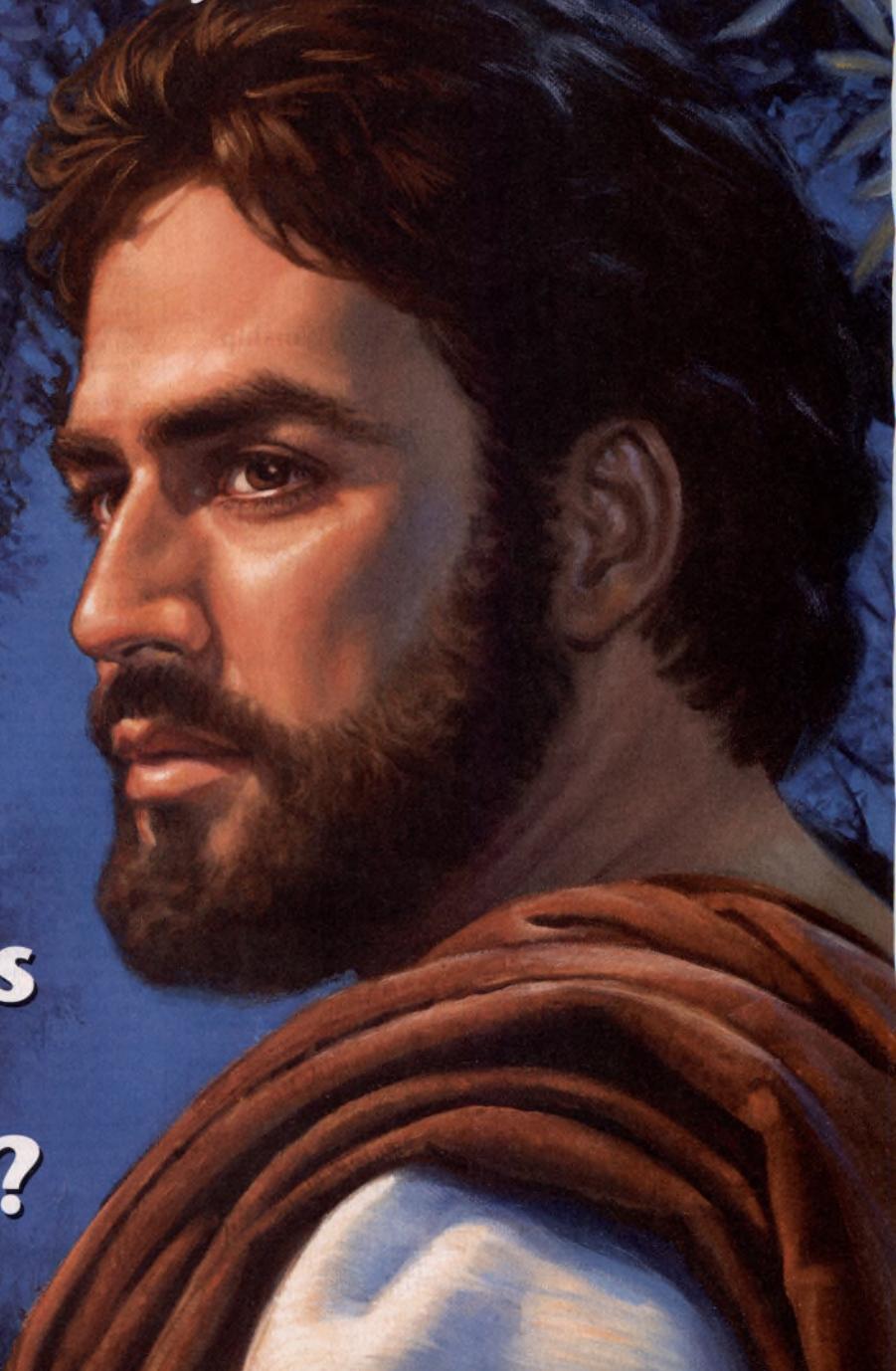


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

SEPTEMBER 15, 2005



**Who Is
Jesus
Christ?**



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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A God or a Man?

"I AM the light of the world. He that follows me will by no means walk in darkness, but will possess the light of life." (John 8:12) These words were spoken by Jesus Christ. A learned man of the first century wrote about him: "Carefully concealed in him are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." (Colossians 2:3) Moreover, the Bible says: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) Accurate knowledge about Jesus is essential in order to satisfy our spiritual need.

People around the earth have heard of Jesus Christ. His influence on the history of mankind is beyond question. In fact, the calendar used in most parts of the world is based on the year he is thought to have been born. "Many people refer to dates before that year as B.C., or *before Christ*," explains *The World Book Encyclopedia*. "They use A.D., or *anno Domini* (in the year of our Lord), for dates after that year."

Yet, there are conflicting ideas about who Jesus was. To some, he was no more than an outstanding man who left his mark on history. Others, though, worship him as God Almighty. Some Hindu thinkers have likened Jesus Christ to the Hindu god Krishna, said by many to be a god incarnate. Was Jesus merely a man, or was he someone to be worshipped? Exactly who was he? Where did he come from? What was he like? And where is he now? As we will see in the following article, the book that has a great deal to say about Jesus gives truthful answers to these questions.



Who Is Jesus Christ?

IMAGINE how excited a young Jew named Andrew must have been when he first listened to the words of Jesus of Nazareth! The Bible states that Andrew rushed to his brother and said: "We have found the Messiah [or, Christ]." (John 1:41) In the Hebrew and Greek languages, the words usually translated "Messiah" and "Christ" mean "Anointed One." Jesus was the Anointed One, or the Chosen One of God—the promised Leader. (Isaiah 55:4) The Scriptures contained prophecies concerning him, and the Jews at the time were in expectation of him.—Luke 3:15.

How do we know that Jesus really was God's Chosen One? Well, consider what happened in the year 29 C.E. when Jesus was 30 years of age. He went to John the Baptizer to be baptized by him in the waters of the Jordan River. The Bible states: "After being baptized Jesus immediately came up from the water; and, look! the heavens were opened up, and he saw descending like a dove God's spirit coming upon him. Look! Also, there was a voice from the heavens that said: 'This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved!'" (Matthew 3:16, 17) After hearing those words of approval, could John have had any doubt that Jesus was God's Chosen One? By pouring out His holy spirit on Jesus, Jehovah God anointed him, or appointed him, to be the King of His coming Kingdom. Thus, Jesus became Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Anointed One. In what way, though, was Jesus God's Son? What was his origin?

His Origin Was "From Early Times"

Jesus' life course might be divided into three stages. The first began long before his human birth. His origin was "from early times, from the days of time indefinite," says Micah 5:2. Jesus himself said: "I am from the realms above"—that is, from heaven. (John 8:23) He had been in heaven as a mighty spirit person.

Since all created things had a beginning, there was a time when God was alone. Countless ages ago, however, God became a Creator. Who was his first creation? The last book of the Bible identifies Jesus as "the beginning of the creation by God." (Revelation 3:14) Jesus is "the firstborn of all creation." That is so "because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible." (Colossians 1:15, 16) Yes, Jesus was the only one directly created by God himself. Therefore, he is called God's "only-begotten Son." (John 3:16) The firstborn Son also bears the title "the Word." (John 1:14) Why? Because before being born as a human, he served in heaven as one who spoke for God.

"The Word" was with Jehovah God "in the beginning," when "the heavens and the earth" were created. He was the one to whom God said: "Let us make man in our image." (John 1:1; Genesis 1:1, 26) Jehovah's firstborn Son was there at his Father's side, actively working with him. At Proverbs 8:22-31, he is represented as saying: "I came to be beside [the Creator] as a master worker,



and I came to be the one he was specially fond of day by day, I being glad before him all the time."

How intimately Jehovah God and his only-begotten Son must have come to know each other as they worked side by side!

That close association with Jehovah for untold ages deeply affected God's Son. This obedient Son came to be just like his Father, Jehovah. In fact, Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus "the image of the invisible God." This is one reason why knowledge about Jesus is vital in satisfying our spiritual need and our natural desire to know God. Everything Jesus did while on earth is exactly what Jehovah expected him to do. Hence, getting to know Jesus also means increasing our knowledge of Jehovah. (John 8:28; 14:8-10) But how did Jesus come to be on earth?

His Life as a Man

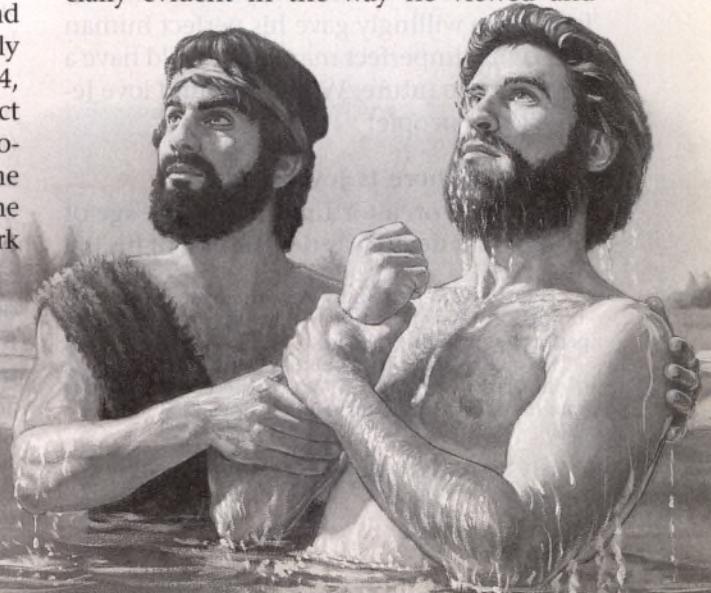
The second stage of Jesus' life course began when God sent his Son to the earth. Jehovah did this by miraculously transferring the life of Jesus from heaven to the womb of a faithful Jewish virgin named Mary. Jesus inherited no imperfections because he did not have a human father. Jehovah's holy spirit, or active force, came upon Mary, and his power 'overshadowed' her, miraculously causing her to become pregnant. (Luke 1:34, 35) Mary therefore gave birth to a perfect child. As the adopted son of the carpenter Joseph, he was brought up in a humble home and was the first of several children in the family.—Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22, 23; Mark 6:3.

At his baptism, Jesus became God's Anointed One

Little is known about Jesus' childhood, but one incident is noteworthy. When Jesus was 12 years old, his parents took him on their annual visit to Jerusalem for the Passover. While there, he spent quite some time at the temple, "sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and questioning them." Moreover, "all those listening to him were in constant amazement at his understanding and his answers." Yes, young Jesus could not only ask thought-provoking, spiritually oriented questions but also give intelligent answers that amazed others. (Luke 2:41-50) As he grew up in the city of Nazareth, he learned to be a carpenter, undoubtedly from his adoptive father, Joseph. —Matthew 13:55.

Jesus lived in Nazareth until he was 30 years old. Then he went to John to be baptized. Following his baptism, Jesus embarked on his dynamic ministry. For three and a half years, he traveled throughout his homeland declaring the good news of God's Kingdom. He gave evidence that he had been sent by God. How? By performing many miracles—powerful works that were beyond human ability.—Matthew 4:17; Luke 19:37, 38.

Jesus was also a man of tender warmth and deep feelings. His tenderness was especially evident in the way he viewed and



treated others. Because Jesus was approachable and kind, people were attracted to him. Even children felt at ease in his presence. (Mark 10:13-16) Jesus treated women with respect, even though some in his day looked down on them. (John 4:9, 27) He helped the poor and oppressed to ‘find refreshment for their souls.’ (Matthew 11:28-30) His manner of teaching was clear, simple, and practical. And what he taught reflected his heartfelt desire to acquaint his listeners with the true God, Jehovah.—John 17:6-8.

Using God’s holy spirit to perform miracles, Jesus compassionately healed the sick and the afflicted. (Matthew 15:30, 31) For example, a person with leprosy came to him and said: “If you just want to, you can make me clean.” What did Jesus do? He stretched out his hand and touched the man, saying to him: “I want to. Be made clean.” And the sick man was healed!—Matthew 8:2-4.

Consider, too, an occasion when a crowd who came to Jesus stayed with him for three days with nothing to eat. He felt pity for the people and miraculously fed the “four thousand men, besides women and young children.” (Matthew 15:32-38) On another occasion, Jesus calmed a storm that threatened the safety of his friends. (Mark 4:37-39) He resurrected, or brought back to life, those who had died.* (Luke 7:22; John 11:43, 44) Jesus even willingly gave his perfect human life so that imperfect mankind would have a hope for the future. What profound love Jesus had for people!

Where Is Jesus Today?

Jesus died on a torture stake at the age of 33 1/2.[#] But death was not the end of his life

* The miracles that Jesus performed were common knowledge. Even Jesus’ enemies acknowledged that he ‘performed many signs.’—John 11:47, 48.

[#] For an explanation of whether Christ died on a stake or on a cross, see pages 89-90 of the book *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

course. The third stage of his life began about three days later when Jehovah God resurrected his Son as a spirit person. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to hundreds of people living in the first century C.E. (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) Thereafter, he “sat down at the right hand of God” and waited to receive kingly power. (Hebrews 10:12, 13) When that time came, Jesus began ruling as King. So how should we imagine Jesus today? Should we think of him as a suffering man being put to death? Or should we view him as someone to be worshipped? Jesus today is neither a man nor God Almighty. Rather, he is a mighty spirit creature, a reigning King. Very soon now, he will manifest his rulership over our troubled earth.

Using symbolic language, Revelation 19:11-16 describes Jesus Christ as a king seated upon a white horse and coming to judge and carry on war in righteousness. He has “a sharp long sword, that he may strike the nations with it.” Yes, Jesus will use his great power to destroy the wicked. And what about those who strive to follow the example he set while on earth? (1 Peter 2:21) He and his Father will preserve them through the upcoming “war of the great day of God the Almighty”—often called Armageddon—so that they can live forever as earthly subjects of God’s heavenly Kingdom.—Revelation 7:9, 14; 16:14, 16; 21:3, 4.

During his reign of peace, what miracles Jesus will perform in behalf of all mankind! (Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1-10) He will cure sickness and bring an end to death. Jesus will be used by God to resurrect billions, giving them an opportunity to live forever on earth. (John 5:28, 29) We cannot even imagine how wonderful our lives will be under Kingdom rule. It is important, then, that we continue to take in Bible knowledge and become better acquainted with Jesus Christ.



*Jesus devoted his energy
to his God-assigned work*



*Today,
Jesus is a
mighty King*

IS JESUS GOD ALMIGHTY?

Many religious people say that Jesus is God. Some claim that God is a Trinity. According to this teaching, "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God." It is held that the three "are co-eternal and co-equal." (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*) Are such views correct?

Jehovah God is the Creator. (Revelation 4:11) He is without beginning or end, and he is almighty. (Psalm 90:2) Jesus, on the other hand, had a beginning. (Colossians 1:15, 16) Referring to God as his Father, Jesus said: "The Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) Jesus also explained that there were some things neither he nor the angels knew but that were known only by his Father.—Mark 13:32.

Moreover, Jesus prayed to his Father: "Let, not my will, but yours take place." (Luke 22:42) To whom was Jesus praying if not to a superior Personage? Furthermore, it was God who resurrected Jesus from the dead, not Jesus himself. (Acts 2:32) Obviously, the Father and the Son were not equal before Jesus came

to the earth or during his earthly life. What about after Jesus' resurrection to heaven? First Corinthians 11:3 states: "The head of the Christ is God." In fact, the Son will always be in subjection to God. (1 Corinthians 15:28) The Scriptures therefore show that Jesus is not God Almighty. Instead, he is God's Son.

The so-called third person of the Trinity—the holy spirit—is not a person. Addressing God in prayer, the psalmist said: "If you send forth your spirit, they are created." (Psalm 104:30) This spirit is not God himself; it is an active force that he sends forth or uses to accomplish whatever he wishes. By means of it, God created the physical heavens, the earth, and all living things. (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 33:6) God used his holy spirit to inspire the men who wrote the Bible. (2 Peter 1:20, 21) The Trinity, then, is not a Scriptural teaching.* "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah," says the Bible.—Deuteronomy 6:4.

* For further information, see the brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Multitudes Embrace Jehovah's Worship

BIBLE prophecies pointing to our day foretold that people from all nations would flock to Jehovah's elevated worship. For example, through the prophet Haggai, Jehovah God declared: "I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory." (Haggai 2:7) Both Isaiah and Micah prophesied that during our time—"the final part of the days"—nations and peoples would worship Jehovah in an acceptable way.—Isaiah 2:2-4; Micah 4:1-4.

Are such prophecies really being fulfilled today? Let the facts speak for themselves. During the past ten years alone, more than 3,110,000 new ones have dedicated themselves to Jehovah in more than 230 lands. Indeed, 6 out of every 10 Witnesses of Jehovah currently serving worldwide were baptized during the last decade. In 2004, on average, a newly dedicated servant of God was added to the Christian congregation every two minutes!*

As in the first century, today 'a great number have become believers and have turned to the Lord.' Although numerical increase is not in itself proof of God's blessing, it does provide evidence that "the hand of Jehovah" is with his people. (Acts 11:21) What leads millions to Jehovah's worship? And how are you personally affected by this development?

Righthearted People Are Attracted

In very direct terms, Jesus stated: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him." (John 6:44) Ultimately, therefore, Jehovah is responsible for drawing

people who are "rightly disposed for everlasting life." (Acts 13:48) God's spirit can awaken people to their spiritual need. (Matthew 5:3) A disturbed conscience, a desperate quest for hope, or a gripping crisis may lead some to search for God and thus learn about his purpose for mankind.—Mark 7:26-30; Luke 19:2-10.

Many individuals are attracted to Jehovah's worship because the Bible educational program of the Christian congregation helps them to get answers to questions that perplex them.

"If there is a God, why do people continue to suffer injustice?" That was the question that tormented Davide, a drug dealer in Italy. He was not particularly interested in religious matters, so he posed this challenging question more as a provocation than anything else. "I didn't think I was going to receive a reasonable and convincing answer," he says. "But the Witness who spoke with me was very patient and backed up with passages from the Bible what he was saying. That conversation had

WHO IS BEHIND THIS INCREASE?

"Unless Jehovah himself builds the house, it is to no avail that its builders have worked hard on it."

—Psalm 127:1.

"God kept making it grow; so that neither is he that plants anything nor is he that waters, but God who makes it grow."

—1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.

* See 2005 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses, September/October.

"No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him."

—JOHN 6:44

a profound effect on me." Today, Davide has straightened out his life and serves Jehovah.

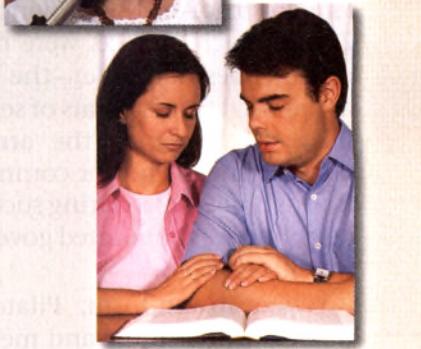
Others are led to the earthly part of Jehovah's organization as a result of their quest for meaning and purpose. Seeking therapy for her own emotional problems, a psychiatrist in Zagreb, Croatia, visited a famous colleague. To her surprise, the doctor gave her the phone number of the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Zagreb, as well as the name of a Witness he knew. "Look," he said, "I think these people can help you. If I send you to the church, you will find only lifeless statues—nobody is speaking, and everything is dark. I don't think the church can help you. I have sent other patients to Jehovah's Witnesses, and I think it would be the best for you too." Obligingly, the Witnesses visited her and soon started a Bible study with her. In a few weeks, that psychiatrist joyfully declared that knowledge of God's purpose had given meaning to her life.—Ecclesiastes 12:13.

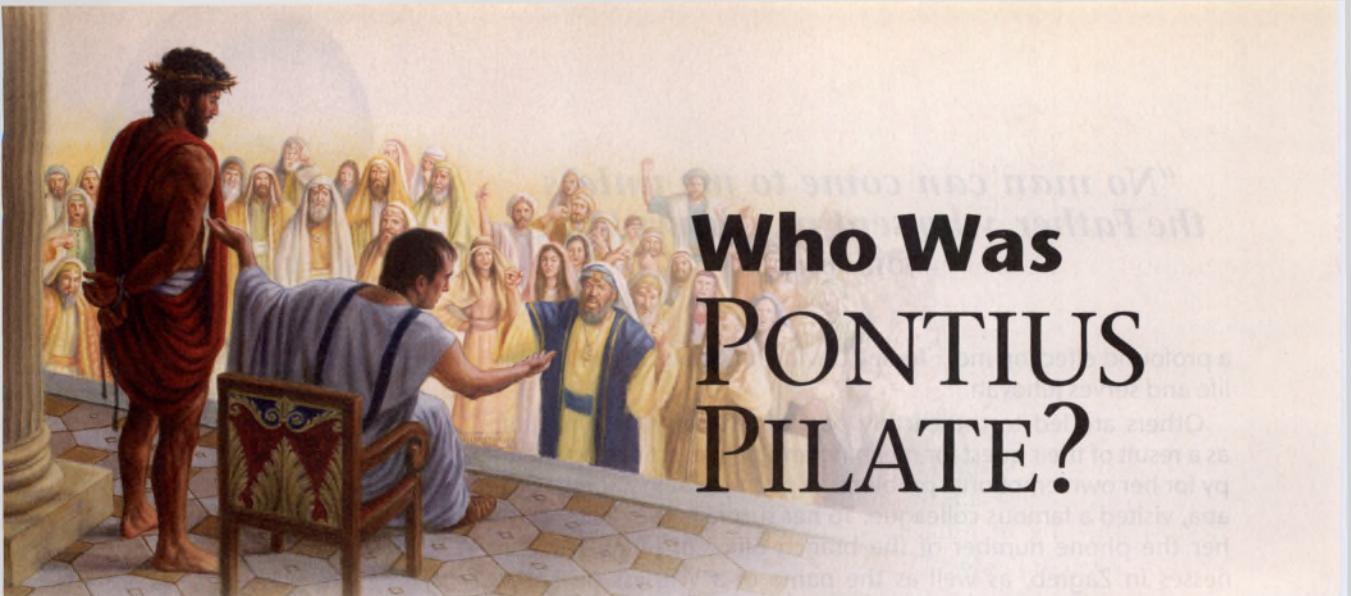
When a personal crisis strikes, many have found that only Bible truth can provide real comfort. In Greece, a seven-year-old boy fell from the roof of his school and died. A few months later, two Witnesses met his mother and tried to comfort her by discussing the resurrection hope. (John 5:28, 29) At that, the lady burst into tears. The sisters asked: "If you would like to know more about the Bible, when can we visit you?" "Right now," she answered. The woman took them to her home, and a Bible study was started. Today, her whole family is serving Jehovah.

Are You Having a Part?

Such experiences are typical of what is happening around the world. Jehovah is gathering and training a great multinational crowd of true worshippers. This international group has the happy prospect of surviving the approaching end of this wicked system of things and living on into a righteous new world.—2 Peter 3:13.

As a result of Jehovah's blessing, this unprecedented work of ingathering is moving irresistibly toward its successful completion. (Isaiah 55:10, 11; Matthew 24:3, 14) Are you zealously engaging in this Kingdom-preaching activity? If you are, you can be confident of divine support and can echo these words of the psalmist: "My help is from Jehovah."—Psalm 121:2.





Who Was PONTIUS PILATE?

MOCKING, skeptical Pilate is a historical figure who haunts our imagination. For some he is a saint, for others the embodiment of human weakness, an archetypal politician willing to sacrifice one man for the sake of stability."—*Pontius Pilate*, by Ann Wroe.

Whether you share any of those views or not, Pontius Pilate did make a name for himself because of the way he treated Jesus Christ. Who was Pilate? What is known about him? A better grasp of his position will enhance our understanding of the most important events ever to unfold on the earth.

Position, Duties, and Power

Roman Emperor Tiberius appointed Pilate governor of the province of Judaea in 26 C.E. Such prefects were men of the so-called equestrian order—the lower nobility, as opposed to aristocrats of senatorial status. Pilate likely joined the army as a military tribune, or junior commander; passed through the ranks during successive tours of duty; and was appointed governor before he was 30 years old.

When in uniform, Pilate would have worn a leather tunic and metal breastplate.

His public clothing was a white toga with a purple border. He would have had short hair and have been clean-shaven. Although some believe that he came from Spain, his name suggests that he belonged to the tribe of the Pontii—Samnite nobles from southern Italy.

Prefects of Pilate's rank were usually sent to barbarous territories. The Romans considered Judaea to be such a place. In addition to maintaining order, Pilate oversaw the collection of indirect taxes and the poll tax. Day-to-day administration of justice was a concern of the Jewish courts, but cases requiring the death penalty were evidently referred to the governor, who was the supreme judicial authority.

With a small staff of scribes, companions, and messengers, Pilate and his wife lived in the port city of Caesarea. Pilate commanded five infantry cohorts of from 500 to 1,000 men each as well as a cavalry regiment likely consisting of 500. His soldiers routinely impaled lawbreakers. In peacetime, executions followed summary hearings, but during an uprising, rebels were put to death on the spot and en masse. For example, the Romans impaled 6,000 slaves to crush the revolt led by Spartacus. If trouble threatened

in Judaea, the governor could normally turn to the imperial legate in Syria, who commanded legions. During much of Pilate's tenure, however, the legate was absent, and Pilate had to end disorders quickly.

Governors regularly communicated with the emperor. Matters involving his dignity or any threats to Roman authority required reports and resulted in imperial orders. A governor might be anxious to give the emperor his own version of events in his province before others could complain. With trouble brewing in Judaea, such concerns were very real to Pilate.

Aside from the Gospel accounts, the historians Flavius Josephus and Philo are the main sources of information on Pilate. Roman historian Tacitus also states that Pilate executed Christus, from whom Christians took their name.

Jewish Outrage Provoked

Josephus says that out of regard for Jewish scruples over the making of images, Roman governors had avoided taking into Jerusalem military standards bearing effigies of the emperor. Because Pilate showed no such restraint, outraged Jews rushed to Caesarea to complain. Pilate did nothing for five days. On the sixth day, he ordered his soldiers to surround the protesters and threaten to execute them if they did not disperse. When the Jews said that they would rather die than see their Law transgressed, Pilate relented and ordered that the images be removed.

Pilate was capable of using force. In an incident recorded by Josephus, the prefect began work on an aqueduct to bring water into Jerusalem and used funds from the temple treasury to finance the project. Pilate did not simply seize the money, for he knew that plundering the temple was sacrilegious and would have caused angry Jews to ask Tiberius to recall him. So it seems that Pilate had the



This inscription identifying Pontius Pilate as prefect of Judaea was found at Caesarea

cooperation of the temple authorities. Dedicated funds, termed "corban," could legitimately be used for public works to benefit the city. But thousands of Jews gathered to express their indignation.

Pilate had troops mingle with the crowd with orders not to use swords but to beat the protesters with clubs. He apparently wanted to control the mob without provoking a massacre. This seems to have paid off, though some did die. Certain ones who reported to Jesus that Pilate had mixed the blood of Galileans with their sacrifices may have been referring to this incident.—Luke 13:1.

"What Is Truth?"

What makes Pilate infamous is his investigation of charges made by the Jewish chief priests and older men that Jesus was presenting himself as King. On hearing of Jesus' mission to bear witness to the truth, Pilate saw that the prisoner presented no threat to Rome. "What is truth?" he asked, evidently thinking that truth was too elusive a concept to merit much attention. His conclusion? "I find no crime in this man." —John 18:37, 38; Luke 23:4.

That should have been the end of Jesus' trial, but the Jews insisted that he was

subverting the nation. Envy was the chief priests' reason for turning Jesus over, and Pilate knew it. He also knew that releasing Jesus would cause trouble, something he wanted to avoid. There had been enough of that already, for Barabbas and others were in custody for sedition and murder. (Mark 15: 7, 10; Luke 23:2) Moreover, previous disputes with the Jews had tarnished Pilate's reputation with Tiberius, who was notorious for dealing severely with bad governors. Yet, to give in to the Jews would be a sign of weakness. So Pilate faced a dilemma.

On hearing where Jesus was from, Pilate tried to pass the case on to Herod Antipas, district ruler of Galilee. When that failed, Pilate attempted to get those gathered outside his palace to ask for Jesus' release, in accord with the custom of freeing a prisoner at Passover. The crowd clamored for Barabbas.
—Luke 23:5-19.

Pilate may have wanted to do what was right, but he also desired to save himself and please the crowd. Finally, he put his career ahead of conscience and justice. Calling for water, he washed his hands and claimed innocence in the death he now sanctioned.* Though he believed that Jesus was innocent, Pilate had him scourged and allowed soldiers to mock, strike, and spit upon him.
—Matthew 27:24-31.

Pilate made a final attempt to free Jesus, but the crowd shouted that if he did so, he was no friend of Caesar. (John 19:12) At that, Pilate caved in. One scholar said this about Pilate's decision: "The solution was easy: execute the man. All that was to be lost was the life of one apparently insignificant Jew; it would be foolish to let trouble develop over him."

* Hand washing was a Jewish, not a Roman, way of expressing nonparticipation in bloodshed.—Deuteronomy 21:6, 7.

What Happened to Pilate?

The last recorded incident in Pilate's career was another conflict. Josephus says that a multitude of armed Samaritans gathered on Mount Gerizim in hopes of uncovering treasures that Moses had supposedly buried there. Pilate intervened, and his troops slew a number of the crowd. The Samaritans complained to Pilate's superior, Lucius Vitellius, governor of Syria. Whether Vitellius thought that Pilate had gone too far is not stated. In any case, he ordered Pilate to Rome to answer to the emperor for his actions. Before he arrived, however, Tiberius died.

"At that point," says one source, "Pilate passes out of history into legend." But many have tried to supply missing details. It has been claimed that Pilate became a Christian. Ethiopian "Christians" made him a "saint." Eusebius, who wrote in the late third and early fourth centuries, was the first of many to say that Pilate, like Judas Iscariot, committed suicide. However, just what became of Pilate is a matter of speculation.

Pilate could be obstinate, flippant, and heavy-handed. But he remained in office for ten years, whereas most prefects of Judaea had much shorter tenures. From a Roman viewpoint, therefore, Pilate was competent. He has been called a coward who reprehensibly had Jesus tortured and killed to protect himself. Others argue that Pilate's duty was not so much to uphold justice as it was to promote peace and Roman interests.

Pilate's times were very different from our own. Yet, no judge could justly condemn a man he considered innocent. Had it not been for his encounter with Jesus, Pontius Pilate might be just another name in the history books.

"THE FEAR OF JEHOVAH *That Is Wisdom"*

TH E conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) What a profound conclusion King Solomon of ancient Israel drew under divine inspiration! The patriarch Job also appreciated the value of the fear of God, for he said: "Look! The fear of Jehovah—that is wisdom, and to turn away from bad is understanding."—Job 28:28.

The Bible places great importance on fearing Jehovah. Why is our cultivating reverential fear of God the course of wisdom? In what way does having godly fear benefit us—individually and as a group of true worshippers? Verses 26 to 35 of Proverbs chapter 14 answer these questions.*

Source of "Strong Confidence"

"In the fear of Jehovah there is strong confidence," states Solomon, *"and for his sons there will come to be a refuge."* (Proverbs 14:26) A God-fearing man's source of trust is none other than the loyal and almighty God, Jehovah. No wonder such a man faces what lies ahead with strong confidence! His future is long and blessed.

What, though, can be said about the future of those who put their confidence in the world—its schemes, its organizations, its



ideologies, and its goods? Whatever future they hope to have is short, for the Bible states: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever." (1 John 2:17) Is there any reason for us, then, to "be loving either the world or the things in the world"?—1 John 2:15.

What measures can God-fearing parents take to ensure that "there will come to be a refuge" for their children? "Come, you sons, listen to me," sang the psalmist, "the fear of Jehovah is what I shall teach you." (Psalm 34:11) When children by parental example and instruction are taught to fear God, they are more likely to grow up to be men and women who have strong confidence in Jehovah.—Proverbs 22:6.

"The fear of Jehovah is a well of life," continues Solomon, *"to turn away from the snares of death."* (Proverbs 14:27) The fear of Jehovah is "a well of life" because the true God is "the source of living water." (Jeremiah 2:13) Taking in knowledge of Jehovah and of Jesus Christ can mean everlasting life for us. (John 17:3) Godly fear also turns us away from the snares of death. How? Proverbs 13:14 states: "The law of the wise one is a source of life, to turn one away from the snares of death." When we fear Jehovah, obey his law, and allow his Word to guide our steps, are we not protected from harmful practices and emotions that can lead to early death?

* For a discussion of Proverbs 14:1-25, see *The Watchtower* of November 15, 2004, pages 26-9, and July 15, 2005, pages 17-20.

"Adornment of a King"

During most of his reign, Solomon was a God-fearing king who obeyed Jehovah. This contributed to a successful rulership. What determines how well a king rules? Proverbs 14:28 answers: "*In the multitude of people there is an adornment of a king, but in the lack of population is the ruin of a high official.*" The success of a king is measured by the welfare of his subjects. If a great multitude of people desire to remain under his rulership, that recommends him as a good ruler. Solomon had "subjects from [the Red] sea to [the Mediterranean] sea and from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth." (Psalm 72:6-8) His rulership was marked by unprecedented peace and prosperity. (1 Kings 4:24, 25) Solomon's reign was a success. On the other hand, a lack of approval by the populace spells disgrace for a high official.

In this regard, what can be said about the glory of the Greater Solomon, the Messianic King, Jesus Christ? Think of the subjects he has even today. From one end of the earth to the other, over six million God-fearing men and women have already chosen to live under Christ's rulership. They exercise faith in Jesus and are united in true worship of the living God. (John 14:1) By the end of the Millennial Rule, all those in God's memory will have been resurrected. A paradise earth will then be full of happy, righteous people who have manifested appreciation for their King. What a testimony that will be to the success of Christ's rulership! Let us hold fast to our wonderful Kingdom hope.

Spiritual and Physical Benefits

Reverential fear of God can give us calmness of heart and tranquillity of spirit. This is so because wisdom's many facets include good judgment and discernment. Proverbs

14:29 states: "*He that is slow to anger is abundant in discernment, but one that is impatient is exalting foolishness.*" Discernment helps us to realize that uncontrolled anger has a damaging effect on our spirituality. "Enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions" are listed among the works that could prevent us from 'inheriting God's kingdom.' (Galatians 5:19-21) We are counseled against harboring even justifiable anger. (Ephesians 4:26, 27) And impatience can lead to foolish speech and action that we later regret.

Pointing to the adverse physical effects of anger, the king of Israel says: "*A calm heart is the life of the fleshy organism, but jealousy is rottenness to the bones.*" (Proverbs 14:30) Ailments resulting from anger and rage include respiratory troubles, increased blood pressure, liver disorders, and ill effects on the pancreas. Physicians also list anger and rage as emotions that aggravate, or even cause, such illnesses as ulcers, hives, asthma, skin diseases, and digestive problems. On the other hand, "*a heart at peace gives life to the body.*" (Proverbs 14:30, New International Version) We are wise, then, to "pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another."

—Romans 14:19.

Fear of God Helps Us to Be Impartial

"He that is defrauding the lowly one has reproached his Maker," says Solomon, "*but the one showing favor to the poor one is glorifying Him.*" (Proverbs 14:31) A God-fearing man realizes that all humans have the same Maker, Jehovah God. Therefore, the lowly one is a fellow human, and how he is treated reflects on the Creator of mankind. To glorify God, we must deal fairly and impartially with others. The Christian of little means should receive spiritual attention without

partiality. We must reach the poor and the rich alike with the good news of God's Kingdom.

Referring to another benefit of godly fear, the wise king says: "*Because of his badness the wicked will be pushed down, but the righteous will be finding refuge in his integrity.*" (Proverbs 14:32) How is the wicked one pushed down? It has been suggested that this means that he lacks any possibility of recovery when he experiences a calamity. On the other hand, when adversity strikes, the God-fearing man takes refuge in his integrity to God. Having implicit trust in Jehovah even to death, he displays the same determination as did Job, who said: "Until I expire I shall not take away my integrity from myself!"—Job 27:5.

Maintaining integrity calls for godly fear and wisdom. And where can wisdom be found? "*In the heart of the understanding one there rests wisdom,*" answers Proverbs 14:33, "*and in the midst of stupid ones it becomes known.*" Yes, wisdom can be found in

Godly fear can be taught

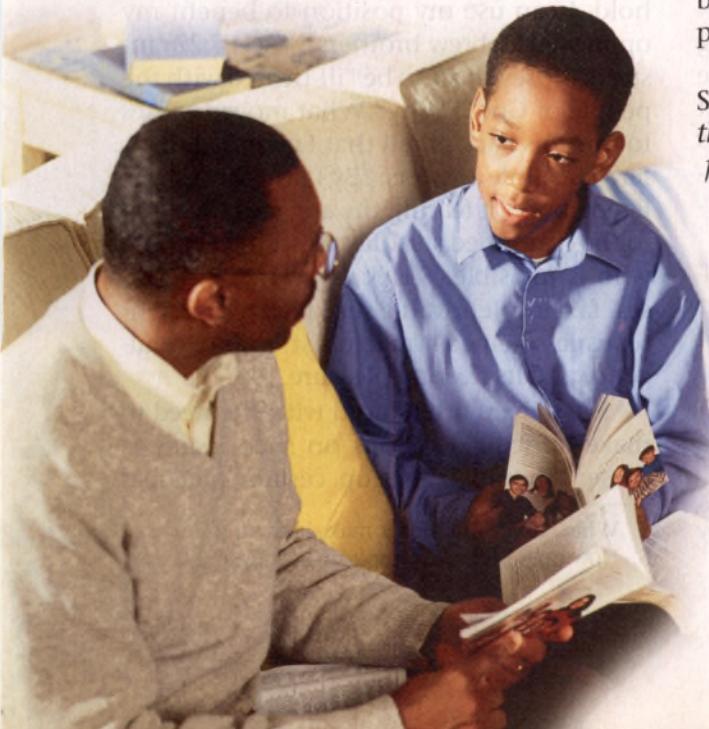
the heart of a man with understanding. In what way, though, does it become known in the midst of fools? According to one reference work, "the fool, anxious to appear wise, blurts out what he thinks is wisdom but in the process turns it to folly."

"Exalts a Nation"

Shifting our attention from how an individual is affected by the fear of God to how it affects an entire nation, the king of Israel says: "*Righteousness is what exalts a nation, but sin is something disgraceful to national groups.*" (Proverbs 14:34) How clearly this principle was demonstrated in the case of the nation of Israel! Adhering to God's high standards resulted in Israel's being exalted over the surrounding nations. However, repeated acts of disobedience led to the disgrace and eventual rejection of Israel by Jehovah. This principle applies to God's people today. The Christian congregation is different from the world because it adheres to God's righteous principles. To maintain that elevated position, though, we must individually live a chaste life. Practicing sin only brings disgrace to us personally as well as reproach on the congregation and on God.

Expressing what brings delight to a king, Solomon says: "*The pleasure of a king is in the servant who is acting with insight, but his fury comes to be toward one acting shamefully.*" (Proverbs 14:35) And Proverbs 16:13

states: "The lips of righteousness are a pleasure to a grand king; and the speaker of upright things he loves." Yes, our Leader and King, Jesus Christ, is well-pleased when we act righteously and with insight and use our lips in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making activity. By all means, then, let us keep busy in that work as we enjoy the blessings that come from fearing the true God.



WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT!

"We are walking by faith, not by sight."—2 CORINTHIANS 5:7.

THE year is 55 C.E. Some 20 years have passed since a man then named Saul, a persecutor of Christians, embraced Christianity. He has not allowed the passing of time to diminish or weaken his faith in God. Even though he has not beheld heavenly realities with his physical eyes, he is firm in faith. When writing to anointed Christians, who had the heavenly hope, the apostle Paul therefore said: "We are walking by faith, not by sight."—2 Corinthians 5:7.

² Walking by faith requires implicit trust in God's ability to direct our lives. We must be fully convinced that he really knows what is in our best interests. (Psalm 119:66) As we make decisions in life and act on them, we take into account "realities we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1, *The New English Bible*) These include the promised "new heavens and a new earth." (2 Peter 3:13) Walking by sight, on the other hand, means that we pursue a life course governed solely by what we perceive with our physical senses. This is dangerous because it can lead to our ignoring God's will altogether.—Psalm 81:12; Ecclesiastes 11:9.

³ Whether we are of the "little flock," with the heavenly calling, or of the "other sheep," with the earthly hope, each one of us should take to heart the admonition to walk by faith and not by sight. (Luke 12:32;

1. What shows that the apostle Paul walked by faith, not by sight?

2, 3. (a) How do we demonstrate that we are walking by faith? (b) What does it mean to walk by sight?

John 10:16) Let us see how following this inspired advice will protect us from falling victim to "the temporary enjoyment of sin," from the snare of materialism, and from losing sight of the end of this system of things. We will also examine the dangers of walking by sight.—Hebrews 11:25.

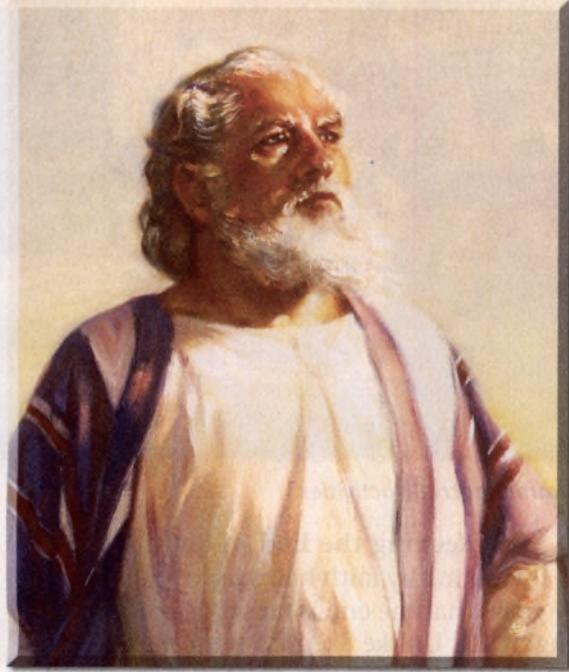
Rejecting "the Temporary Enjoyment of Sin"

⁴ Imagine the life that Moses, a son of Amram, could have had. Raised among the royal offspring in ancient Egypt, Moses had within his grasp power, wealth, and influence. Moses could have reasoned: 'I have been well-educated in the vaunted wisdom of Egypt, and I am powerful in word and deed. If I stay attached to the royal household, I can use my position to benefit my oppressed Hebrew brothers!' (Acts 7:22) Instead, Moses chose to be "ill-treated with the people of God." Why? What moved Moses to turn his back on all that Egypt had to offer? The Bible answers: "By faith [Moses] left Egypt, but not fearing the anger of the king, for he continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:24-27) Moses' faith in Jehovah's sure reward for righteousness helped him to resist sin and indulgence and its fleeting pleasure.

⁵ We too are often faced with the need to make difficult decisions on such issues as these: 'Should I give up certain practices

4. What choice did Moses make, and why?

5. How does Moses' example encourage us?



Moses walked by faith

closed his eyes to God's precious promises, viewing them as of little value. He walked by sight, not by faith.

⁷ Esau provides a warning example for us today. (1 Corinthians 10:11) When we face decisions, whether great or small, we must not be seduced by the propaganda of Satan's world, which says that you must have what you want right now. We do well to ask ourselves: 'Are Esaulike tendencies showing up in the decisions I make? Would pursuing what I want now mean putting spiritual interests in the background? Are my choices endangering my friendship with God and my future reward? What kind of example am I setting for others?' If our choices reflect appreciation for sacred things, Jehovah will bless us.—Proverbs 10:22.

or habits that are not fully in line with Bible principles? Should I accept employment that has apparent material advantages but that would hinder my spiritual progress?⁸ Moses' example encourages us not to make choices that reflect the shortsightedness of this world; rather, we should exercise faith in the farsighted wisdom of "the One who is invisible"—Jehovah God. Like Moses, may we cherish Jehovah's friendship more than anything that this world has to offer.

⁶ Contrast Moses with Esau, a son of the patriarch Isaac. Esau preferred instant gratification. (Genesis 25:30-34) "Not appreciating sacred things," Esau gave away his rights as firstborn "in exchange for one meal." (Hebrews 12:16) He failed to consider how his decision to sell his birthright would affect his relationship with Jehovah or what influence his action would have on his offspring. He lacked spiritual vision. Esau

6, 7. (a) How did Esau show that he preferred to walk by sight? (b) What warning example do we find in Esau?

Avoiding the Snare of Materialism

⁸ In a revelation to the apostle John toward the close of the first century, the glorified Jesus Christ delivered a message to the congregation located in Laodicea, Asia Minor. It was a warning message against materialism. Though materially rich, Laodecean Christians were bankrupt spiritually. Instead of continuing to walk by faith, they allowed material possessions to blind their spiritual vision. (Revelation 3:14-18) Materialism has a similar effect today. It weakens our faith and causes us to stop 'running with endurance the race' for life. (Hebrews 12:1) If we are not careful, the "pleasures of this life" can smother spiritual activities to the point that they are "completely choked."—Luke 8:14.

⁹ A key to spiritual protection is contentment rather than the use of this world to

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8. What warning did the Laodecean Christians receive, and why is that of interest to us?
 9. How do contentment and appreciation for spiritual food protect us?



Does recreation often keep you from theocratic activities?

the full and the enrichment of ourselves materially. (1 Corinthians 7:31; 1 Timothy 6:6-8) When we walk by faith and not by sight, we find joy in the present spiritual paradise. As we partake of nourishing spiritual food, are we not moved to "cry out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart"? (Isaiah 65:13, 14) Moreover, we take delight in our association with those who manifest the fruitage of God's spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) How vital that we find satisfaction and refreshment in what Jehovah provides in a spiritual way!

¹⁰ Some questions we do well to ask ourselves are: 'What place do material things occupy in my life? Am I using the material possessions I have to live a life of pleasure or to promote true worship? What brings me the greatest satisfaction? Is it Bible study and fellowship at Christian meetings, or is it weekends away from Christian responsibilities? Do I reserve many weekends for recreation instead of using such time for the field ministry and other activities in connection with pure worship?' Walking by faith means that we keep busy in the Kingdom work, with full trust in Jehovah's promises. —1 Corinthians 15:58.

10. What questions do we do well to ask ourselves?

Keeping the End in Sight

¹¹ Walking by faith helps us to shun fleshly views that the end is far off or is not coming at all. Unlike skeptics who make light of Bible prophecy, we discern how world events line up with what God's Word foretold for our day. (2 Peter 3:3, 4) For example, do not the attitude and the behavior of people in general give evidence that we are living in "the last days"? (2 Timothy 3:1-5) With the eyes of faith, we see that current world events are not just history repeating itself. Rather, they form "the sign of [Christ's] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things."—Matthew 24:1-14.

¹² Consider an event in the first century of our Common Era that has a parallel in our day. When on earth, Jesus Christ warned his followers: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw." (Luke 21:20, 21) In fulfillment of this prophecy, Roman armies under the command of Cestius Gallus laid siege to Je-

11. How does walking by faith help us to keep the end in sight?
12. How were Jesus' words recorded at Luke 21:20, 21 fulfilled in the first century?

rusalem in 66 C.E. But the armies withdrew abruptly, furnishing the signal and the opportunity for the Christians there ‘to flee to the mountains.’ In 70 C.E., the Roman armies returned, attacked the city of Jerusalem, and destroyed its temple. Josephus reports that over a million Jews died, and 97,000 were taken captive. Divine judgment was executed upon that Jewish system of things. Those who walked by faith and heeded Jesus’ warning escaped the calamity.

¹³ Something similar is about to take place in our day. Elements within the United Nations will be involved in the execution of divine judgment. Just as the Roman armies of the first century were designed to maintain the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), the United Nations of today is intended to be a peacekeeping instrument. Although the Roman armies tried to ensure relative safety throughout the then known world, they became the desolator of Jerusalem. Likewise today, Bible prophecy indicates that militarized powers within the United Nations will see religion as a disturbing element and will act to destroy modern-day Jerusalem—Christendom—as well as the rest of Babylon the Great. (Revelation 17:12-17) Yes, the entire world empire of false religion stands on the brink of destruction.

¹⁴ The desolation of false religion will mark the beginning of the great tribulation. In the final part of the great tribulation, the remaining elements of this wicked system of things will be destroyed. (Matthew 24:29, 30; Revelation 16:14, 16) Walking by faith keeps us alert to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. We are not duped into thinking that any man-made agency like the United Nations is God’s means of bringing true peace and security. So, then, should not our

13, 14. (a) What events lie ahead? (b) Why should we stay alert to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy?

way of life demonstrate our conviction that “the great day of Jehovah is near”?—Zephaniah 1:14.

Walking by Sight—How Dangerous?

¹⁵ The experiences of ancient Israel illustrate the dangers of allowing walking by sight to weaken one’s faith. In spite of witnessing the ten plagues that humiliated the false gods of Egypt and then experiencing the spectacular deliverance through the Red Sea, the Israelites disobediently made a golden calf and began to worship it. They became restless and grew weary of waiting for Moses, who “was taking a long time about coming down from the mountain.” (Exodus 32:1-4) Impatience moved them to worship an idol visible to the natural eye. Their walking by sight insulted Jehovah and led to the execution of “about three thousand men.” (Exodus 32:25-29) How sad it is when a worshipper of Jehovah today makes decisions that indicate distrust of Jehovah and a lack of confidence in his ability to fulfill his promises!

¹⁶ Outward appearances affected the Israelites negatively in other ways. Walking by sight made them tremble in fear of

15. In spite of their experiencing God’s blessing, what snare did the nation of Israel fall into?

16. How were the Israelites affected by outward appearances?

Do You Recall?

- What did you learn from the examples of Moses and Esau about walking by faith, not by sight?
- What is a key to avoiding materialism?
- How does walking by faith help us to avoid the view that the end is far off?
- Why is walking by sight dangerous?

their enemies. (Numbers 13:28, 32; Deuteronomy 1:28) It caused them to challenge Moses' God-given authority and complain about their lot in life. This lack of faith led to their preferring demon-controlled Egypt to the Promised Land. (Numbers 14:1-4; Psalm 106:24) How hurt Jehovah must have been as he witnessed the gross disrespect his people showed for their invisible King!



How does paying attention to God's Word protect you?

¹⁷ Again in the prophet Samuel's day, the favored nation of Israel was caught in the snare of walking by sight. The people began to desire a king whom they could see. Even though Jehovah had demonstrated that he was their King, this was not enough to make them walk by faith. (1 Samuel 8:4-9) To their own harm, they foolishly rejected the flawless guidance of Jehovah, preferring instead to be like the surrounding nations.
—1 Samuel 8:19, 20.

¹⁸ As Jehovah's modern-day servants, we cherish our good relationship with God. We are eager to learn and apply in our lives valuable lessons from past events. (Romans

17. What caused the Israelites to reject Jehovah's guidance in Samuel's day?
18. What lessons can we learn about the dangers of walking by sight?

15:4) When the Israelites walked by sight, they forgot that God through Moses was directing them. If we are not careful, we too can forget that Jehovah God and the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, are directing the Christian congregation today. (Revelation 1:12-16) We must be on guard against taking a human view of the earthly part of Jehovah's organization. Our doing so can lead to a complaining spirit and a loss of appreciation for Jehovah's representatives as well as for the spiritual food provided by "the faithful and discreet slave."—Matthew 24:45.

Be Resolved to Walk by Faith

¹⁹ "We have a wrestling," states the Bible, "not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) Our chief enemy is Satan the Devil. His aim is to destroy our faith in Jehovah. He will not overlook any type of persuasion that might sway us from our decision to serve God. (1 Peter 5:8) What will protect us from being deceived by the outward appearance of Satan's system? Walking by faith, not by sight! Trust and confidence in Jehovah's promises will safeguard us from experiencing 'shipwreck concerning our faith.' (1 Timothy 1:19) By all means, then, let us be determined to continue walking by faith, fully confident in Jehovah's blessing. And may we keep on praying that we may escape all the things destined to occur in the near future.—Luke 21:36.

²⁰ As we walk by faith, not by sight, we have a superb Exemplar. "Christ suffered for you," states the Bible, "leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely." (1 Peter 2:21) The next article will discuss how we can go on walking as he walked.

- 19, 20. What are you resolved to do, and why?

GO ON WALKING AS JESUS CHRIST WALKED

"He that says he remains in union with [God] is under obligation himself also to go on walking just as that one [Jesus] walked." —1 JOHN 2:6.

LEAVE us run with endurance the race that is set before us," wrote the apostle Paul, "as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus." (Hebrews 12: 1, 2) Following the course of faithfulness requires that we look intently at Jesus Christ.

² The original-language word for "look intently," as used in the Christian Greek Scriptures, means "to direct one's attention without distraction," "to look away from one thing so as to see another," "to concentrate the gaze upon." One reference work observes: "The minute the Greek runner in the stadium takes his attention away from the race course and the goal to which he is speeding, and turns it upon the onlooking crowds, his speed is slackened. It is so with the Christian." Distractions can hinder our spiritual progress. We must look intently at Jesus Christ. And what are we looking for in the Chief Agent? The Greek term rendered "chief agent" means "chief leader, one that takes the lead in anything and thus furnishes the



example." Looking intently at Jesus calls for following his example.

³ "He that says he remains in union with [God] is under obligation himself also to go on walking just as that one [Jesus] walked," states the Bible. (1 John 2:6) We must remain in union with God by observing Jesus' commandments as he observed those of his Father. —John 15:10.

Hence, walking as Jesus walked requires that we closely observe him as the Chief Leader and that we follow his steps closely. The important questions to consider in this regard are: How does Christ lead us today? How should imitating his manner of walking affect us? What are the benefits of adhering to the pattern set by Jesus Christ?

How Christ Leads His Followers

⁵ Before ascending to heaven, the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples and assigned them an important work. He said: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations."

3, 4. (a) Walking as Jesus Christ walked requires what on our part? (b) What questions deserve our attention?

5. Before his ascension to heaven, what promise did Jesus make to his followers?

1, 2. What is involved in looking intently at Jesus?

On that occasion the Chief Leader also promised to be with them as they fulfill this assignment, saying: "Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:19, 20) How is Jesus Christ with his followers in this time of the conclusion of the system of things?

⁶ "The helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name," said Jesus, "that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you." (John 14:26) The holy spirit, sent in Jesus' name, guides and strengthens us today. It enlightens us spiritually and helps us to understand "even the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10) Moreover, the godly qualities of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control" are "the fruitage of the spirit." (Galatians 5:22, 23) With the help of the holy spirit, we can cultivate these qualities.

⁷ As we study the Scriptures and endeavor to apply what we learn, Jehovah's spirit helps us to grow in wisdom, discernment, understanding, knowledge, judgment, and thinking ability. (Proverbs 2:1-11) Holy spirit also helps us to endure temptations and trials. (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 4:13) Christians are exhorted to 'cleanse themselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness.' (2 Corinthians 7:1) Can we really measure up to God's requirement of holiness, or cleanliness, without the help of the holy spirit? One of the means Jesus uses to lead us today is the holy spirit, which Jehovah God has authorized his Son to employ.—Matthew 28:18.

⁸ Consider another means by which Christ leads the congregation today. Com-

6, 7. How does Jesus lead us by means of the holy spirit?

8, 9. How does Christ use "the faithful and discreet slave" to provide leadership?

menting on his presence and the conclusion of the system of things, Jesus said: "Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all his belongings."—Matthew 24:3, 45-47.

⁹ The "master" is Jesus Christ. The "slave" is the group of anointed Christians on earth. This slave class is entrusted with caring for Jesus' earthly interests and with providing timely spiritual food. A small group of qualified overseers from among the composite "faithful and discreet slave" form the Governing Body, serving as the representative of the slave class. They direct the worldwide Kingdom-preaching work and the supplying of spiritual nourishment at the right time. Christ thus leads the congregation by means of the spirit-anointed "faithful and discreet slave" and its Governing Body.

¹⁰ Still another manifestation of Christ's leadership are the "gifts in men"—Christian elders, or overseers. They have been given "with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ." (Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12) Concerning them, Hebrews 13:7 states: "Remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith." The elders take the lead in the congregation. Since they imitate Christ Jesus, their faith becomes worthy of imitation. (1 Corinthians 11:1) We can show our gratitude for the elder arrangement by being obedient and submissive to these "gifts in men."—Hebrews 13:17.

10. What should be our attitude toward the elders, and why?



Christian elders help us to follow Christ's leadership

¹¹ Yes, Jesus Christ leads his followers today through the holy spirit, "the faithful and discreet slave," and the congregation elders. Our walking as Christ walked involves understanding his way of leading and submitting to it. It also requires that we imitate his manner of walking. "To this course you were called," wrote the apostle Peter, "because even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely." (1 Peter 2:21) In what way should following Jesus' perfect model affect us?

Be Reasonable When Exercising Authority

¹² Though Jesus had received unmatched authority from his Father, he was reasonable in the way he wielded it. All in the congregation—particularly the overseers—should let their "reasonableness become known to all men." (Philippians 4:5; 1 Timothy 3:2, 3) Since elders have a measure of authority in the congregation, it is essential that they follow Christ's footsteps in exercising it.

¹³ Jesus took into consideration the lim-

11. By what means does Christ lead his followers today, and what is involved in walking as he did?
12. What aspect of Christ's example is of particular interest to the elders in the congregation?
- 13, 14. In what way can elders imitate Christ as they encourage others to serve God?

itations of his disciples. He did not demand of them more than they were capable of giving. (John 16:12) Without pressuring them, Jesus encouraged his followers to 'exert themselves vigorously' in doing God's will. (Luke 13:24) He did this by taking the lead and by appealing to their hearts. Similarly, Christian elders today do not intimidate others into serving God through shame or guilt. Rather, they encourage them to serve Jehovah out of love for him and for Jesus, as well as for their fellow man.—Matthew 22:37-39.

¹⁴ Jesus did not abuse the authority entrusted to him by controlling people's lives. He neither set unreachable standards nor laid down countless rules. His approach was to motivate others by reaching their hearts with the principles behind the laws given through Moses. (Matthew 5:27, 28) In imitation of Jesus Christ, the elders refrain from making arbitrary rules or insisting on their personal viewpoints. In matters of dress and grooming or recreation and entertainment, elders try to reach hearts using godly principles, such as those outlined at Micah 6:8; 1 Corinthians 10:31-33; and 1 Timothy 2:9, 10.

Be Sympathetic and Forgiving

¹⁵ Christ left a model for us to follow in the way he treated his disciples' failures and errors. Consider two events from his last night on earth as a human. After arriving at Gethsemane, Jesus "took Peter and James and John along with him" and told them to "keep on the watch." Then, "going a little way forward he proceeded to fall on the ground and began praying." Upon returning, he "found them sleeping." How did Jesus respond? He said: "The spirit, of course,

15. How did Jesus respond to the failures of his disciples?

is eager, but the flesh is weak." (Mark 14:32-38) Instead of sharply rebuking Peter, James, and John, he expressed sympathy! On that same night, Peter denied Jesus three times. (Mark 14:66-72) How did Jesus treat Peter thereafter? "The Lord was raised up and he appeared to Simon [Peter]." (Luke 24:34) "He appeared to Cephas," says the Bible, "then to the twelve." (1 Corinthians 15:5) Instead of feeling resentment, Jesus forgave the repentant apostle and strengthened him. Later, Jesus entrusted Peter with great responsibilities.—Acts 2:14; 8:14-17; 10:44, 45.

¹⁶ When our fellow believers fail us or wrong us in some way because of human imperfection, should we not also be sympathetic and forgiving as Jesus was? Peter urged his fellow believers: "All of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind, not paying back injury for injury or reviling for reviling, but, to the contrary, bestowing a blessing." (1 Peter 3:8, 9) What if another person fails to treat us as Jesus would have, refusing to be sympathetic or forgiving? Even then we are under obligation to try to imitate Jesus and respond as he would have.—1 John 3:16.

Put Kingdom Interests First

¹⁷ In yet another way, we need to walk as Jesus Christ walked. Declaring the good news of God's Kingdom occupied the central place in Jesus' life. After preaching to the Samaritan woman near the city of Sychar in Samaria, Jesus told his disciples: "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." (John 4:34) The doing

16. How can we walk as Jesus walked when our fellow believers fail us or wrong us in some way?

17. What shows that Jesus gave the doing of God's will the first place in his life?



Young people, what plans are you making for a rewarding Christian life?

of his Father's will sustained Jesus; it was as nourishing, satisfying, and refreshing to him as food. Would imitating Jesus by remaining focused on doing God's will lead to anything less than a truly meaningful and satisfying life?

¹⁸ When parents encourage their children to take up full-time service, they as well as their offspring receive many blessings. A father of twin sons held pioneer service before them as a goal from their early childhood. After finishing their secular education, the twins did become pioneers. Reflecting on the joys he has experienced as a result, this father writes: "Our boys have not disappointed us. Gratefully we can say, 'Sons are an inheritance from Jehovah.'" (Psalm 127:3) And how do children benefit from pursuing full-time service? A mother of five says: "Pioneering has helped all my children to develop a much closer relationship with Jehovah, has improved their personal study habits, has helped them learn how to manage their time wisely, and has helped them learn to put spiritual things first in their lives. Although all of them had to make many adjustments, none of them regret the path they have chosen to follow."

18. What blessings result from encouraging children to take up the full-time service?



¹⁹ Youths, what are your plans for the future? Are you seeking to excel in some professional field? Or are you working toward a career in the full-time service? "Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons," admonished Paul, "buying out the opportune time for yourselves, because the days are wicked." He adds: "On this account cease becoming unreasonable, but go on perceiving what the will of Jehovah is."—Ephesians 5:15-17.

Be Loyal

²⁰ Walking as Jesus walked calls for imitating his loyalty. Concerning Jesus' loyalty, the Bible states: "Although he was existing in God's form, [he] gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake." Jesus loyally upheld Jehovah's sovereignty by submitting to God's will for him. He became obedient as far as suffering death on a torture stake. We

19. What plans for the future should youths wisely consider?

20, 21. In what way was Jesus loyal, and how can we imitate his loyalty?

must "keep this mental attitude" and loyally submit to doing God's will.—Philippians 2: 5-8.

²¹ Jesus also showed loyalty to his faithful apostles. Despite their weaknesses and imperfections, Jesus loved them "to the end." (John 13:1) Similarly, we should not let the imperfections of our brothers cause us to adopt a critical attitude.

Adhere to the Pattern Set by Jesus

²² Of course, as imperfect humans, we cannot walk precisely in the footsteps of our perfect Exemplar. However, we can strive to follow his steps closely. Doing so requires that we understand and submit to Christ's way of leading and stick to the pattern he set.

²³ Becoming imitators of Christ leads to many blessings. Our life becomes more meaningful and satisfying because we are focused on doing God's will rather than our own. (John 5:30; 6:38) We have a good conscience. Our way of walking becomes exemplary. Jesus invited all who were toiling and loaded down to come to him and find refreshment for their souls. (Matthew 11:28-30) When we follow Jesus' example, we too can refresh others by our association. Let us, then, continue to walk as Jesus walked.

22, 23. What are the benefits of adhering to the pattern set by Jesus?

Do You Recall?

- How does Christ lead his followers today?
- How can elders follow Christ's lead in exercising their God-given authority?
- How can we follow Jesus' example when dealing with the shortcomings of others?
- How can youths put Kingdom interests first?

Resist Wrong Thinking!

WHEN experiencing calamity, the patriarch Job received a visit from his three friends Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They came to sympathize with him and to comfort him. (Job 2:11) The most influential and perhaps the oldest of the three was Eliphaz. He was the first one to speak and had the most to say. What type of thinking did Eliphaz reflect in his three speeches?

Recalling a supernatural experience he once had, Eliphaz said: "A spirit itself went passing over my face; the hair of my flesh began to bristle. It began to stand still, but I did not recognize its appearance; a form was in front of my eyes; there was a calm, and I now heard a voice." (Job 4:15, 16) What kind of spirit had influenced the thinking of Eliphaz? The critical tone of the words that followed shows that the spirit certainly was not one of God's righteous angels. (Job 4:17, 18) It was a wicked spirit creature. Otherwise, why would Jehovah have reproved Eliphaz and his two associates for having spoken lies? (Job 42:7) Yes, Eliphaz had come under demon influence. His comments reflected ungodly thinking.

What ideas can be identified from the statements of Eliphaz? Why is it important

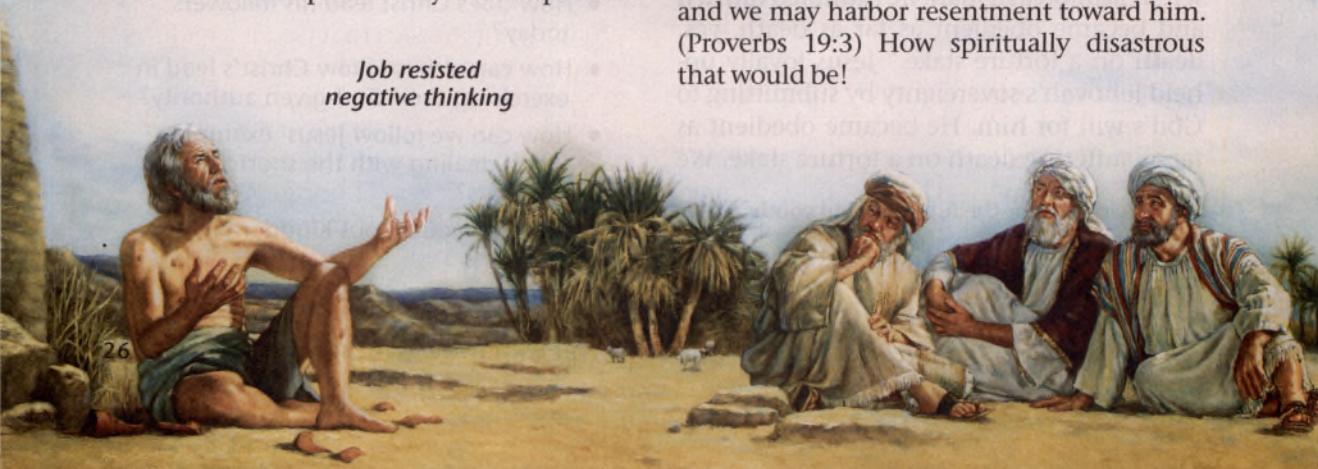
Job resisted negative thinking

that we guard against wrong thinking? And what measures can we take to resist it?

"In His Servants He Has No Faith"

In all three speeches, Eliphaz presented the idea that God is so exacting that nothing his servants do is good enough for him. "Look! In his servants he has no faith," Eliphaz told Job, "and his angels he charges with faultiness." (Job 4:18, footnote) Eliphaz later said of God: "In his holy ones he has no faith, and the heavens themselves are actually not clean in his eyes." (Job 15:15) And he asked: "Does the Almighty have any delight in that you are righteous?" (Job 22:3) Bildad was in agreement with this viewpoint, for he stated: "There is even the moon, and it is not bright; and the stars themselves have not proved clean in [God's] eyes."—Job 25:5.

We must be on guard against being influenced by such thinking. It can lead us to feel that God requires too much of us. This view attacks our very relationship with Jehovah. Moreover, if we succumb to this type of reasoning, how would we respond when we are given needed discipline? Rather than humbly accepting the correction, our heart may become "enraged against Jehovah himself," and we may harbor resentment toward him. (Proverbs 19:3) How spiritually disastrous that would be!



"Can an Able-Bodied Man Be of Use to God?"

Closely related to the idea that God is too exacting is the view that he regards humans as useless. Eliphaz' third speech contains the question: "Can an able-bodied man be of use to God himself, that anyone having insight should be of use toward him?" (Job 22:2) Eliphaz was implying that man is useless to God. In a similar vein, Bildad argued: "How can mortal man be in the right before God, or how can one born of a woman be clean?" (Job 25:4) According to that line of reasoning, how could Job, a mere mortal, ever presume to have a righteous standing before God?

Some people today are plagued with negative feelings about themselves. Such factors as family upbringing, exposure to the pressures of life, or being victims of racial or ethnic hatred may have contributed to this. But Satan and his demons also take delight in crushing a person. If they can influence an individual to feel that nothing he does is good enough for Almighty God, he is more vulnerable to despondency. In time, such a person could drift away, even draw away, from the living God.—Hebrews 2:1; 3:12.

Advancing age and health problems put limitations on us. The share we have in Kingdom service may seem quite small in comparison with what we did when we were younger, healthier, and stronger. How important it is to recognize that Satan and his demons want us to feel that what we do is not good enough for God! We must resist such thinking.

How to Resist Negative Thinking

Despite the suffering brought upon him by Satan the Devil, Job said: "Until I expire I shall not take away my integrity from myself!" (Job 27:5) Because he loved God, Job was determined to maintain his integrity no matter what happened, and nothing was

going to change that. Herein lies a key to resisting negative thinking. We must acquire a good understanding of God's love and cultivate heartfelt appreciation for it. We also need to deepen our love for him. This is achieved by means of a regular study of God's Word and prayerful meditation on what we learn.

For example, John 3:16 states: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son." Jehovah has deep love for the world of mankind, and his dealings with humans over time show that love. Meditating on examples from the past ought to build up our appreciation for Jehovah and deepen our love for him, thus helping us to resist wrong or negative thinking.

Consider the way Jehovah treated Abraham at the time of the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham inquired of Jehovah eight times respecting His judgment. At no point did Jehovah show irritation or frustration. Instead, his replies reassured and comforted Abraham. (Genesis 18:22-33) When God later rescued Lot and his family from Sodom, Lot asked to escape to a nearby city rather than to the mountains. Jehovah replied: "Here I do show you consideration to this extent also, by my not overthrowing the city of which you have spoken." (Genesis 19:18-22) Do these accounts portray Jehovah as an exacting, unloving, authoritarian ruler? No. They show him to be what he really is—a loving, kind, merciful, and understanding Sovereign.

Disproving the idea that God is a faultfinder and that no one can be good enough for him are the examples of Aaron, David, and Manasseh of ancient Israel. Aaron was guilty of three serious wrongs. He made the golden calf, joined his sister Miriam in criticizing Moses, and failed to sanctify and honor God at Meribah. Nevertheless, Jehovah saw good in him and allowed him to continue serving

as high priest right up to his death.—Exodus 32:3, 4; Numbers 12:1, 2; 20:9-13.

King David committed grave sins during his reign. These included adultery, plotting an innocent man's death, and taking an illegal census. However, Jehovah noted David's repentance and loyally stuck to the Kingdom covenant by allowing him to serve as king until his death.—2 Samuel 12:9; 1 Chronicles 21:1-7.

Judaean King Manasseh set up altars to Baal, made his sons pass through fire, promoted spiritistic practices, and built false religious altars in the temple courtyards. After he showed heartfelt repentance, however, Jehovah forgave him, released him from captivity, and gave him back the kingship. (2 Chronicles 33:1-13) Are these the actions of a God for whom no one is good enough? Hardly!

Lot learned that Jehovah is an understanding Sovereign



The False Accuser Himself Is Guilty

It should not surprise us that Satan is the chief embodiment of the very characteristics he accuses Jehovah of having. Satan is harsh and exacting. This can clearly be seen from the practice of child sacrifice connected with false worship in times past. The apostate Israelites burned their sons and daughters in the fire—a thing that had not even come up into Jehovah's heart.—Jeremiah 7:31.

It is Satan, not Jehovah, who is a faultfinder. Revelation 12:10 refers to Satan as "the accuser of our brothers . . . , who accuses them day and night before our God!" On the other hand, concerning Jehovah, the psalmist sang: "If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand? For there is the true forgiveness with you." —Psalm 130:3, 4.

When Wrong Thinking Will Be No More

What relief the angelic spirit creatures must have felt when Satan the Devil and his demons were cast out of the heavens! (Revelation 12:7-9) Thereafter, these wicked spirits could no longer have any effect on the activities of Jehovah's angelic family in heaven. —Daniel 10:13.

The inhabitants of the earth will rejoice in the near future. Soon, an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand will bind Satan and his demons and hurl them into the abyss of inactivity. (Revelation 20:1-3) What relief we will experience when that happens!

Meanwhile, we must be on guard against wrong thinking. Whenever we find that wrong or negative thoughts are creeping into our mind, we need to resist them by focusing our minds on Jehovah's love. Then 'the peace of God that excels all thought will guard our hearts and our mental powers.' —Philippians 4:6, 7.

Questions From Readers

Could playing violent computer games affect one's relationship with Jehovah?

"Jehovah himself examines the righteous one as well as the wicked one," wrote King David of ancient Israel, "and anyone loving violence His soul certainly hates." (Psalm 11:5) The original-language word for "hate" can carry the thought of being "one who is an enemy." Therefore, anyone loving violence is making himself an enemy of God. The question that we need to consider, then, is: Could playing certain computer games nurture a love of violence?

Violent computer games glorify the use of weapons. They often train the user in the art of war. The magazine *The Economist* stated: "America's military is relying more heavily on computer games as training tools. Some games which the military uses are off-the-shelf products."

True, those who play violent computer games are not doing harm to real people. But what does this choice of entertainment indicate about what may be happening to their hearts? (Matthew 5:21, 22; Luke 6:45) What would you conclude about a person who enjoyed stabbing, shooting, maiming, and killing imaginary people? What if this person spent many hours each week indulging those violent fantasies, becoming almost addicted to such games? At the very least, you would conclude that he was fostering a love of violence, just as a person who watches pornography is cultivating immoral desires.—Matthew 5:27-29.

How intensely does Jehovah hate someone who loves violence? David said that Jehovah "certainly hates" him. In Noah's day, Jehovah demonstrated the intensity of his hatred for those who love violence. Jehovah said to

Noah: "The end of all flesh has come before me, because the earth is full of violence as a result of them; and here I am bringing them to ruin together with the earth." (Genesis 6:13) The true God destroyed an entire world of mankind because of their violent ways. He preserved only Noah and his family—eight individuals who did not love violence.—2 Peter 2:5.

People who want to be Jehovah's friends "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears." Instead of learning to love violence, they do not "learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4) To remain God's friend rather than become his enemy, we must "turn away from what is bad and do what is good." We need to "seek peace and pursue it."—1 Peter 3:11.

What if we have already been involved in playing violent video games? Then we need to be firmly resolved to please Jehovah by desisting from practicing what he hates. Surely we should pray for the help of God's holy spirit to end this spiritually detrimental practice. We can stop if we allow such qualities as peace, goodness, and self-control to exercise a godly influence in our lives.—Luke 11:13; Galatians 5:22, 23.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Do You Recognize the Sign of Jesus' Presence?

Is Your Conscience Well Trained?

Parents—What Future Do You Want for Your Children?

What Others Think of Us

Does It Matter?

ALMOST everyone likes to be praised. Compliments can make us feel good, giving us a sense of accomplishment. Approval can even make us want to improve our performance. The opposite is true when we perceive that some people disapprove of us. A cold response or a critical remark may crush our spirit. What others think of us may have a profound effect on what we think of ourselves.

It would be a mistake to ignore how others view us. We can actually benefit by having others scrutinize our conduct. When based on high moral principles, the opinions of others can act as a force for good, motivating us to be upright. (1 Corinthians 10:31-33) However, public opinion is often very unfair. Think of the distorted view the chief priests and others had of Jesus Christ when "they began to yell, saying: 'Impale! Impale him!'" (Luke 23:13, 21-25) Viewpoints based on false information or influenced by envy or prejudice may just have to be dismissed. Hence, we need to exercise good judgment and react sensibly to the opinions of others.

Whose Opinion Matters?

We want the approval of those close to us in true worship. These include family members who are in the faith and our Christian brothers and sisters. (Romans 15:2; Colossians 3:18-21) The love and respect of fellow believers and the "interchange of encouragement" among them mean a great deal to us. (Romans 1:11, 12) With 'lowliness of mind, we consider that others are superior to us.'

"Praise shames me, for I secretly beg for it."

—INDIAN POET
RABINDRANATH
TAGORE

(Philippians 2:2-4) Moreover, we seek and value the approval of "those who are taking the lead" among us—the elders in the congregation.—Hebrews 13:17.

Calter Pictures

Also desirable is "a fine testimony from people on the outside." (1 Timothy 3:7) How good it is when unbelieving relatives, work-mates, and neighbors respect us! And do we not try to leave a good impression with the people to whom we preach so that they will be favorably inclined toward the Kingdom message? Our having a reputation in the community as being morally clean, upright, and honest people brings glory to God. (1 Peter 2:12) However, we can never compromise Bible principles to win the favor of others; neither can we put on a false front to impress them. We must recognize that it is impossible to please everyone. Jesus said: "If you were part of the world, the world would be fond of what is its own. Now because you are no part of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on this account the world hates you." (John 15:19) Can we do anything to gain the respect of those who oppose us?

Gaining the Respect of Opposers

"You will be objects of hatred by all people on account of my name," warned Jesus, "but he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Matthew 10:22) This hatred

sometimes brings forth vicious accusations. Biased government officials may label us as "seditious" or "subversive." Outspoken opposers may allege that we are a troublesome sect that must be suppressed. (Acts 28:22) These false accusations can sometimes be counteracted. How? By following the apostle Peter's counsel: "[Be] ready to make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you, but doing so together with a mild temper and deep respect." (1 Peter 3:15) Moreover, we should use "wholesome speech which cannot be condemned; so that the man on the opposing side may get ashamed, having nothing vile to say about us."—Titus 2:8.



While we try to clear our name of reproach, we need not be discouraged or overwhelmed when we are unfairly maligned. Jesus, the perfect Son of God, was accused of blasphemy, sedition, and even spiritism. (Matthew 9:3; Mark 3:22; John 19:12) The apostle Paul was defamed. (1 Corinthians 4:13) Both Jesus and Paul ignored such criticism and kept busy in their work. (Matthew 15:14) They knew that they could never win the approval of their enemies, since "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) Today, we face the same challenge. We do not have to be intimidated when hateful opposers spread lies about us.—Matthew 5:11.

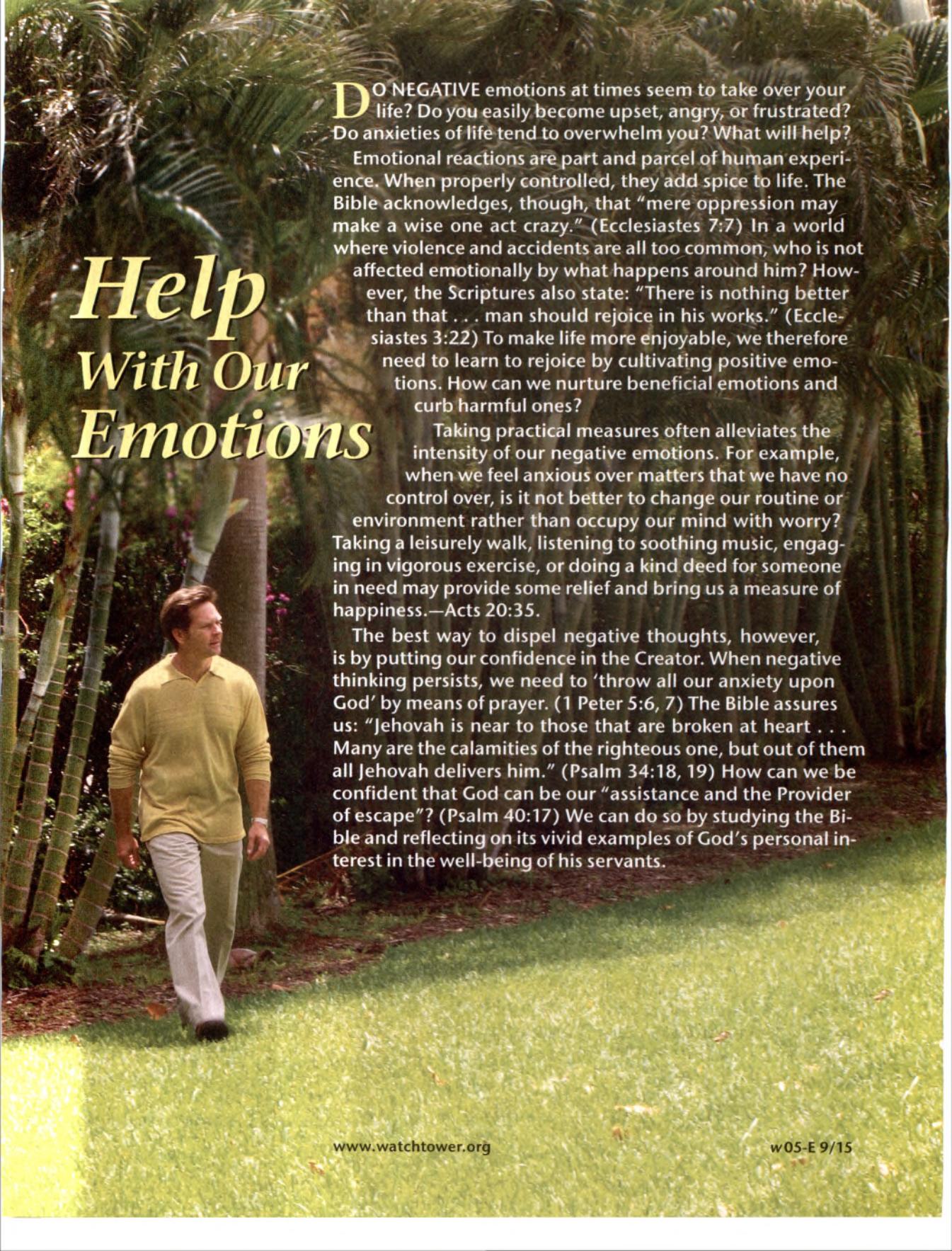
Opinions That Really Count

What people think of us varies a great deal, depending on their motives and what they have heard about us. We are praised and honored by some, reviled and hated by others. As long as we are being guided by Bible principles, however, we have every reason to be happy and at peace.

The apostle Paul wrote: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) We gain the favor of Jehovah God and of his Son, Jesus Christ, by gratefully accepting God's Word as our guide in all things. In the end, the opinions that matter the most are those of Jehovah and his Son. What they think of us reflects our true worth. Ultimately, our life depends on their approval.—John 5:27; James 1:12.

The opinions of our fellow believers matter



A photograph of a man in a yellow shirt and light-colored pants walking through a lush tropical garden with palm trees and greenery.

Help With Our Emotions

DO NEGATIVE emotions at times seem to take over your life? Do you easily become upset, angry, or frustrated? Do anxieties of life tend to overwhelm you? What will help?

Emotional reactions are part and parcel of human experience. When properly controlled, they add spice to life. The Bible acknowledges, though, that "mere oppression may make a wise one act crazy." (Ecclesiastes 7:7) In a world where violence and accidents are all too common, who is not affected emotionally by what happens around him? However, the Scriptures also state: "There is nothing better than that . . . man should rejoice in his works." (Ecclesiastes 3:22) To make life more enjoyable, we therefore need to learn to rejoice by cultivating positive emotions. How can we nurture beneficial emotions and curb harmful ones?

Taking practical measures often alleviates the intensity of our negative emotions. For example, when we feel anxious over matters that we have no control over, is it not better to change our routine or environment rather than occupy our mind with worry? Taking a leisurely walk, listening to soothing music, engaging in vigorous exercise, or doing a kind deed for someone in need may provide some relief and bring us a measure of happiness.—Acts 20:35.

The best way to dispel negative thoughts, however, is by putting our confidence in the Creator. When negative thinking persists, we need to 'throw all our anxiety upon God' by means of prayer. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) The Bible assures us: "Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart . . . Many are the calamities of the righteous one, but out of them all Jehovah delivers him." (Psalm 34:18, 19) How can we be confident that God can be our "assistance and the Provider of escape"? (Psalm 40:17) We can do so by studying the Bible and reflecting on its vivid examples of God's personal interest in the well-being of his servants.