

September 15, 1988

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



*Do all
good people
go to
Heaven?*

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

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Do all good people go to heaven?

"The funeral was over but not the ice-cold shock. . . . It seemed incredible that only a few weeks earlier my little boy had been taking his first steps, his small face aglow with a grin of sheer triumph. But now Andrew was dead! . . .

"I kept standing by the window, looking out into the night, searching the heavens. 'Where is the little fellow now?' I wondered. 'Is he somewhere up there in heaven among the stars?'"



THE death of a child is probably the most traumatic experience parents can have. 'Where is our child now?' they wonder. 'In heaven or some other place?' Most religions teach that babies who die go to heaven. In Johannesburg, South Africa, the epitaph on one tombstone reads: "God wanted an opening flower, his angel took one of ours." But one may wonder: 'Why should God want "an opening flower" when, according to popular belief, he already has so many?' And countless people wonder . . .

'What Is Heaven Like?'

Most people have only a vague idea of heaven. Some lightheartedly speak of "pie in the sky when you die." But what does the Bible say? Its very first verse says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) This refers to the physical heavens, the glorious array of stars and galaxies. (Deuteronomy 4:19) But there are also spiritual heavens. Thus, the Bible speaks of Jehovah's "lofty abode of holiness and beauty."—Isaiah 63:15.

Who was the first to ascend to this "lofty abode" of our heavenly Father? His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. He said: "No man has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man." (John 3:13) This clearly shows that no human creatures had gone to heaven. But Jesus promised that some humans would go there. Just before he ascended to heaven, he said to his faithful disciples: "I am going my way to prepare a place for you . . . and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be."—John 14:2, 3.

Obviously, then, *some* good people go to heaven. But do *all* good people go to heaven? What about man's home—the earth? Is it to be destroyed by nuclear war to become a burned cinder floating in space? Definitely not. The Bible says: "A generation is going, and a generation is coming; but the earth is standing even to time indefinite." (Ecclesiastes 1:4) And why should the Creator destroy this beautiful earth, even though parts of it have been polluted by selfish people? God's Word promises: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." —Psalm 37:29.

Evidently, then, the earth has an interesting future. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus foretold:

"Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5) Moreover, the last Bible book, Revelation, indicates that the earth will become a paradise. Concerning obedient mankind, it says: "God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

From the foregoing, it can be seen that

some good people go to heaven, whereas others will enjoy life on earth. This means that there are two distinct groups of people involved. How is that possible? Moreover, like the mother of Andrew, many worry about what happens to their babies who die unbaptized. Roman Catholics are taught that they go to a place called Limbo. Is there such a place? Do babies go there? Satisfying and comforting answers are provided in the next article.

Where are our dead loved ones now?

WHAT is the little fellow now?" The anguished mother (mentioned in the previous article) kept wondering where her dead baby had gone. Was he in heaven or in some other place?

Andrew's mother was soon given an answer. Upon hearing of the tragedy, her eldest child, also a Roman Catholic, replied: "Andrew is in Limbo." But was he?

Where or What Is Limbo?

The Concise Oxford Dictionary says that Limbo is a "region on border of hell, supposed abode of pre-Christian righteous persons and unbaptized infants; . . . condition of neglect or oblivion." Concerning Limbo, the New Catholic Encyclopedia says: "Today the term is used by theologians to designate the state and place either of those souls who did not merit hell

and its eternal punishments but could not enter heaven before the Redemption (the fathers' Limbo) or of those souls who are eternally excluded from the beatific vision because of original sin alone (the children's Limbo)."

However, the same encyclopedia also says: "The fate of infants dying without Baptism is indeed a very complex problem. . . . The question of Limbo still belongs among the unsettled questions of theology. An official endorsement of Limbo's existence by the Church is not to be found." In confirmation of this, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* states: "Because the Roman Catholic Church has never officially endorsed the doctrine of limbo as an existing state or place, the concept of limbo remains a question that is unsettled."

In spite of this, many devout Catholics accept the concept of Limbo. But please consider this point carefully: Why should babies be condemned to exist in a mysterious, incomprehensible place for all eternity simply because they were not baptized?

Does the Bible mention Limbo? No, God's Word never mentions it. So this raises the vital question: Where do people, including babies, go when they die?

Where Do People Go at Death?

A popular view among churchgoers of Christendom is that at death people go either to heaven or to hell. But what does the Bible say about this? It states: "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, *The Holy Scriptures, According to the Masoretic Text*) So the dead know nothing. They are not living somewhere but are literally and completely dead. They are conscious of nothing.

This fact is confirmed by these statements in the Bible book of Psalms: "The dead themselves do not praise Jah, nor do any going down into silence." (Psalm 115: 17) "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs. His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish."—Psalm 146:3, 4.

But what about the soul? Is it not immortal? No. Contrary to what most people believe, the soul is not immortal. This fact is plainly stated in the Bible, which says: "The soul that is sinning—it itself will die." (Ezekiel 18:4, 20) Further confirmation of this is found at Acts 3:23, which says: "Indeed, any soul that does not listen to that Prophet [Jesus] will be completely destroyed."

Is Death the End of Everything?

Death is not necessarily the end of everything. The resurrection of the dead is plainly taught in the Scriptures. Jesus said: "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life, those who practiced vile things to a resurrection of judgment." (John 5:28, 29) Furthermore, Jesus actually resurrected certain persons during his ministry on earth. The most amazing case was that of Jesus' friend Lazarus. He

had been dead for four days. But when Jesus cried out: "Lazarus, come on out!" the dead man responded, coming out of the tomb. What a thrill for the observing crowd! And what a joyful event for Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus!—John 11:38-45.

Where had Lazarus been during those four days? In heaven? In Limbo? No. The Bible does not say this or indicate it. If Lazarus had been conscious somewhere, surely he would have told others about this. But as the Bible says: "The dead know nothing."—Ecclesiastes 9:5, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

Another heartwarming incident took place at the city of Nain. As Jesus approached the gate of the city, he met a



Where was Lazarus while he was dead?

Some good people do go to heaven. Who are they?

funeral procession. The deceased was "the only-begotten son of his mother," who was a widow. Naturally, she was weeping bitterly. This touched Jesus' kind, loving heart. He approached, stopped the procession, and said: "Young man, I say to you, Get up!" And the dead man did! Can you imagine the ecstasy of the mother and the amazement of the bystanders?—Luke 7: 11-17.

Did this young man have anything to say about being in heaven or Limbo? No. How could he? "The dead know nothing." The Bible also likens death to a deep sleep. David said: "Answer me, O Jehovah my God. Do make my eyes shine, that I may not fall asleep in death." (Psalm 13:3) Moreover, just before he resurrected Lazarus, Jesus likened death to sleep.—John 11:11-14.

At this point, another question arises.

Do Any Good People Go to Heaven?

Yes, some good people do go to heaven. A most interesting fact about good people, or true Christians, that is unknown to most churchgoers is that there are two groups. A small minority go to heaven to reign with Jesus Christ, while the majority will enjoy everlasting life on earth. Perhaps this surprises you. Therefore, let us consider what the Bible has to say on this interesting subject.

What was God's original purpose for mankind? When he created Adam and Eve, did he intend that they should enjoy life for a while in the garden of Eden and then die and go to heaven? No. God gave them a special assignment as regards the earth, saying: "Be fruitful and become

many and fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28) And Jehovah does not change his set purpose. He declares, at Psalm 89:34: "The expression out of my lips I shall not change." So the Edenic Paradise must be restored and be enjoyed by faithful servants of Jehovah—the majority group mentioned above.

The minority group are given a very special privilege, that of reigning with Christ in heaven. In other words, they will share with Jesus in governing those living on earth. This is the Kingdom government that Christians pray for in the Lord's prayer. Interestingly, in that same prayer, we say: "Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:9, 10.

Does the Bible reveal how many are going to enjoy the very great privilege of reigning with Christ in heaven? Yes, it does. Says Revelation chapter 14, verse 1: "I saw, and, look! the Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads." Keep in mind that Revelation uses many symbols, or "signs," as expressed in the opening verse, Revelation 1:1. "The Lamb" is Jesus Christ. (Compare John 1:29.) And Mount Zion refers not to the political capital of Israel but to "heavenly Jerusalem."—Hebrews 12:22.

Revelation chapter 7 gives us information about both the heavenly group and the earthly group we have mentioned. Verses 4-8 mention the 144,000 "sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel."

This is another case of symbolism and means spiritual Israel, or "the Israel of God." (Galatians 6:16) Romans 2:29 says: "He is a Jew who is one on the inside, and his circumcision is that of the heart by spirit." Revelation 7:9 next describes the earthly group, saying: "Look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues."

Good People Will Live on Earth

Billions of good people will live on a paradise earth. (Luke 23:43) Would you like to be among them? Of course you would. What a privilege it will be to live on a cleansed earth that is free of pollution, famine, crime, sickness, suffering, and the ghastly prospect of nuclear conflict! Does the Bible really foretell such a thing? Yes, indeed. It says: "Evildoers themselves will be cut off, but those hoping in Jehovah are the ones that will possess the earth. . . . The meek ones them-

selves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace. The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:9, 11, 29; compare Matthew 5:5.

What, then, about babies who have died? Will they too be present on the Paradise earth? They do not go to Limbo, which does not exist. But young ones in God's memory will come back in the resurrection of the dead—one of the marvelous promises in God's Word, as we have already noted. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) Perhaps you have lost loved ones in death and often wonder where they are now. From the Scriptures it is clear that they are asleep, awaiting the resurrection. Would you like to have more information about this marvelous hope of life on a paradise earth? If so, why not discuss these matters with Jehovah's Witnesses when they next call at your home?

Photo taken at Brooklyn Botanic Garden



The Question of Inheritance

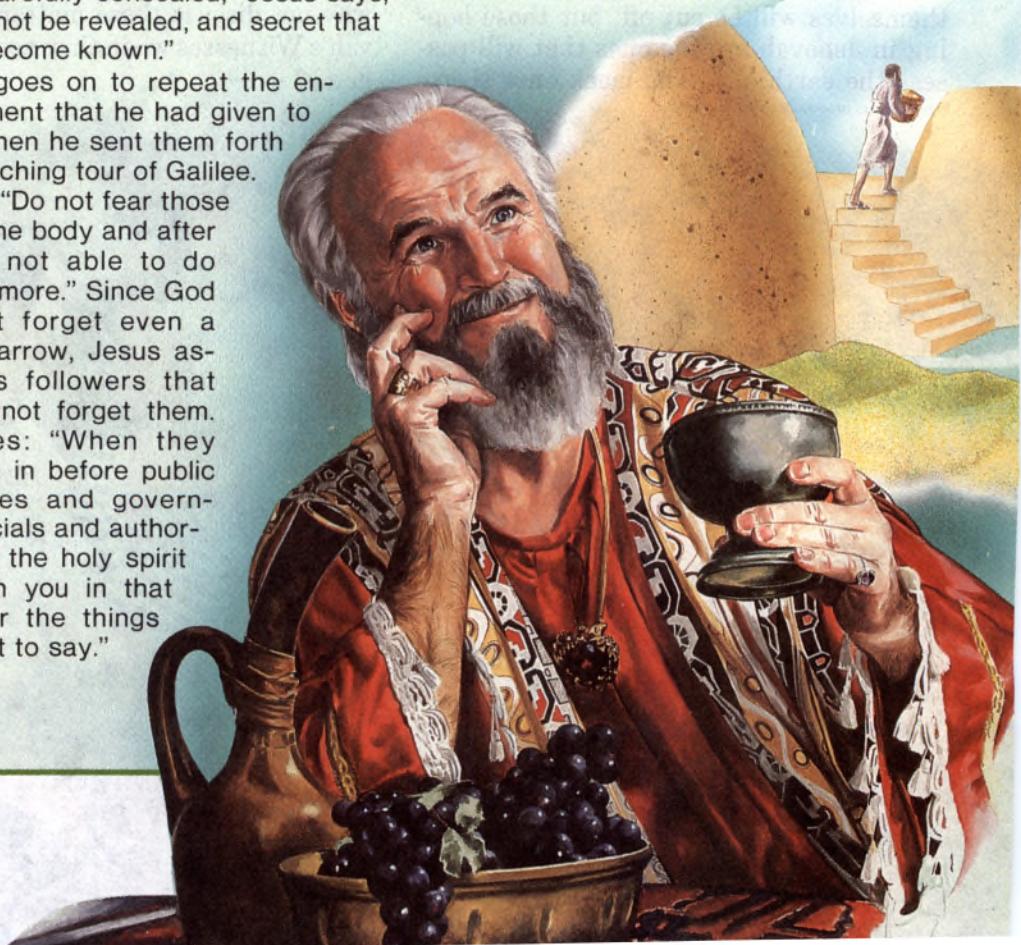
THE people evidently know that Jesus has been dining at the Pharisee's house. So they gather outside by the thousands and are waiting when Jesus comes out. Unlike the Pharisees who oppose Jesus and try to catch him in saying something wrong, the people eagerly listen to him with appreciation.

Turning first to his disciples, Jesus says: "Watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." As demonstrated during the meal, the whole religious system of the Pharisees is filled with hypocrisy. But even though the wickedness of the Pharisees may be concealed by a show of piety, eventually it will be exposed. "There is nothing carefully concealed," Jesus says, "that will not be revealed, and secret that will not become known."

Jesus goes on to repeat the encouragement that he had given to the 12 when he sent them forth on a preaching tour of Galilee. He says: "Do not fear those who kill the body and after this are not able to do anything more." Since God does not forget even a single sparrow, Jesus assures his followers that God will not forget them. He states: "When they bring you in before public assemblies and government officials and authorities, . . . the holy spirit will teach you in that very hour the things you ought to say."

A man from the crowd speaks up. "Teacher," he petitions, "tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." The Law of Moses stipulates that the firstborn son is to receive two parts of the inheritance, so there should be no reason for a dispute. But the man apparently wants more than his legal share of the inheritance.

Jesus properly refuses to get involved. "Man, who appointed me judge or apportioner over you persons?" he asks. He then gives this vital admonition to the crowd: "Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness, because even when a person has an abundance his life



does not result from the things he possesses." Yes, no matter how much a man may come to have, normally he will die and leave it all behind. To emphasize this fact, as well as to show the folly of failing to build up a good reputation with God, Jesus uses an illustration. He explains:

"The land of a certain rich man produced well. Consequently he began reasoning within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, now that I have nowhere to gather my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my storehouses and build bigger ones, and there I will gather all my grain and all my good things; and I will say to my soul: "Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, enjoy yourself.'" But God said to him, 'Unreasonable one, this night they are demanding your soul from you. Who, then, is to have the things you stored up?'"

In conclusion, Jesus observes: "So it goes with the man that lays up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."

While the disciples may not be ensnared by the folly of piling up wealth, they could easily be distracted from serving Jehovah whole-souled by the daily cares of life. So Jesus uses

the occasion to repeat the fine counsel he had given about a year and a half earlier in the Sermon on the Mount. Turning to his disciples, he says:

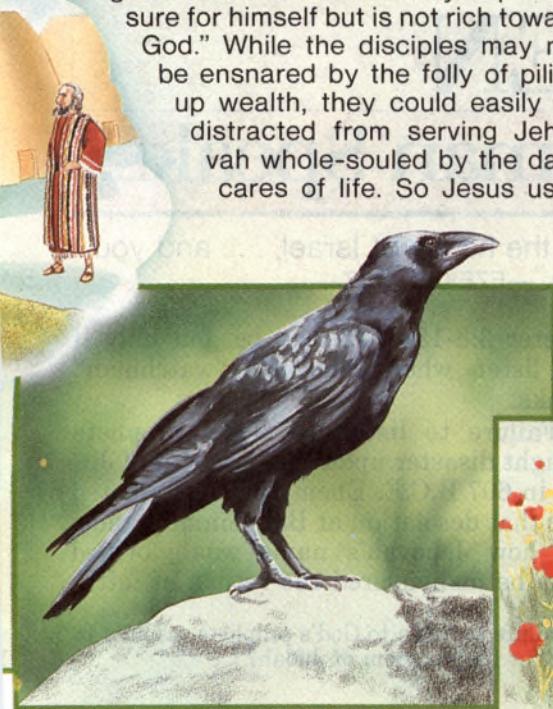
"On this account I say to you, Quit being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or about your bodies as to what you will wear. . . . Mark well that the ravens neither sow seed nor reap, and they have neither barn nor storehouse, and yet God feeds them. . . . Mark well how the lilies grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, Not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. . . .

"So quit seeking what you might eat and what you might drink, and quit being in anxious suspense; for all these are the things the nations of the world are eagerly pursuing, but your Father knows you need these things. Nevertheless, seek continually his kingdom, and these things will be added to you."

Especially during times of economic hardship do Jesus' words bear close consideration. The person who becomes overanxious about his material needs and begins to slack off in spiritual pursuits is, in fact, demonstrating a lack of faith in God's ability to provide for His servants.

Luke 12:1-31; Deuteronomy 21:17.

- ♦ Why, perhaps, does the man ask about inheritance, and what admonition does Jesus give?
- ♦ What illustration does Jesus use, and what is its point?
- ♦ What counsel does Jesus repeat, and why is it appropriate for this occasion?





LISTEN

Jehovah's Watchman Speaks!

"A watchman is what I have made you to the house of Israel, . . . and you must warn them from me."—EZEKIEL 3:17.

JEHOVAH'S "watchman" is speaking God's message right now. Are you listening? Your very life depends on your responding to that message with appreciation and action. Soon, 'the nations will know Jehovah' when he sanctifies his holy name by destroying this wicked system and preserving his people. Do you hope to be among them? (Ezekiel 36:23; 39:7;

1. Why listen when Jehovah's "watchman" speaks?

2 Peter 3:8-13) You may be, but only if you listen when Jehovah's "watchman" speaks.

² Failure to listen to God's prophets brought disaster upon the kingdom of Judah in 607 B.C.E. Enemy nations gloated over that desolation at Babylonian hands. But how Jehovah's name was glorified when he maneuvered the return of faith-

2. Failure to listen to God's prophets resulted in what for the kingdom of Judah?

ful Jews to their homeland in 537 B.C.E.!

³ Both that desolation and the restoration were foretold by Jehovah's watchman, Ezekiel. The Bible book bearing his name and completed by him in Babylonia in about 591 B.C.E. contains (1) Ezekiel's commission; (2) prophetic enactments; (3) messages against Israel; (4) forecasts of Jerusalem's judgment; (5) prophecies against other nations; (6) restoration promises; (7) a prophecy against Gog of Magog; and (8) a vision of God's sanctuary. We invite you to read the book as we study it. You will thus see how it affects us today and you will be listening as Jehovah's "watchman" speaks.*

God's Watchman Commissioned

⁴ On Tammuz 5, 613 B.C.E. (in the fifth year of Judean king Jehoiachin's exile in Babylon), the 30-year-old priest Ezekiel was among Jewish captives by "the river Chebar," a notable canal of the Euphrates River. In vision, he beheld Jehovah's celestial chariot, attended by "four living creatures." (*Read Ezekiel 1:4-10.*) Each 'living creature,' or winged cherub, had four faces. (*Ezekiel 10:1-20; 11:22*) These indicate that the cherubs possess God-given love (the man), justice (the lion), power (the bull), and wisdom (the eagle). Each cherub stood beside a huge 'wheel within a wheel,' and God's spirit, or active force, was able to move them in any direction.

—Ezekiel 1:1-21.

* As time permits, the conductor should have italicized citations read during congregational study of this article and the two that follow it. Bible highlights in the Theocratic Ministry School can also be drawn from these articles in current studies of the book of Ezekiel.

3. What does the book of Ezekiel contain?
4. (a) What did Ezekiel behold in vision? (b) Who were the "living creatures," and what qualities did they possess?

⁵ The chariot Rider was a glorious representation of Jehovah. (*Read Ezekiel 1: 22-28.*) How well the chariot represents God's angelic spirit organization! (Psalm 18:10; 103:20, 21; Daniel 7:9, 10) Jehovah rides it in the sense of dominating these creatures and using them according to his purpose. The Rider was calm, like the accompanying rainbow, but Ezekiel was overwhelmed. Surely, this awesome view of Jehovah's glory and power as the Supreme Organizer of his heavenly hosts should make us humbly grateful for the privilege of serving him as part of his earthly organization.

⁶ Though reminded of his human origin and lowly estate by being called "son of man," Ezekiel was appointed as Jehovah's prophet. (*Read Ezekiel 2:1-5.*) Ezekiel would go to "rebellious nations," the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. First, by divine command he ate a scroll containing dirges, but it tasted like honey because he was grateful to be God's prophet. Similarly, anointed Christians and their fellow servants find it sweet to be witnesses of Jehovah. Ezekiel was to prophesy among hardhearted and hardheaded people, but God would make his face as determined as their faces, his forehead as hard as a diamond. He would prophesy boldly whether they listened or not. It is heartening to know that as God upheld Ezekiel in difficult circumstances, He will help us to bear witness courageously in any territory.—Ezekiel 2:6-3:11.

⁷ Eating the scroll produced in Ezekiel

5. What does the celestial chariot represent, and how should this view of it affect Jehovah's people?

6. (a) What appointment did Ezekiel receive, and how did he view service to God? (b) Among people of what kind was Ezekiel to prophesy, and of what benefit is it to know how God dealt with him?

7. Ezekiel's commission entailed what responsibility?

'a rage of spirit' appropriate to its message. At Tel-abib he dwelt 'stunned for seven days' digesting the message. (Ezekiel 3:12-15) We too need to meditate and study diligently to comprehend deep spiritual things. Having a message to declare, Ezekiel was commissioned as God's watchman. (*Read Ezekiel 3:16-21.*) The newly appointed watchman was to warn law-breaking Israelites that they faced divine execution.

⁸ If Ezekiel failed as a watchman, Jehovah would hold him responsible for the deaths of victims. Although those not wanting him to administer reproof would put figurative cords upon him, he would boldly declare God's message. (Ezekiel 3: 22-27) In our day, Christendom refuses to listen and tries to impose restraints upon anointed Christians. But since 1919 these anointed ones have served as Jehovah's "watchman," courageously declaring his message for this system's "time of the end." (Daniel 12:4) Associated with them in this work is an increasing "great crowd" of Jesus' "other sheep." (Revelation 7:9, 10; John 10:16) Since the "watchman" class keeps speaking God's message, surely every one of the anointed and the "great crowd" would want to declare it as a regular publisher.

Enacted Prophecies

⁹ Ezekiel next enacted prophetic pantomimes with humility and boldness, setting an example that should move us to carry out God-given assignments humbly and courageously. To depict the Babylonian siege, he was to lie down facing a brick on which he had engraved a picture

8. Who serve as Jehovah's "watchman" today, and who are associated with them?
9. (a) How did Ezekiel set an example for us? (b) What did Ezekiel do to depict the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, and what was denoted by the 390 days and the 40 days?

of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was to lie on his left side for 390 days to bear the error of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, then on his right side for 40 days to carry the sin of two-tribe Judah. A day stood for a year. So the 390 years ran from the founding of Israel in 997 B.C.E. to the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. Judah's 40 years ran from Jeremiah's appointment as God's prophet in 647 B.C.E. to Judah's desolation in 607 B.C.E.—Ezekiel 4:1-8; Jeremiah 1:1-3.

¹⁰ Ezekiel next enacted the effects of the siege. To denote famine, he subsisted on just over eight ounces of food and about a pint of water a day. His bread (an unlawful mixture of wheat, barley, broad beans, lentils, millet, and spelt baked over dung) was unclean. (Leviticus 19:19) This action showed that Jerusalem's residents would suffer great privation. But how heartening it is to know that just as Jehovah sustained Ezekiel under difficult circumstances, God will help us to remain faithful and fulfill our preaching commission in the face of all hardships!—Ezekiel 4:9-17.

¹¹ Using a sword, Ezekiel next shaved off his hair and beard. (*Read Ezekiel 5: 1-4.*) Those dying of famine and pestilence would be like the third of the prophet's hair that he burned in the midst of Jerusalem. The war dead would be like the third struck with the sword. Survivors would be dispersed among the nations like the third of his hair scattered to the wind. But some exiles would be like the few hairs taken from that scattered portion and wrapped in Ezekiel's garment to show that they would take up true worship in

10. How did Ezekiel enact the effects of the siege, and what lesson can we learn from the fact that God sustained him?
11. (a) What actions are mentioned at Ezekiel 5:1-4, and what was their significance? (b) The fact that God fulfilled Ezekiel's enactments should have what effect on us?

Judah after the 70-year desolation. (Ezekiel 5:5-17) The fact that Jehovah fulfilled this and the other prophetic enactments should move us to trust in him as the Fulfiller of prophecy.—Isaiah 42:9; 55:11.

Destruction Ahead!

¹² In 613 B.C.E., Ezekiel addressed the land to indicate what would befall Judah's idolatrous inhabitants. (*Read Ezekiel 6:1-7.*) Invaders would wreck the high places, incense stands, and altars used in false worship. The very thought of devastation by famine, pestilence, and warfare would make one cry "Alas!" and emphasize this by clapping the hands and stamping the foot. Dead bodies of spiritual fornicators would litter the high places. When Christendom, antitypical Jerusalem, suffers similar destruction, she will know that her calamity is from Jehovah.—Ezekiel 6:8-14.

¹³ 'The end was coming upon the four extremities of the land,' Judah's unfaithful religious system. A "garland" of calamitous things would encircle an idolater's head when "the rod" in God's hand—Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian hordes—acted against Jehovah's people and his temple. Those belonging to Judah's "crowd" of buyers and sellers would be either killed or taken into exile, and the hands of any who managed to stay alive would drop from faintness. At the overthrow of their false religious system, they would, as it were, shave their heads bald in mourning.—Ezekiel 7:1-18.

¹⁴ Jehovah and his executional forces

12. (a) Ezekiel 6:1-7 indicates that invaders would do what? (b) According to Ezekiel's prophecy, what is antitypical Jerusalem, and what will happen to her?

13. What was "the rod" in Jehovah's hand, and what was to result from its use?

14. What was bribery unable to do for Jerusalem, and what does that indicate for Christendom?

cannot be bribed. (*Read Ezekiel 7:19.*) Bribery could not save the "concealed place," the Most Holy, from being profaned as Chaldean "robbers" seized sacred utensils and left the temple in ruins. Jehovah 'caused the pride of the strong ones to cease' when King Zedekiah was captured and chief ones of the Levitical priesthood were killed. (2 Kings 25:4-7, 18-21) No, sinners in besieged Jerusalem could not escape adversity by bribery when God 'judged them' as covenant breakers. Similarly, during the imminent desecration of things Christendom holds sacred, she will not be able to bribe her way out of the execution of divine judgment upon her. It will then be too late to listen to Jehovah's "watchman."—Ezekiel 7:20-27.

Sighing Over Detestable Things

¹⁵ When Ezekiel envisioned God in glory on Elul 5, 612 B.C.E., 'the representation of a hand took him by a tuft of hair' and carried him to Jerusalem by the spirit of inspiration. The celestial chariot had also moved there. What Ezekiel then beheld should make us recoil at the very thought of listening to apostates. (*Proverbs 11:9.*) At the temple, Israelite apostates were worshiping an idolatrous symbol (perhaps a sacred pole) that provoked God to jealousy. (*Exodus 20:2-6.*) Entering the inner courtyard, what detestable things Ezekiel saw! (*Read Ezekiel 8:10, 11.*) How disgraceful that 70 Israelite elders were offering incense to false gods represented by despicable wall carvings!—Ezekiel 8:1-12.

¹⁶ Ezekiel's vision shows how spiritually deadly apostasy is. Why, Israelite women had been talked into weeping over

15. What did Ezekiel behold in Jerusalem, and what effect should this have on us?

16. Ezekiel's vision indicates what about the effects of apostasy?

Tammuz, a Babylonian deity and lover of the fertility goddess Ishtar! And what an abomination to see 25 Israelite men in the temple's inner courtyard worshiping the sun! (Deuteronomy 4:15-19) To God's nose they held out an obscene twig, perhaps representing the human male organ. No wonder Jehovah would not listen to their prayers, even as Christendom will seek his help in vain during the "great tribulation"!—Ezekiel 8:13-18; Matthew 24:21.

Marked for Survival

¹⁷ Next, we note seven men—one a linen-clad secretary and six others with smashing weapons. (*Read Ezekiel 9:1-7.*) The "six men" represented Jehovah's heavenly executional forces, though he could use earthly agents. Those whose foreheads the 'man in linen' marked would experience God's compassion because they were not in sympathy with the detestable things done at the temple. Execution by the "six men" began there with the 70 idolatrous elders, the women weeping for Tammuz, and the 25 sun worshipers. These and others disloyal to God were killed by the Babylonians in 607 B.C.E.

¹⁸ The antitypical 'man in linen' is the class of anointed Christians. They go from house to house to put a symbolic mark on those who become part of the "great crowd" of Christ's "other sheep." The "mark" is the evidence that such sheep are dedicated, baptized individuals with a Christlike personality. They 'sigh and groan over detestable things' done in Christendom, and they have come out of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. (Revelation 18:4, 5) Their

17. What seven men were envisioned, and what did they do?
18. (a) Who is the modern-day 'man in linen'?
(b) What is the "mark," who now have it, and in what will possessing it result?

"mark" will make it plain to God's executional forces that they should be spared during the "great tribulation." They can retain that "mark" by sharing with the anointed ones in marking yet others. So, if you have been 'marked,' share zealously in the 'marking' work.—Ezekiel 9:8-11.

Fiery Destruction Ahead!

¹⁹ The linen-clad man went between the wheels of the celestial chariot to obtain fiery coals. These were tossed over Jerusalem, giving advance notice that its destruction would be an expression of God's fiery wrath. (Ezekiel 10:1-8; Lamentations 2:2-4; 4:11) In Ezekiel's day, Jehovah's anger was poured out by means of the Babylonians. (2 Chronicles 36:15-21; Jeremiah 25:9-11) But what about our day? The antitypical 'man in linen' scatters God's fiery message throughout Christendom as notification that divine anger will soon be vented upon her and the rest of Babylon the Great. Of course, those refusing to listen to Jehovah's "watchman"

19. What does the modern-day 'man in linen' scatter throughout Christendom?

Do You Recall?

- Why listen when Jehovah's "watchman" speaks?
- What was represented by God's celestial chariot?
- Who serve as Jehovah's "watchman" today?
- What apostate acts did Ezekiel see in Jerusalem, and how should this vision affect us?
- Who is the modern-day 'man in linen,' and what is the "mark" he puts on foreheads?

have no hope of survival.—Isaiah 61:1, 2; Revelation 18:8-10, 20.

²⁰ Attention is drawn again to the celestial chariot, God's heavenly organization. Noting the harmony between the chariot's wheels and the cherubs, we should be moved to cooperate fully with God's earthly organization. Out of loyalty, we should also protect it from treacherous men. (Ezekiel 10:9-22) There were such men in Ezekiel's day, for he saw 25 governmental princes plotting revolt against God's executional forces with Egyptian help. They likened Jerusalem to a caldron, and themselves to flesh safe inside. But how wrong they were! The "sword" of Babylonian "strangers" was to kill some of the schemers, whereas others were to become captives. This was to occur as God held the Jews accountable for breaking his covenant. (Ezekiel 11:1-13; Exodus 19:1-8; 24:1-7; Jeremiah 52:24-27) Because Christendom claims to be in a covenant with God but puts confidence in worldly alliances, she will perish under assault by Jehovah's executional forces.

²¹ Though Israelites had been 'scattered among the lands,' as in 617 B.C.E., God was "a sanctuary," or refuge, for repentant exiles.

20. (a) How should the harmony between the celestial chariot's wheels and the cherubs affect us? (b) What were some princes doing, and to what did they wrongly liken Jerusalem?
21. What happened after Judah's 70-year desolation, and what comparable development affected the anointed remnant?

(Ezekiel 11:14-16) But what else could be expected? (*Read Ezekiel 11:17-21.*) After Judah's 70-year desolation, a remnant was restored to the cleansed "soil of Israel." Comparably, after a Babylonish captivity, the anointed remnant was delivered in 1919, and under the guidance of God's spirit, the once desolate "soil" of spiritual Israel has been cleansed. Hence, those 'marked' for preservation are now enjoying divine favor along with the restored remnant of spiritual Israel. And if you keep on listening to God's "watchman," you may be among the survivors when Jehovah unsheathes his sword.



JEHOVAH

Unsheathes His Sword!

"All those of flesh will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have brought forth my sword from its sheath."—EZEKIEL 21:5.

JEHOVAH'S sword rightly inspires terror in his foes. But when he wielded it against wrongdoers in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, did they really know what was happening? Yes, they were made to know that Jehovah had brought his symbolic sword from its sheath.—Ezra 9:6-9; Nehemiah 1:8; 9:26-30.

² Through his prophet and watchman Ezekiel, God said: "All those of flesh will have to know that I myself,

1. Against whom did Jehovah wield his sword in Judah and Israel?

2. What did Jehovah say about his "sword," raising what questions?

Jehovah, have brought forth my sword from its sheath." (Ezekiel 21:5) Did those words apply only in ancient times? Or do they have meaning for us?

Forecasts of Jerusalem's Judgment

³ Jehovah's chariot moved again, and Ezekiel's location also changed. It was as if God's chariotlike heavenly organization moved to an observation post above the Mount of Olives. From there Jesus foretold the destruction that came upon Jerusalem in 70 C.E., a devasta-

3. What did Ezekiel tell exiles in Babylonia, and this has what modern-day parallel?



tion prophetic of Christendom's end. (Mark 13:1-20) In vision, Ezekiel himself had been taken from the river Chebar, but by God's spirit he was now brought back to his house of exile in Babylonia. There he told other exiles 'all that Jehovah had caused him to see.' Similarly, God's anointed "watchman" and associated witnesses today declare all that has been revealed to them by the Rider of the celestial chariot.—Ezekiel 11:22-25.

⁴ By symbolic acts, Ezekiel showed Jewish exiles that national disaster was imminent. (*Read Ezekiel 12:1-7.*) The prophet carried "luggage for exile" to denote the few items that captives could manage to carry on their shoulders. Horror would soon prevail in besieged Jerusalem. Though many did not take such warnings seriously, Ezekiel was to tell the people: "There will be no postponement anymore." Today too there is contempt for divine warnings and prophecies, but we can do much to help truth-seekers to place confidence in their fulfillment.—Ezekiel 12:8-28.

⁵ Those not listening to Jehovah's watchman needed to know that they would feel God's "sword." So, those responsible for misconceptions about the security of Jerusalem and Judah were denounced. False prophets were compared to destructive foxes, and it was shown that liars were whitewashing the tottering walls, or vain projects, of the people. False prophetesses were denounced too. "The day of Jehovah" was imminent, and his face was set against those 'withdrawing from him,' that is, 'dedicating themselves away from following God.' If we are dedicated to Jehovah, surely we would never want to withdraw from his sacred service.—Ezekiel 13:1-14:11.

4. How did Jewish exiles respond to Ezekiel's symbolic acts?
5. Since "the day of Jehovah" was imminent, what denunciations were fitting?

⁶ Who could save the wayward people of Judah? Not even righteous Noah, Daniel, and Job could deliver them when God brought his judgments upon the land. If we are to experience salvation, then, we must shoulder our personal responsibility before God and do his will.—Ezekiel 14:12-23; Romans 14:12.

⁷ Because of her unfaithful inhabitants, Judah was likened to a wild vine without good fruit and fit only for the fire. (Ezekiel 15:1-8) She was also likened to a foundling saved by God from Egypt and nurtured to womanhood. Jehovah took her as his wife, but she turned to false gods and would suffer destruction for her spiritual adultery. Yet, with faithful ones God would 'establish an indefinitely lasting covenant'—the new covenant with spiritual Israel.—Ezekiel 16:1-63; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 6:16.

⁸ Next, the rulers of Babylon and Egypt were likened to great eagles. One broke off the top of a cedar tree by removing King Jehoiachin and replacing him with Zedekiah. Although Zedekiah took a loyalty oath to Nebuchadnezzar, he broke it, seeking the military help of Egypt's ruler, the other great eagle. If Zedekiah invoked God's name in taking his oath, breaking it brought reproach on Jehovah. The very thought of bringing reproach on God should restrain us from ever proving false to our word. Privileged we are indeed to bear the divine name as Jehovah's Witnesses!—Ezekiel 17:1-21.

⁹ Heartening Messianic prophecy comes

6. Could any human save the wayward people of Judah, and what does this teach us?
7. To what was Judah likened, yet what would God establish with the faithful ones?
8. (a) To what were Babylon and Egypt likened?
(b) How should Zedekiah's breaking of his oath affect us?
- 9, 10. (a) What prophecy is recorded at Ezekiel 17:22-24, but what must be done if we are to benefit from the fulfillment of it? (b) Who is responsible for the consequences of our conduct?

next. (Read *Ezekiel 17:22-24*.) Here, “a tender one” is the Messianic King, Jesus Christ. Planted by Jehovah on heavenly Mount Zion, he would become “a majestic cedar,” a source of protection and blessing as he ruled over the earth. (*Revelation 14:1*) In this we can indeed take heart.

¹⁰ If we are to benefit from the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, however, we must maintain a good relationship with Jehovah. Ezekiel’s fellow exiles apparently thought that they had a fine standing with God and blamed their forebears for their sufferings. But the prophet pointed out that each person is responsible for the consequences of his own conduct. (*Ezekiel 18:1-29*; compare *Jeremiah 31:28-30*.) Next came an appeal. (Read *Ezekiel 18:30-32*.) Yes, Jehovah is merciful to the repentant and takes no delight in anyone’s death. Therefore, God says: ‘Turn back and keep living, O you people.’—Compare *2 Peter 3:9*.

¹¹ In a dirge over Judah’s fall, her rulers were compared to young lions. King Jehoahaz died in Egyptian exile, Jehoiakim was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, and Jehoiachin was exiled to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar next placed Zedekiah

11. To what were Judah’s rulers compared, and what would happen to her when she was struck by Jehovah’s “sword”?

on Judah’s throne, but he revolted. Ultimately, like a caged lion, Zedekiah was carried captive to Babylon. In keeping with the prophetic dirge, in 607 B.C.E., Judah became a ruined vine, “and there proved to be in her no strong rod, no scepter for ruling.” She had been struck by Jehovah’s “sword”—*Ezekiel 19:1-14; Jeremiah 39:1-7*.

When King Zedekiah broke his oath to Nebuchadnezzar and was taken captive, what prophecy began to be fulfilled?



¹² Approached by "men from the elderly ones of Israel," Ezekiel spoke God's message. He pointed out that although Jehovah delivered the Israelites from Egypt and gave them His Law, they rejected it and practiced idolatry. Since Ezekiel's contemporaries were guilty of similar wrongdoing, God would put himself on judgment against them. Apparently with skepticism and not because they did not understand what Ezekiel meant, the people asked: "Is he not composing proverbial sayings?" They would soon learn that there was nothing merely proverbial about the prophet's message. This should warn us never to adopt a skeptical attitude toward the fulfillment of Scriptural warnings.—Ezekiel 20:1-49.

Jehovah the Warrior

¹³ In the seventh year of the exile (by Ab 10, 611 B.C.E.), less than two and a half years remained before "the battle in the day of Jehovah" was to begin against Judah and Jerusalem. (Ezekiel 13:5; 20:1) Note what Jehovah the Warrior then said through Ezekiel. (*Read Ezekiel 21:1-5.*) God's "sword" signifies the earthly agency he would use, but it can include his heavenly, chariotlike organization. "Righteous" and "wicked" inhabitants of Judah and Israel, as well as nations having ill will toward God's people, would fall by the edge of God's "sword." Indeed, "all those of flesh" would be made to know that Jehovah was warring against them.

¹⁴ Like Ezekiel, Jehovah's anointed wit-

12. (a) Like their forebears, in what wrongdoing did Ezekiel's contemporaries engage? (b) Why did the people ask if Ezekiel was not composing proverbial sayings, and what warning does this provide for us?

13. God's "sword" signifies what, and what would "all those of flesh" be made to know when that sword was wielded?

14. (a) Like Ezekiel, to what do Jehovah's anointed witnesses call attention? (b) What indicates that Christendom's rulers will not escape God's "sword"?

nesses today call attention to the "sword" that God will brandish against adherents of Christendom, the realm of which is the antitypical "soil of Israel." Soon that "sword" will be felt by "all flesh from south to north," by all practitioners of false religion. Self-assured ones of Ezekiel's day had no reason to exult, concluding that Jehovah's "sword" would not 'organize a slaughter' against them. That "sword" rejected the royal scepter of the kingdom of Judah, even as it rejected every other "tree," or scepter. Surely, then, Christendom's rulers will not be spared by God's executional agency.—Ezekiel 21:6-17.

¹⁵ Ezekiel's prophecy goes on to show that nobody, including the demons, can turn Jehovah's "sword" aside. (*Read Ezekiel 21:18-22.*) Although King Nebuchadnezzar would employ demonistic divination, Jehovah would see to it that the Babylonian ruler marched against Jerusalem, not against the weaker Ammonite capital of Rabbah. From a container Nebuchadnezzar would choose an arrow marked for Jerusalem. He would use teraphim (likely, small idols in human form) and would look for indications in the liver of a slain animal. Despite divination, however, he would take the road to the Judean capital and besiege it. True, Nebuchadnezzar had concluded a covenant with King Zedekiah. But because of their oath-breaking, Zedekiah and other Jews would be "seized even by the hand" and led captive to Babylon.—Ezekiel 21:23, 24.

¹⁶ By rebelling, Zedekiah wounded himself in a deadly way. (*Read Ezekiel 21:25-27.*) When Judah's king was deposed, the royal turban and the crown were

15. What incident involving Nebuchadnezzar shows that nobody can turn Jehovah's "sword" aside?

16. (a) What happened in fulfillment of Ezekiel 21:25-27? (b) When did the Gentile Times begin, and with what event did they end?

removed. (2 Kings 25:1-7) The “high” kingdom of Judah was ‘brought low’ by being destroyed in 607 B.C.E. Thus the “low” Gentile kingdoms were “put on high,” leaving them in control of the earth without interference by a typical kingdom of God. (Deuteronomy 28:13, 15, 36, 43, 44) So began “the appointed times of the nations”—the Gentile Times—that ended in 1914 when God conferred kingship upon Jesus Christ, ‘the one having the legal right’ to it. (Luke 21:20-24; Psalm 110:1, 2; Daniel 4:15-28; 7:13, 14) With Jesus on a heavenly throne, Gentile nations cannot trample upon what ancient Jerusalem symbolized, the Kingdom of David’s legal heir.—Hebrews 12:22.

¹⁷ Ammonite prophets were saying that Ammon’s capital, Rabbah, would escape destruction by Nebuchadnezzar’s sword. But this was “a lie,” for the entire land of Ammon would be devastated. In our day, God has decreed that the destruction of the nations will follow that of Christendom, even as Rabbah was destroyed after Jerusalem.—Ezekiel 21:28-32; Revelation 16:14-16.

Jerusalem Arraigned

¹⁸ Again speaking Jehovah’s word, Ezekiel denounced Jerusalem for such sins as bloodshed, idolatry, loose conduct, fraud, and forgetting God. Her bloodguilty chieftains abused power to the point of judicial murder, and slanderers rid themselves of foes by accusing them falsely. For such wrongdoing, Jerusalem’s residents would be scattered. Knowledge of this should strengthen our resolve to avoid abuse of power, loose conduct, slander, and other gross sins.—Ezekiel 22:1-16.

17. What “lie” was being proclaimed by Ammonite prophets?
18. For what sins did Ezekiel denounce Jerusalem, and how should we react to this?

¹⁹ Jehovah would also smelt the people of Judah in a furnace. This was not to purify them in a refining process but was to liquefy them in his fiery rage. (Ezekiel 22:17-22) This judgment was well deserved by the conspiring prophets, lawless priests, greedy princes, and unjust people. All were denounced. Since not a man among them stood for righteousness, God would exterminate them with the fire of his fury.—Ezekiel 22:23-31.

Punishment Deserved

²⁰ The outpouring of God’s anger was next represented as judgment executed upon two symbolic women guilty of spiritual adultery. One was Oholah, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel with Samaria as her capital. She was “the older one” because of being composed of most of the tribes of Israel, including those that descended from Jacob’s eldest sons, Reuben and Simeon. Her sister was Oholibah, two-tribe Judah with Jerusalem as her capital. Oholah means “Her Tent.” Oholibah means “My Tent Is in Her,” which is apropos since God’s tent, or temple, was in Judah.—Ezekiel 23:1-4.

²¹ Oholah (Israel) ceased to exist when she was overthrown by the Assyrians in 740 B.C.E. What had she done? (*Read Ezekiel 23:5-7.*) Oholah had faithlessly sought security in political alliances, but this led to her adopting the false worship of her allies, so that ‘she defiled herself with their dungy idols.’ Taking a warning from Oholah’s spiritual adultery, we should guard against worldly ties that can

19. In what way would the people of Judah be smelted, and why was their extermination warranted?
20. Upon what symbolic women was God’s anger to be poured out, and what details can you provide regarding their identity?
21. In what did Oholah seek security, providing what warning for us?

destroy our faith.—James 4:4; 1 John 2: 15-17.

²² For pursuing a more sinful course than her sister, Oholibah (Judah) suffered national calamity at Babylonian hands in 607 B.C.E. Her children fell by the sword or were led away captive, and she was disgraced among the nations. Like Oholah and Oholibah, Christendom commits spiritual adultery, a sin in the sight of the God she claims to worship. Protestantism, with her many denominations, has defiled herself with the commercial and political powers of the world even more than her elder sister, Roman Catholicism. Thus, Jehovah will see to it that all of Christendom is destroyed. Then people will know that he is the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. It will strengthen our determination to shun improper worldly ties if we remember that Christendom's associates will soon turn on her and execute God's sentence upon her as a principal part of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. —Ezekiel 23:8-49; Revelation 17:1-6, 15-18.

Hypocrites Stunned

²³ On the very day in late December that Nebuchadnezzar began his 18-month siege of Jerusalem (Tebeth 10, 609 B.C.E.), God gave Ezekiel another graphic message. In it, besieged Jerusalem was represented as a cooking pot in which the city's residents would be 'boiled.' Moral filth had caused "rust" in that symbolic cooking pot. "Piece by piece," the wrongdoers would be brought out of Jerusalem, and her woe would not end until she suffered destruction. Jehovah had judged Jerusalem ac-

22. Like Oholah and Oholibah, what is Christendom doing, but what will happen to her?
23. How was Jerusalem represented in God's message to Ezekiel in late December of 609 B.C.E., and what would happen to her?

cording to her wicked dealings, and she had to be destroyed, even as Christendom must be.—Ezekiel 24:1-14.

²⁴ Next, Ezekiel was to act in an unusual way. (*Read Ezekiel 24:15-18.*) Why was the prophet to display no grief when his wife died? To show how stunned the Jews would be at the destruction of Jerusalem, her inhabitants, and the temple. Ezekiel had already said enough about such matters and would not speak God's message again until Jerusalem's downfall was reported to him. Similarly, Christendom and her hypocritical religionists will be stunned at the time of their destruction. And after the "great tribulation" begins, what the anointed watchman class had already said about her end will be enough. (Matthew 24:21) But when God's "sword" descends upon Christendom, such stunned religionists and others 'will have to know that he is Jehovah.'—Ezekiel 24:19-27.

24. (a) Why did Ezekiel display no grief when his wife died? (b) When Jehovah's "sword" descends upon her, how will Christendom react, and what will she come to know?

How Would You Respond?

- What happened when Jehovah wielded his "sword" against Judah and Israel?
- How should we be affected by Zedekiah's breaking of his oath to Nebuchadnezzar?
- What does God's "sword" signify?
- What incident involving Nebuchadnezzar shows that nobody can turn Jehovah's "sword" aside?
- What happened in fulfillment of Ezekiel 21:25-27?
- What was foreshadowed by Ezekiel's not displaying grief when his wife died?

“They Will Have to Know That I Am JEHOVAH”

“I shall no more let my holy name be profaned; and the nations will have to know that I am Jehovah.”—EZEKIEL 39:7.

JEHOVAH’S holy name was profaned by the ancient Israelites. This the book of Ezekiel makes clear. But the people of Christendom also profane the name of the God they profess to worship.

² Will the Universal Sovereign endlessly tolerate the profaning of his name? No, for he has declared: “I shall no more let my holy name be profaned; and the nations will have to know that I am Jehovah.” (Ezekiel 39:7; see also Ezekiel 38:23.) What will this mean? And what lessons can be learned from later chapters in the book of Ezekiel?

Prophecies Against Others

³ After Jerusalem’s destruction, Ammon was condemned for expressing glee over Judah’s suffering, and Moab for adopting a scornful attitude toward Judah. Edom was held guilty of malice, and the Philistines’ vengeful spirit was to bring God’s “raging reproofs.” (Ezekiel 25:1-17; Proverbs 24:17, 18) For exulting over Jerusalem’s calamity, the city of Tyre would fall to Nebuchadnezzar, or Nebuchadrezzar (a

1, 2. How do we know that Jehovah will not endlessly tolerate the profaning of his holy name?

3. (a) How did other nations react to Judah’s suffering? (b) For what spirit was Tyre’s “king” removed, and how should this affect us?

spelling nearer the Babylonian). (Ezekiel 26:1-21) She was like a ship sure to sink. (Ezekiel 27:1-36) Tyre’s “king” (apparently her line of rulers) was removed for having a proud spirit like that of Satan. (Ezekiel 28:1-26) Surely, then, we should avoid sinful haughtiness that might cause us to profane Jehovah’s name.—Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 21:4.

⁴ Ezekiel foretold a 40-year desolation of Egypt. Her wealth would be Nebuchadrezzar’s pay for military service rendered in executing Jehovah’s judgment upon Tyre. (Ezekiel 29:1-21) When God saw to it that the Egyptians were dispersed, ‘they would know that he is Jehovah.’ (Ezekiel 30:1-26) Representing Egypt, proud Pharaoh was likened to a lofty cedar tree that would be cut down. (Ezekiel 31:1-18) Finally, Ezekiel lifted up dirges about Pharaoh and the descent of Egypt into Sheol.—Ezekiel 32:1-32.

The Watchman’s Duty

⁵ Ezekiel was reminded of his duty as a watchman. (Ezekiel 33:1-7) Of course, God approves of a spiritual watchman only if he does his duty and warns the wicked. (Read

4. What was in store for Pharaoh and Egypt?
5. (a) Only under what circumstances does God approve of a spiritual watchman? (b) What does it mean to ‘walk in the very statutes of life’?



Jehovah gives his sheep tender care, as did ancient shepherds. So Christian shepherds should treat God's flock with tenderness

Ezekiel 33:8, 9.) Like Ezekiel, then, the anointed "watchman" class boldly declares divine warnings. Since God takes no delight in the death of wicked ones, he will not hold their past record against them if they heed warnings and 'walk in the very statutes of life.' In Ezekiel's day, walking in those statutes meant keeping the Law, but it now means accepting Christ's ransom and being his follower. (1 Peter 2:21) There is nothing maladjusted about the way God punishes or rewards people, and preservation through the "great tribulation" depends on compliance with his statutes.—Ezekiel 33:10-20; Matthew 24:21.

⁶ Near the end of 607 B.C.E., a refugee reported Jerusalem's destruction, and Ezekiel again spoke Jehovah's message. (Eze-

6. Today, how are many like the Jewish exiles of Ezekiel's time?

kiel 33:21-29) How did the exiles react? (Read Ezekiel 33:30-33.) Today, many are like the Jewish exiles to whom Ezekiel was a singer of 'a sensuous love song.' When the anointed ones and their associates call from house to house, these people enjoy the sound of the Kingdom message but do not embrace it. To them, it is like a pleasant love song, but they do not make a dedication to Jehovah, and they will not survive the "great tribulation."

Jehovah's "One Shepherd"

⁷ In a message to Ezekiel after Jerusalem's fall, Jehovah condemned profaners of His holy name, the governmental "shepherds of Israel." How well those words fit the rulers of Christendom! (Read Ezekiel 34: 1-6.) Unlike the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, Christendom's political rulers fatten themselves materially off the "sheep." (John 10:9-15) But as God delivered his sheep by stripping selfish shepherds of rulership when Judah was desolated, so he will again deliver his sheep by depriving Christendom's rulers of their authority during the "great tribulation." (Revelation 16:14-16; 19:11-21) Jehovah showed love for his sheeplike people when he delivered them from Babylon in 537 B.C.E., even as he displayed that quality when he used the Greater Cyrus, Jesus Christ, to free

7. What actions by Jehovah in our time are comparable to his dealings with his sheep in Ezekiel's day?

the remnant of spiritual Israel from bondage to Babylon the Great in 1919 C.E.—Ezekiel 34:7-14.

⁸ God gives his sheep tender care. (*Read Ezekiel 34:15, 16.*) If a ‘fat sheep’ was to oppress God’s flock today, Jehovah would “feed” him with disfellowshipping now and annihilation in the “great tribulation.” In 1914 Jehovah placed over the anointed remnant “one shepherd,” Jesus Christ. Since 1935 he has directed the gathering of a “great crowd” of “other sheep,” who now serve with anointed ‘sheep of Jehovah’s pasturing.’ Like God and Christ, Christian undershepherds must treat all these sheep with tenderness.—Ezekiel 34:17-31; Revelation 7:9; John 10:16; Psalm 23:1-4; Acts 20:28-30.

A “Garden of Eden”!

⁹ Consider again the desolated land of Judah and Israel. Since God had determined that it should keep a sabbath by remaining unoccupied for 70 years, he acted to prevent Edom and other nations from occupying that territory. (2 Chronicles 36:19-21; Daniel 9:2) In fact, Edom and its mountainous region of Seir were also desolated, as foretold, being subjugated by the Babylonians in 602-601 B.C.E.—Ezekiel 35:1-36:5; Jeremiah 25:15-26.

¹⁰ The restoration of a remnant to Judah in 537 B.C.E. pointed to thrilling developments in our day. In 1919 “the mountains of Israel,” or the spiritual estate of Jehovah’s anointed witnesses, began to be repopulated with a spiritually revived remnant. (Ezekiel 36:6-15) God cleansed them of religious uncleanness and put in them

8. What would Jehovah do if a ‘fat sheep’ was to oppress the flock, and how must Christian undershepherds treat the sheep?

9. Since Jehovah had determined that the land of Judah and Israel should keep a sabbath, what did he do?

10. The restoration of a remnant to Judah in 537 B.C.E. pointed to what developments in our day?

“a new spirit” enabling them to produce the fruitage of his holy spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) And so that Jehovah’s name might not be profaned by worldlings because he had disciplined his people, he has blessed the remnant abundantly.—Ezekiel 36:16-32.

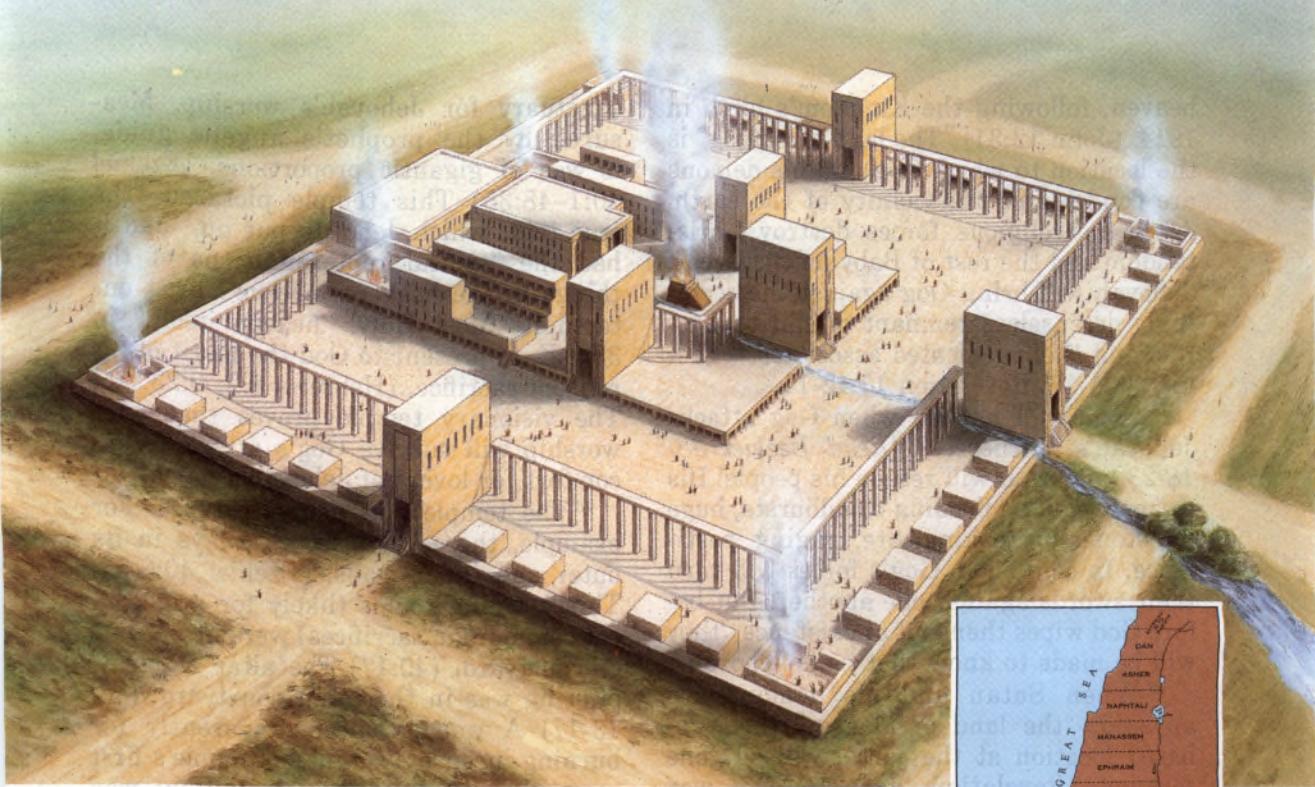
¹¹ After a remnant returned to Judah, that desolated land was transformed into a fruitful “garden of Eden.” (*Read Ezekiel 36:33-36.*) Similarly, since 1919 Jehovah has transformed the once desolate estate of the anointed remnant into a fruitful spiritual paradise, now shared with the “great crowd.” Since this spiritual paradise has been populated with holy people, let each dedicated Christian work to keep it clean.—Ezekiel 36:37, 38.

Unity Restored

¹² In Babylonian captivity, the Jews were almost a dead nation, like mere bones in a field. (Ezekiel 37:1-4) But what did Ezekiel next see? (*Read Ezekiel 37:5-10.*) Those bones were reclothed with sinews, flesh, and skin, and they were reactivated with the breath of life. (Ezekiel 37:11-14) God resurrected the Jewish nation when 42,360 people of all tribes of Israel and some 7,500 non-Israelites seized their opportunity to repopulate Judah, rebuild Jerusalem and its temple, and restore true worship in their homeland. (Ezra 1:1-4; 2:64, 65) Similarly, in 1918 the persecuted remnant of spiritual Israel became like those dry bones—killed as regards their public witnessing work. But in 1919 Jehovah revived them as Kingdom proclaimers. (Revelation 11:7-12) This parallel should strengthen our confidence that these anointed ones and their associates

11. In harmony with Ezekiel 36:33-36, what has God done with the spiritual estate of the anointed remnant?

12. How was the revitalizing of the ancient Jewish nation illustrated at Ezekiel 37:1-14, and what modern-day parallel did this have?



make up the earthly organization Jehovah is using today.—See the 1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, pages 87-125.

¹³ How was the restoration of organizational unity among Jehovah's ancient people illustrated? (*Read Ezekiel 37:15-20.*) There is a modern parallel for the joining of the two sticks (one marked for the two-tribe kingdom of Judah, the other for ten-tribe Israel). During World War I, ambitious men tried to break up the unity of God's servants, but in 1919 faithful anointed ones were unified under Christ, their "one king" and "one shepherd." Moreover, like the more than 7,500 non-Israelites who returned to Judah, those of the "great crowd" are now united with the anointed remnant. What joy to be in the

13. How was restoration of organizational unity among Jehovah's ancient people illustrated at Ezekiel 37:15-20, and what parallel was there for this?

The holy contribution and tribal assignments



spiritual paradise, serving Jehovah in unity under our "one king!"—Ezekiel 37: 21-28.

Gog Attacks!

¹⁴ Next, a dramatic event was foretold. Hoping to profane God's name and destroy His people, Gog of Magog will attack the remnant of spiritual Israel, who represent Jehovah's "woman," or heavenly organization. (*Revelation 12:1-17*) Gog is "the ruler of this world," Satan the Devil. He received the name Gog after his ouster from

14. Who is Gog of Magog, and what action will he take? (*Ezekiel 38:1-17*)

heaven, following the Kingdom's birth in 1914. (John 12:31) "The land of Magog" is the location to which Gog and his demons are confined in the vicinity of the earth. After antireligious forces destroy Christendom and the rest of Babylon the Great, Jehovah will bring Gog against the seemingly defenseless remnant of spiritual Israel and their dedicated associates.—Ezekiel 38:1-17; Revelation 17:12-14.

¹⁵ What will happen when Gog attacks Jehovah's Witnesses? (*Read Ezekiel 38:18-23.*) Jehovah will rescue his people! His weapons will be flooding cloudbursts, huge hailstones, streaking fire, raging pestilence. In confusion, Gog's forces will turn their swords against one another. But before God wipes them out of existence, 'they will be made to know that he is Jehovah.'

¹⁶ When Satan and his demons are abyssed, "the land of Magog," their debased location at the earth, will be gone forever. (Revelation 20:1-3) Gog's war equipment will be so extensive that it will take some time to dispose of it. Birds and beasts will gorge themselves on the unburied bodies of Gog's crowd. How should knowledge of all of this affect us? Why, learning that Gog's attack is imminent but that Jehovah will rescue His people ought to increase our faith and make us rejoice that such events will result in sanctifying God's long-profaned name!—Ezekiel 39:1-29.

Behold Jehovah's Sanctuary!

¹⁷ In 593 B.C.E., the 14th year after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, Ezekiel was granted a vision of a new

15. What will occur when Gog attacks Jehovah's Witnesses?

16. (a) What will happen to "the land of Magog"? (b) How should we be affected by knowledge of foretold events involving Gog?

17. (a) What vision was Ezekiel granted in 593 B.C.E.? (b) Of what is the existence of the visionary temple proof?

sanctuary for Jehovah's worship. Measured by the prophet's angelic guide, it was of gigantic proportions. (Ezekiel 40:1-48:35) This temple pictured "the true tent, which Jehovah put up," and it had the "typical representations of the things in the heavens." Jesus Christ entered its Most Holy, "heaven itself," in 33 C.E. to present to God the merit of his ransom sacrifice. (Hebrews 8:2; 9:23, 24) The visionary temple proves that pure worship will survive Gog's attack. What comfort for lovers of Jehovah's name!

¹⁸ The temple had many features. For example, there were six gateways in its outer and inner walls. (Ezekiel 40:6-35) Thirty dining rooms (likely for people to eat communion sacrifices) were in the outer courtyard. (40:17) The altar of burnt offering was in the inner courtyard. (43:13-17) A wooden altar, apparently for burning incense, was in the temple's first room. (41:21, 22) The Most Holy was

18. What are some of the recorded features of the visionary temple?

What Would You Say?

- Only under what circumstances does Jehovah approve of a spiritual watchman?
- How does Jehovah treat his sheep, and how should Christian shepherds deal with them?
- How was the revitalizing of the Jewish nation illustrated? (Ezekiel 37:1-14) What is the modern parallel of this?
- Who is Gog of Magog, and what will happen when he attacks Jehovah's Witnesses?
- What is symbolized by the water flowing from the visionary temple?

20 cubits square, and the wall around the temple was 500 reeds (5,100 feet) on each side. What a grand house filled with God's glory!—Ezekiel 41:4; 42:16-20; 43:1-7.

¹⁹ The many details of the temple, sacrifices, offerings, and festivals should impress us with the need to follow instructions from God's organization carefully, realizing that every effort should be made to exalt Jehovah and his worship. (Ezekiel 45:13-25; 46:12-20) Those ministering at the temple had to meet God's high standards, and they were to teach people 'the difference between holy things and profane things.' (Ezekiel 44:15, 16, 23) This should move us to maintain holiness as Jehovah's people.—Ephesians 1:3, 4.

²⁰ From the temple flowed a stream that healed, or sweetened, the salty waters of the Dead Sea, so that they came to teem with fish. (Ezekiel 47:1-11) This water symbolizes God's provision for life eternal, including Jesus' sacrifice, which is ample for survivors of Gog's attack and others, including those resurrected. (John 5:28, 29; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 22:1, 2) The Dead Sea represents the element in which mankind has existed—condemnation to inherited sin and death as well as Satan's rulership. Like the plentiful fish in the sweetened waters of the Dead Sea, redeemed mankind will flourish under the healed circumstances of Messianic rule.

²¹ Healing is also associated with trees growing alongside the visionary stream. (*Read Ezekiel 47:12.*) In the new world, obedient mankind will enjoy perfect physical and spiritual health. And why

19. How should we be affected by the details of the temple and the fact that those ministering there had to meet God's standards?

20. (a) What is symbolized by the water that flowed from the visionary temple? (b) This symbolic water will have what effect?

21. Ezekiel 47:12 indicates that obedient mankind will enjoy what in the new world?

not? Leafage of the envisioned fruit trees has continuous healing properties. What blessings for those who know and serve Jehovah!

Then They Will Know!

²² By cooperating with Jehovah's organization now, we can develop qualities that will make us cooperative when God places people where he chooses in the earthly Paradise. That there will be such placement of people is suggested by the fact that tribal assignments were made north and south of an administrative strip seen by Ezekiel in vision. That three-part "contribution" of land included a section for the nonpriestly Levites and a priestly portion containing the visionary temple. In the center of the southern section was a city with an intertribal work force under a collective "chieftain," the Messiah's princely representatives in the "new earth."—Ezekiel 47:13-48:34; 2 Peter 3:13; Psalm 45:16.

²³ Enthroned in his heavenly sanctuary, God will bless the symbolic city beheld by Ezekiel. (*Read Ezekiel 48:35.*) That earthly seat of administration will be named Jehovah-Shammah, or "Jehovah Himself Is There." Continue to display unfailing love for God, and you can be part of redeemed mankind living in Paradise, when no one on earth will be in spiritual darkness but all will know that Jehovah is the one living and true God. (Habakkuk 2:14) Avoid being forced to acknowledge God's name against your will when the wicked are destroyed. Exercise faith, showing that you hope to be among the survivors when he fulfills the words: "The nations will have to know that I am Jehovah."—Ezekiel 36:23.

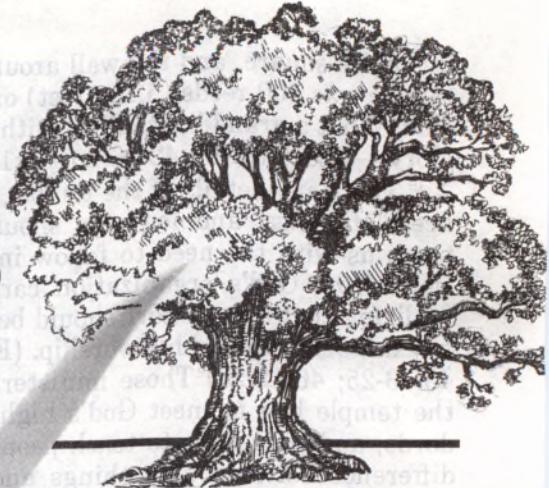
22. What indicates that God will place people where he chooses in Paradise?

23. To be part of redeemed mankind living in Paradise, what must we do now?

...to see if I can get you to say yes. I don't know if you have seen our new website yet, but it's quite nice.

CHRISTIANS

Firm yet Flexible



THE stately oak tree is the very picture of strength. When strong winds blow, it usually has little problem standing up to them. While a sturdy oak survives most storms because of its strength and comparative rigidity or firmness, the tiny blade of grass also survives but for quite a different reason. Its secret? Flexibility. It bends but does not break under the force of the wind.

Flexibility or rigidity—which, then, is more important? Actually, a Christian needs a mixture of both. Yet, a balance of firmness and flexibility may sometimes be lacking even among some of God's people. They have high principles, but a few tend to be unyielding. Others are somewhat like a 'reed that is tossed by a wind.' (Matthew 11:7) They succumb to the pressures and influences of this wicked world. Or they may be tolerant to the point of being permissive.

As Solomon said: "For everything there is an appointed time." (Ecclesiastes 3:1) When, therefore, is it time to be rigid and when is it time to be flexible?

When to Be Firm

Once, King Saul of Israel was explicitly commanded: "Go, and you must strike down Amalek [an enemy nation] and de-

vote him to destruction with all that he has, and you must not have compassion upon him, and you must put them to death, man as well as woman, child as well as suckling, bull as well as sheep, camel as well as ass." (1 Samuel 15:3) The Amalekites had a history of opposing both God and his people and thus were worthy of extermination. (Deuteronomy 25:17-19) However, "Saul and the people had compassion upon Agag [the king of Amalek] and upon the best of the flock and the herd . . . , and they did not wish to devote them to destruction." Saul's bending the rules was not acceptable to Jehovah. "Look!" declared the prophet Samuel, "To obey is better than a sacrifice."—1 Samuel 15:9-22.

The lesson in this is clear: There can be no flexibility when it comes to obedience to God. "For this is what the love of God means," said the apostle John, "that we observe [God's] commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3) The experience of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego illustrates just how far servants of God must be willing to go in showing this obedience. They refused to worship the image that Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar set up. Why? Because God's law clearly condemned idol worship.

(Exodus 20:4-6) They did not reason that the circumstances warranted bending this divine command. Rather, they uncompromisingly preferred death to disobedience.—Daniel 3:16-18.

Most Christians have little trouble submitting to clearly defined Bible laws. But Christians are told: “Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you.” (Hebrews 13:17) Congregation elders may designate specific times for the congregation to meet for field service. Or they may specify that Kingdom Hall equipment should be used in a certain way. True, no Bible text spells out how a thermostat should be adjusted or who should do such adjusting. Yet, when the elders make such decisions, is it not a fine thing to cooperate?

Likewise, a husband may make various decisions for his family. A Christian wife may not necessarily agree with his judgment in a certain respect, but she seeks to obey “the law of her husband.” (Romans 7:2) Obedience to elders, husbands, parents, and employers should not be sidestepped in the name of flexibility.—Colossians 3:18-24.

When to Be Flexible

Nevertheless, there is also a time to be flexible. The apostle Paul indicated this when he said: “Let your reasonableness become known to all men.” (Philippians 4:5) The Greek word Paul used here means “not insisting on the letter of the law; it expresses that considerateness that looks ‘humanely and reasonably at the facts of a case.’” (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*) Reasonableness is often a case of being willing to adapt to existing circumstances.

For example, a missionary serving in a foreign country may quickly realize that local rules of etiquette are different from those of the land in which he was reared.

But if he looks down on the ways of the local people and refuses to make some adjustments, how effective will his ministry be? So he wisely adapts to the beneficial ways of the new culture.—1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

Interestingly, right after mentioning two women in the congregation who were having personal difficulties, Paul encouraged Philippian Christians to be reasonable. (Philippians 4:2-5) Although Paul did not tell us the nature of their dispute, a lack of reasonableness is often at the heart of strained relations. No one is comfortable around someone critical or overly demanding. “Do not become righteous overmuch,” Solomon cautions, “nor show yourself excessively wise. Why should you cause desolation to yourself?”—Ecclesiastes 7:16.

Christians must make allowances for the imperfections of others. How fine it is when we try to look at matters from the viewpoint of the other person! Sadly, though, some Christians in ancient Corinth were so concerned about their personal “rights” that they even resorted to taking fellow believers to court. By airing their problems before unbelievers, they not only brought reproach upon the congregation but also widened the breach between themselves.—1 Corinthians 6:1-6.

Paul therefore encouraged offended

In Our Next Issue

■ The Sign—Have You Seen It?

■ Our Rewarding Life as Missionaries in Africa

■ Remember Christian Principles

Corinthian Christians to have a yielding attitude. He urged: "Really, then, it means altogether a defeat for you that you are having lawsuits with one another. Why do you not rather let yourselves be wronged? Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded?" (1 Corinthians 6:7) A Christian considers it gain to maintain good relations with his spiritual brothers and sisters.

Being reasonable is especially fitting for those exercising authority. For example, parents may set a time by which their sons and daughters must be home in the evening. But suppose a child requests an exception to the rule on one occasion? Would it not be appropriate at least to consider the specific circumstances involved? And what about Christian elders? Is not reasonableness one of their qualifications? (1 Timothy 3:3) Yes. But when and how should they manifest this quality?

Elders—Firm yet Flexible

The apostle Peter once contrasted "reasonable" men with those "hard to please." (1 Peter 2:18) An elder might offer some suggestions to help a brother improve his speaking ability. But if the elder applies a very rigid standard and fails to take into consideration the education, abilities, and circumstances of the brother, what could happen? The brother might resent the counsel or become very discouraged, concluding that the elders are too "hard to please."

Elders must also be flexible about applying various rules in the congregation. Never should they allow rules to 'make the word of God invalid' by giving such rules greater weight than the perfect principles of Jehovah's Word.—Matthew 15:6; 23:23.

It is appropriate for elders to be flexible when Scriptural principles are not violated by such flexibility. For instance, they may note that at large, crowded conventions,

the saving of seats is strongly discouraged. But must such a rule be enforced in a small congregation where seats are plentiful? Or the elders may feel that generally a certain form of attire—such as a jacket and tie for men—is appropriate for door-to-door preaching. Such was the case in a congregation in a South American land. Nevertheless, an elder there learned that a young man was holding back from sharing the good news with others. The reason? He could not afford to buy a jacket and a tie. The elder concluded that flexibility was in order and therefore encouraged the young man to begin sharing his faith with others.

Flexibility must also be shown in handling judicial cases in the congregation. Although the wrongdoing could warrant the disfellowshipping of a wrongdoer, what if repentance is shown? Jehovah set the proper pattern in his dealings with the people of Nineveh. God had told Jonah: "Only forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown." Yet, when the people manifested repentance, Jehovah did not insist on following through with the announced destruction. He recognized that circumstances had changed. (Jonah 3:4, 10) Similarly, elders should delight in 'forgiving in a large way' where there is clear evidence of true repentance.—Isaiah 55:7.

Maintaining a balance between firmness and flexibility is not easy. Imperfect humans naturally seem prone to extremes. But Christians who strive to be firm yet flexible will be richly rewarded. Because they try to be flexible, they will enjoy better relations with others and will avoid much emotional turmoil. Moreover, because appointed elders are firm, steadfast in good works as integrity keepers, they set an example that wins the confidence and cooperation of the entire congregation, as all move on together with the hope of everlasting life.—Isaiah 32:2; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

A Staunch Fighter for the Truth

MARTIN POETZINGER, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, finished his earthly course as an anointed Christian in the early evening of Thursday, June 16, 1988. He had been in failing health for some time but died without apparent pain at Brooklyn Bethel. His wife, Gertrud, had been at his side throughout his illness.

Brother Poetzinger was born on July 25, 1904, in Munich, Germany. He was baptized on October 2, 1928, and entered the pioneer service on October 1, 1930. In the autumn of 1933, the Watch Tower Society assigned him to look after Kingdom interests in Bulgaria, but within a year Witnesses who were nonnationals were deported. Brother Poetzinger's next move was to Hungary. Falsely arrested and deported from that country, he was next given oversight of a group of pioneers in Yugoslavia. After a serious illness, necessitating a long hospital stay in Zagreb, he returned to Germany.

Brother and Sister Poetzinger were married in 1936, but in that very year he was sent to a concentration camp for refusal to renounce his faith. His wife was imprisoned elsewhere, but he was sent to Dachau and then to the extermination camp at Mauthausen, Upper Austria. There the Gestapo used starvation diets, whippings, and indescribable brutality to induce him and other Witnesses to break their integrity to Jehovah God. But Brother Poetzinger clung to the true faith.

After nine years of cruel imprisonment, Brother and Sister Poetzinger were re-united in 1945. Shortly after this, he began serving in the circuit work in Germany, and later Gertrud traveled with him,



zealously working in the field as he served the congregations. In 1958 he attended the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, and on his return to Germany, he and his wife continued in the traveling work until they entered Bethel service there in 1977. In September 1977, Brother Poetzinger was appointed to the Governing Body and was able to come to the Society's world headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, somewhat over a year later. He served with the Service Committee of the Governing Body and the Service Department Committee.

Brother Poetzinger was a courageous fighter for the truth. His loyalty and zealous support of Jehovah's organization and the Kingdom work were truly exemplary. So we are confident that he is among those to whom these words apply: "Happy are the dead who die in union with the Lord . . . Yes, says the spirit, . . . the things they did go right with them." —Revelation 14:13.



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