

JANUARY 15, 2012

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY EDITION

STUDY ARTICLES

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JANUARY 15, 2012

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ENGLISH

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLE 1 PAGES 4-8

This article will show how sincere Christians throughout the ages have sought to be guided by God's Word. The discussion highlights our yeartext for 2012.

STUDY ARTICLE 2 PAGES 9-13

This article discusses three lessons about keeping on the watch that we can learn from the apostles and other first-century Christians. This study should strengthen our determination to bear thorough witness about God's Kingdom.

STUDY ARTICLES 3, 4 PAGES 16-25

The Mosaic Law required that the ancient Israelites make sacrifices to Jehovah on a number of occasions. Christians are not bound by that Law. However, principles therein provide lessons regarding the spirit of gratitude that Jehovah expects from his worshippers today, as these articles will explain.

STUDY ARTICLE 5 PAGES 26-30

The greatest need for mankind is to be reconciled to God. This article explores how a royal priesthood will help to accomplish this reconciliation, and it explains how we will benefit.

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THE STUDY EDITION!**

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**15 MAKING STUDY TIME MORE
ENJOYABLE AND PRODUCTIVE**

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COVER: A street market in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico. A pioneer couple who learned the Tzotzil language witness to an indigenous family



MEXICO

POPULATION
108,782,804

PUBLISHERS
710,454

TRANSLATION WORK
30 indigenous
languages

Yes, This Is the Study Edition!

We have redesigned the study edition to be more appealing and helpful to you in your study of Jehovah's precious Word of truth.—Ps. 1:2; 119:97.

It was four years ago that we began publishing two editions of *The Watchtower*, one for the public and one for all of us—Jehovah's Witnesses and our progressive Bible students.

Regarding the study edition, a long-time servant of Jehovah wrote: "Marvelous and penetrating—that was my impression of the first study edition of *The Watchtower*. The deeper spiritual language and statements spoke directly to my heart. Thank you so much for this wonderful new provision." Another brother wrote: "I look forward to spending intimate hours with the study edition and my *Reference Bible* at hand." We trust that you feel similarly.

As you know, *The Watchtower* has been in publication since 1879, a feat that has been possible only with Jehovah's spirit and blessing. (Zech. 4:6) During these 133 years, there have been several changes to the cover of the magazine. For 2012, each study edition will feature on the cover an artist's colorful rendering of a witnessing scene, reminding us of our God-given commission to bear thorough witness about Jehovah's Kingdom. (Acts 28:23) Inside the cover, on page 2, you will find the photograph on which the artwork is based, along with a brief description of what is taking place and where. Through

the course of the year, this will remind all of us that Jehovah's people are preaching the good news "in all the inhabited earth."—Matt. 24:14.

What other changes have been made to the magazine? The review box has been moved to the beginning of each study article. This will highlight for you the main points that you should look for as you read and study the article. Of course, *Watchtower* Study conductors will want to continue using these questions to review the material at the end of the study. You will note that the margins have been widened a little and that the page and paragraph numbers stand out more.

As is explained in this month's issue, a new feature, "From Our Archives," is being added to show significant developments in the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses. Also, true-life experiences will occasionally appear under the heading "They Offered Themselves Willingly." These will vividly describe the joy, satisfaction, and happiness that brothers and sisters have experienced by serving where there is a greater need for Kingdom proclaimers.

May you thoroughly enjoy the time you spend studying God's Word with the help of this magazine.

The Publishers



1879



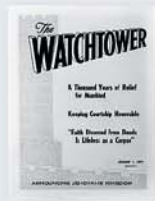
1895



1931



1950



1974



2008



"Your word is truth."

—JOHN 17:17.

LOOK FOR THESE POINTS:

How did a meeting that was held in Jerusalem in 49 C.E. contrast with subsequent church councils?

Who were some champions of God's Word who lived during the Middle Ages?

What method for Bible study was used by faithful Christians in the late 1800's, and why was it effective?

TRUE CHRISTIANS RESPECT GOD'S WORD

THINK about the first time you had a meaningful discussion with one of Jehovah's Witnesses. What do you remember about it? Many would reply, 'I was impressed by the fact that the Witness used the Bible to answer all my questions.' How delighted we were to discover God's purpose for the earth, what happens when we die, and what the future holds for our dead loved ones!

² As we studied further, however, we realized that the Bible does much more than answer our questions about life, death, and the future. We came to appreciate that the Bible is the most practical book in the world. Its counsel is timeless, and those who carefully follow it will lead successful and happy lives. (*Read Psalm 1:1-3.*) Genuine Christians have always accepted the Bible, "not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God." (1 Thess. 2:13) A brief historical review will highlight the contrast between those who truly respect God's Word and those who do not.

A THORNY ISSUE IS SETTLED

³ During the 13 years that followed the anointing of the first uncircumcised Gentile, Cornelius, an issue arose that threatened the unity of the Christian congregation. Growing numbers of Gentiles were embracing the Christian faith. The question was, Should the men be circumcised according to the

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1. From personal experience, name one important respect in which Jehovah's Witnesses are different from other religious groups.
 2. What are some of the reasons why you came to appreciate the Bible?
 3. What issue threatened the unity of the first-century Christian congregation, and what was at stake?

Jewish custom before presenting themselves for baptism? That was not an easy question for a Jew to answer. Jews who observed the Law would not even enter a Gentile's home, let alone enjoy warm fellowship with one. Jewish Christians were already severely persecuted for abandoning their former religion. If they went so far as to welcome uncircumcised Gentiles into their midst, it would only widen the rift between practicing Jews and the Christians and expose the latter to further reproach.—Gal. 2:11-14.

⁴ In 49 C.E., the apostles and older men in Jerusalem, themselves circumcised Jews, "gathered together to see about this affair." (Acts 15:6) What followed was, not a mind-numbing theological debate over dry technicalities, but a lively doctrinal discussion. Strong opinions were expressed on both sides of the issue. Would personal preferences or prejudices rule the day? Would the responsible older men postpone the decision until the religious climate in Israel improved for them? Or would some sort of compromise be worked out, with advocates on each side modifying their position until a consensus of sorts was reached?

⁵ Compromise and lobbying are common at church councils today. However, at that meeting in Jerusalem, there was no compromise; nor did any lobbying for votes take place. What is more, a unanimous decision was reached. How could that be? As strongly as each participant felt about his point of view, *all*

present respected God's Word, and those holy writings held the key to resolving the issue.—**Read Psalm 119:97-101.**

⁶ The passage that helped settle the matter was Amos 9:11, 12. As quoted at Acts 15:16, 17, it reads: "I shall return and rebuild the booth of David that is fallen down; and I shall rebuild its ruins and erect it again, in order that *those who remain of the men* may earnestly seek Jehovah, *together with people of all the nations*, people who are called by my name, says Jehovah."

⁷ 'But wait,' someone may object, 'that text does not say that it was unnecessary for Gentile believers to be circumcised.' That is true; however, Jewish Christians would have got the point. They did not consider *circumcised* Gentiles as 'people of the nations' but as brothers. (Ex. 12:48, 49) For example, according to Bagster's version of the *Septuagint*, Esther 8:17 reads: "Many of the Gentiles were circumcised, and *became Jews*." Thus, when the Scriptures foretold that those remaining of the house of Israel (Jews and circumcised Jewish proselytes) *together with* "people of all the nations" (*uncircumcised* Gentiles) would become one people for God's name, the message was clear. Circumcision was not required of Gentiles who wanted to become Christians.

⁸ God's Word and his spirit led those sincere Christians to "a unanimous accord." (Acts 15:25) Even though the decision would likely expose Jewish Christians to more persecution, faithful ones lent their full support to the Bible-based decision.—Acts 16:4, 5.

6, 7. How were the Scriptures used to settle the circumcision issue?

8. What role did courage play in the decision that was made?

4. Who were called upon to resolve the issue, and in this regard, what questions could have arisen in the minds of onlookers?

5. In what important ways did the meeting in Jerusalem in 49 C.E. differ from church councils held in later centuries?

A MARKED CONTRAST

⁹ The apostle Paul foretold that after the death of the apostles, the Christian faith would be contaminated by false teachings. (*Read 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7.*) Among those who would not put up with “the healthful teaching” were some in responsible positions. (2 Tim. 4:3) Paul warned elders in his day: “From among *you yourselves* men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:30) *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* describes one major factor that led to twisted reasoning: “Christians who had some training in Greek philosophy began to feel the need to express their faith in its terms, both for their own intellectual satisfaction and in order to convert educated pagans.” An important doctrine that was given a pagan twist had to do with the identity of Jesus Christ. The Bible calls him the Son of God; the lovers of Greek philosophy insisted that he is God.

¹⁰ The question was debated at a number of church councils. The issue could have been settled quite easily had the delegates given appropriate weight to the Scriptures, but most did not. In fact, the majority had made up their minds even before they arrived at the councils, and they left more deeply entrenched than ever in their positions. The canons and declarations that resulted from these meetings hardly even referred to the Scriptures.

¹¹ Why were the Scriptures not more

9. What is one important factor that led to the defilement of true worship, and what significant doctrine came to the fore?

10. How could the issue of Christ’s identity have been settled?

11. What weight was given to the authority of the so-called Church Fathers, and why so?

thoroughly considered? Scholar Charles Freeman answers that those who believed that Jesus is God “found it difficult to refute the many sayings of Jesus that suggested he was subordinate to God the Father.” As a result, church tradition and opinions of later authorities were substituted for the Gospels. To this day, many of the clergy elevate the uninspired sayings of so-called Church Fathers to a plane higher than the Word of God! If you have ever discussed the Trinity doctrine with a seminarian, you have likely noticed that.

¹² A notable feature of the debates at those councils was the interference of the Roman emperors. In this regard, Professor Richard E. Rubenstein wrote respecting the Council of Nicaea: “Constantine had favored and enriched [the bishops] beyond their wildest dreams. In less than a year, the new emperor had returned or rebuilt virtually all their churches, given them back the jobs and honors taken from them . . . He had accorded Christian clergymen privileges formerly granted to pagan priests.” As a result, “Constantine was in a position strongly to influence—perhaps even to dictate—the course of events at Nicaea.” Charles Freeman confirmed: “The precedent had now been set that the emperor might intervene not only to strengthen the Church but to influence doctrine.” —*Read James 4:4.*

¹³ While church dignitaries found it difficult to determine the exact identity of Jesus Christ, many of the common people had no such problem. Since they

12. What negative influence was exercised by the emperor?

13. What factors, do you think, influenced church leaders of later centuries to ignore the Bible’s plain teachings?



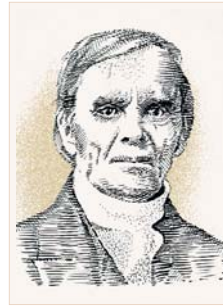
Waldo



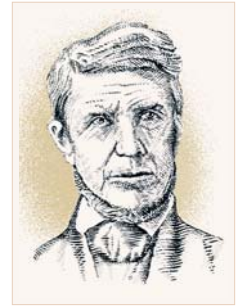
Wycliffe



Tyndale



Grew



Storrs

were not interested in lining their purses with the emperor's gold or in furthering their careers in the church hierarchy, they were able to view matters more objectively, in the light of the Scriptures. And by all accounts, they did. A theologian of the period, Gregory of Nyssa, made this derisive comment regarding the common people: "Clothes dealers, money changers, and grocers are all theologians. If you inquire about the value of your money, some philosopher explains wherein the Son differs from the Father. If you ask the price of bread, your answer is the Father is greater than the Son. If you should want to know whether the bath is ready, you get the pronouncement that the Son was created out of nothing." Yes, unlike the members of the hierarchy, many of the common people were supporting their conclusions by using God's Word. Gregory and his associates would have done well to listen to them!

"WHEAT" AND "WEEDS" GROW TOGETHER

¹⁴ In a parable, Jesus indicated that from the first century onward, there

14. Why can we conclude that from the first century onward, there must always have been some genuine anointed Christians on earth?

would always be some genuine anointed Christians on the earth. He compared them to "wheat" growing among "weeds." (Matt. 13:30) Of course, we cannot say for certain which individuals or groups belonged to the anointed wheat class, but we can confirm that there have always been some who have courageously defended God's Word and exposed the church's unscriptural teachings. Let us consider a few examples.

¹⁵ Archbishop Agobard of Lyons, France (779-840 C.E.), spoke out against image worship, churches dedicated to saints, and the church's unscriptural liturgies and practices. One of his contemporaries, Bishop Claudius, also rejected church tradition and objected to prayers to saints and the veneration of relics. In the 11th century, Archdeacon Berengarius of Tours, France, was excommunicated for rejecting the Catholic teaching of transubstantiation. Moreover, he held that the Bible is superior to church tradition.

¹⁶ The 12th century saw the arrival of two lovers of Bible truth, Peter of Bruys and Henry of Lausanne. Peter resigned from the priesthood because he could

15, 16. Name some who showed respect for God's Word.

not reconcile with the Scriptures the Catholic teachings of infant baptism, transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, and worship of the cross. In 1140, Peter paid for his beliefs with his life. Henry, a monk, spoke out against corrupt practices in the church as well as the unscriptural aspects of church liturgy. He was arrested in 1148 and spent the rest of his life in prison.

¹⁷ About the time that Peter of Bruys was burned alive for daring to criticize the church, a person was born who would later have a powerful influence on the spread of Bible truth. His last name

the bishop. This action actually served to spread the Bible's message to other areas. Eventually, the followers of Waldo, Peter of Bruys, and Henry of Lausanne as well as other dissenters could be found in many parts of Europe. Other champions of Bible truth rose up in the centuries that followed: John Wycliffe (c. 1330-1384), William Tyndale (c. 1494-1536), Henry Grew (1781-1862), and George Storrs (1796-1879).

"THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND"

¹⁸ Try as they might, enemies of Bible truth have been unable to prevent its spread. "The word of God is not bound," says 2 Timothy 2:9. In 1870 a group of sincere Bible students began searching for the truth. Their method of study? Someone would raise a question. They would discuss it. They would look up all related scriptures on the point, and then, when they were satisfied with the harmony of these texts, they would finally state their conclusion and make a record of it. Does it not reassure you to know that like the apostles and older men of the first century, those faithful men, our "spiritual ancestors" of the late 1800's, were determined to align their beliefs solidly with God's Word?

¹⁹ The Bible is still the foundation for our beliefs. With that in mind, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses has chosen as our yeartext for 2012 the confident statement of Jesus: "Your word is truth." (John 17:17) Since everyone who desires to gain God's approval must walk in the truth, may all of us continually strive to be guided by God's Word.

Our yeartext for 2012: "Your word is truth." —John 17:17

was Valdès, or Waldo.* Unlike Peter of Bruys and Henry of Lausanne, he was a layman, but he valued God's Word so much that he divested himself of his material goods and arranged for portions of the Bible to be translated into a language commonly spoken in southeastern France. Some were so thrilled to hear the Bible's message in their own tongue that they too gave up their belongings and devoted their lives to sharing Bible truth with others. The church found this deeply disturbing. In 1184 these zealous men and women, later called the Waldenses, were excommunicated by the pope and banished from their homes by

* Valdès has sometimes been called Pierre Valdès or Peter Waldo, but his first name cannot be confirmed.

17. What important steps were taken by Waldo and his followers?

18. Explain the method of Bible study used by sincere Bible students in the 19th century and why it was effective.

19. What is the yeartext for 2012, and why is it appropriate?



LEARN WATCHFULNESS FROM JESUS' APOSTLES

*“Keep on the watch
with me.”—MATT. 26:38.*

WHAT CAN YOU LEARN ABOUT :

Watching for direction on
where to preach?

Being vigilant with a view to
prayers?

Bearing thorough witness
despite obstacles?

IMAGINE the scene on the final night of Jesus' earthly life. Jesus has come to one of his favorite places, the garden of Gethsemane, just east of Jerusalem. He has come here with his faithful apostles. With much weighing on his mind and heart, Jesus needs to find solitude so that he can pray.—Matt. 26:36; John 18:1, 2.

² Three of the apostles—Peter, James, and John—accompany Jesus to a spot deeper in the garden. “Stay here and keep on the watch with me,” he tells them, and then he goes off to pray. When he comes back, he finds his friends fast asleep. Again he implores them: “Keep on the watch.” Yet, they fall asleep two more times! Later that same night, all the apostles fail to keep spiritually alert. Why, they even abandon Jesus and flee!—Matt. 26:38, 41, 56.

³ Surely the apostles regretted their failure to keep on the watch. Those faithful men quickly learned from their mistake. The Bible book of Acts shows that they went on to set an outstanding example in keeping watchful. Their faithful course must have influenced their fellow Christians to do the same. Now more than ever, we need to keep on the watch. (Matt. 24:42) Let us discuss three lessons about keeping on the watch that we can learn from the book of Acts.

WATCHFUL FOR DIRECTION ON WHERE TO PREACH

⁴ To begin with, the apostles were watchful for direction on where to preach. In one account, we

1-3. How did the apostles fail to keep on the watch during Jesus' final night on earth, and what shows that they learned from their mistake?

4, 5. How did Paul and his traveling companions experience the direction of the holy spirit?

learn how Jesus used the holy spirit, which Jehovah put at his disposal, to guide the apostle Paul and his traveling companions during a most unusual journey. (Acts 2:33) Let us join them.—**Read Acts 16:6-10.**

⁵ Paul, Silas, and Timothy had left the city of Lystra in southern Galatia. Days later they reached a Roman highway leading westward to the most populated region of the district of Asia. They wanted to take that road so as to visit cities where thousands of people needed to hear about Christ. But something stopped them in their tracks. Verse 6 says: “They went through Phrygia and the country of Galatia, because they were forbidden by the holy spirit to speak the word in the district of Asia.” In some undisclosed manner, the holy spirit prevented the travelers from preaching in the province of Asia. Evidently Jesus—by means of God’s spirit—wanted to guide Paul and his companions in a different direction.

⁶ Where did the eager travelers go? Verse 7 explains: “Further, when getting down to Mysia they made efforts to go into Bithynia, but the spirit of Jesus did not permit them.” Prevented from preaching in Asia, Paul and his companions turned northward, intending to preach in the cities of Bithynia. However, when they neared Bithynia, Jesus again used the holy spirit to block them. By then, the men must have been puzzled. They knew *what* to preach and *how* to preach, but they did not know *where* to preach. We might put it this way: They had knocked on the door leading to Asia—but in vain. They had knocked

on the door leading to Bithynia—again in vain. Did they stop knocking? Not those zealous preachers!

⁷ At this point, the men made a decision that might have appeared a bit strange. Verse 8 tells us: “They passed Mysia by and came down to Troas.” So the travelers turned west and walked 350 miles (563 km), bypassing city after city until they reached the port of Troas, the natural gateway to Macedonia. There, for the third time, Paul and his companions knocked on a door, but this time it swung wide open! Verse 9 reports what happened next: “During the night a vision appeared to Paul: a certain Macedonian man was standing and entreating him and saying: ‘Step over into Macedonia and help us.’” Finally, Paul knew *where* to preach. Without delay, the men sailed for Macedonia.

⁸ What can we learn from this account? Note that only *after* Paul set out for Asia did God’s spirit intervene. Then, only *after* Paul neared Bithynia did Jesus step in. And finally, only *after* Paul reached Troas did Jesus direct him to Macedonia. As Head of the congregation, Jesus may deal with us in a similar way. (Col. 1:18) For example, you may have been thinking about serving as a pioneer or moving to an area where the need is greater. But it may be only *after* you take steps to reach your goal that Jesus, by means of God’s spirit, will guide you. To illustrate: A driver can direct his car to turn left or right but only if the car is moving. Likewise, Jesus may direct us in expanding our ministry but only if we are moving—if we are putting forth effort to reach our goal.

⁹ What, though, if your efforts do not

6, 7. (a) What happened to Paul and the other travelers near Bithynia? (b) What decision did the disciples make, and with what result?

8, 9. What can we learn from the account of Paul’s journey?

bear fruit right away? Should you give up, concluding that God's spirit is not guiding you? Well, remember that Paul too encountered setbacks. Yet, he kept on searching and knocking until he found a door that opened. Similarly, if you persevere in searching for "a large door that leads to activity," you too may be rewarded.—1 Cor. 16:9.

VIGILANT WITH A VIEW TO PRAYERS

¹⁰ Consider, now, a second lesson about watchfulness that we can learn from our first-century Christian brothers: They were vigilant with a view to prayers. (1 Pet. 4:7) Persevering in prayer is essential to keeping on the watch. Recall that in the garden of Gethsemane just before his arrest, Jesus told three of his apostles: "Keep on the watch and pray continually."—Matt. 26:41.

¹¹ Peter, who was present on that occasion, later experienced firsthand the power of fervent prayers. (*Read Acts 12:1-6.*) In the opening verses of this account, we learn that in order to win favor with the Jews, Herod mistreated the Christians. He likely knew that James was an apostle who had been especially close to Jesus. Hence, Herod had James killed "by the sword." (Verse 2) The congregation thus lost a beloved apostle. What a test for the brothers!

¹² What did Herod do next? Verse 3 explains: "As he saw it was pleasing to the Jews, he went on to arrest Peter also." But prisons had not always managed to contain the apostles, including Peter. (Acts 5:17-20) Herod may well have known that. The canny politician took no chances. He turned Peter over to

"four shifts of four soldiers each to guard him, as he intended to produce him for the people after the passover." (Verse 4) Imagine that! Herod had Peter chained between 2 guards, with 16 guards working in shifts day and night to make sure that this apostle did not escape. Herod's intention was to present Peter to the people after the Passover, his death sentence a gift to delight the crowds. Under such dire circumstances, what could Peter's fellow Christians do?

¹³ The congregation knew exactly what to do. Verse 5 reads: "Consequently Peter was being kept in the prison; but prayer to God for him was being carried on intensely by the congregation." Yes, their prayers in behalf of their beloved brother were intense, heartfelt pleas. So the death of James had not plunged them into despair; nor had it caused them to view prayer as ineffective. On the contrary, they knew that the prayers of faithful worshippers mean a great deal to Jehovah. If such prayers are in harmony with his will, he answers them.—Heb. 13:18, 19; Jas. 5:16.

¹⁴ What can we learn from the response of Peter's fellow Christians? Keeping on the watch involves praying not just for ourselves but for our brothers and sisters as well. (Eph. 6:18) Do you know of fellow believers who are beset by trials? Some may be enduring persecution, governmental bans, or natural disasters. Why not make them the subject of your heartfelt prayers? You may know of others who are undergoing less noticeable hardships. They may be struggling to cope with family troubles, discouragement, or ill health. Why not

10. What shows that being vigilant in prayer is essential to keeping on the watch?

11, 12. Why and how did Herod mistreat the Christians, including Peter?

13, 14. (a) How did the congregation react to Peter's imprisonment? (b) What can we learn from the example set by Peter's fellow Christians in the matter of prayer?

think of specific individuals whom you can mention by name as you speak to Jehovah, the “Hearer of prayer”?—Ps. 65:2.

¹⁵ How, though, did things turn out for Peter? During his final night in the prison while he was fast asleep between his two guards, Peter experienced a series of amazing events. (**Read Acts 12:7-11.**) Picture what happened: Suddenly, a bright light filled his cell. An angel stood there, evidently unseen by the guards, and urgently woke Peter up. And those chains binding his hands simply fell off! The angel then led Peter out of the cell, right by the guards stationed outside, and through the massive iron gate, which opened “of its own accord.” Once they were outside the prison, the angel vanished. Peter was free!

15, 16. (a) Describe how Jehovah’s angel delivered Peter from prison. (See the picture below.) (b) Why is it comforting to contemplate the way that Jehovah rescued Peter?

An angel led Peter through the massive iron gate



¹⁶ Is it not faith-strengthening to contemplate Jehovah’s power to rescue his servants? Of course, we do not expect Jehovah to deliver us miraculously at this time. However, we have full faith that he uses his power in behalf of his people today. (2 Chron. 16:9) By means of his powerful holy spirit, he can make us equal to any trial we may face. (2 Cor. 4:7; 2 Pet. 2:9) And Jehovah will soon empower his Son to free countless millions from that most unyielding of prisons, death. (John 5:28, 29) Our faith in God’s promises can give us tremendous courage when we face trials today.

BEARING THOROUGH WITNESS DESPITE OBSTACLES

¹⁷ Here is a third lesson about watchfulness that we can learn from the apostles: They kept on bearing thorough witness despite obstacles. Preaching with zeal and urgency is vital to keeping on the watch. The apostle Paul was an outstanding example in this regard. He exerted himself zealously, traveling extensively and establishing many congregations. He endured many hardships, yet he never lost his zeal or his sense of urgency.—2 Cor. 11:23-29.

¹⁸ Consider our last glimpse of Paul in the book of Acts, as recorded in Acts chapter 28. Paul arrived in Rome, where he was to appear before Nero. He was kept in custody, perhaps chained to his guard. Yet, no chain could silence the zealous apostle! Paul continued to find ways to bear witness. (**Read Acts 28: 17, 23, 24.**) After three days, Paul summoned the principal men of the Jews in

17. How did Paul set an outstanding example in preaching with zeal and urgency?

18. How did Paul continue to bear witness when he was in custody in Rome?

order to give them a witness. Then, on a chosen day, he gave an even greater witness. Verse 23 states: "They [the local Jews] now arranged for a day with him, and they came in greater numbers to him in his lodging place. And he explained the matter to them by bearing thorough witness concerning the kingdom of God and by using persuasion with them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening."

¹⁹ Why was Paul so effective in bearing witness? Notice that verse 23 really highlights a number of reasons. (1) He focused on God's Kingdom and on Jesus Christ. (2) He tried to appeal to his listeners "by using persuasion." (3) He reasoned from the Scriptures. (4) He showed a selfless attitude, bearing witness "from morning till evening." Paul gave a powerful witness, but not everyone responded. "Some began to believe the things said; others would not believe," notes verse 24. Dissension ensued, and the people departed.

²⁰ Was Paul disheartened because not everyone accepted the good news? By no means! Acts 28:30, 31 tells us: "He remained for an entire two years in his own hired house, and he would kindly receive all those who came in to him, preaching the kingdom of God to them and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with the greatest freedom of speech, without hindrance." On that truly warm note, the inspired book of Acts concludes.

²¹ What can we learn from Paul's ex-

19, 20. (a) Why was Paul effective in bearing witness? (b) How did Paul respond when not everyone accepted the good news?

21. What can we learn from Paul's example when he was under house arrest?

"THE BOOK OF ACTS WILL NEVER BE THE SAME FOR ME"

After reading the book "*Bearing Thorough Witness*" About God's Kingdom, a traveling overseer expressed his feelings as follows: "The book of Acts will never be the same for me. I have 'walked' through the account of Acts on many occasions but only as if holding a candle and wearing dirty glasses. Now I feel as if I have been blessed to see its glory in the brightness of the sun."

ample? While under house arrest, Paul was not free to witness from house to house. Yet, he maintained a positive outlook, witnessing to all who came to him. Likewise, many of God's people today maintain their joy and keep preaching despite being unjustly imprisoned because of their faith. Some of our dear brothers and sisters are housebound, perhaps even living in nursing homes because of advanced age or illness. As they are able, they preach to doctors and staff, visitors, and others who come in to them. Their heart's desire is to bear thorough witness about God's Kingdom. How we appreciate the example they set!

²² Clearly, there is much to learn about watchfulness from the apostles and other first-century Christians mentioned in the Bible book of Acts. As we await the end of this old system of things, let us be determined to imitate those first-century Christians in giving a bold and zealous witness. There is now no greater privilege we can have than to share in "bearing thorough witness" about God's Kingdom!—Acts 28:23.

22. (a) What provision is helping us to benefit from the Bible book of Acts? (See box above.) (b) What is your determination as you await the end of this old system of things?

‘How Will I Be Able to Preach?’

Throughout the world, we have outstanding examples of brothers and sisters who faithfully share in the preaching work despite coping with serious health problems.

Take, as an example, Dalia, who lives in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania.



Dalia is a sister in her mid-30's. Since birth, she has suffered from the effects of cerebral apoplexy. That disorder has left her paralyzed and with a serious speech impediment. As a result, only family members are able to understand her well. Dalia lives with her mother, Galina, who cares for her needs. Although Dalia's life has been filled with adversity and anxiety, she

maintains a positive outlook. How is that possible?

Galina explains: "In 1999, my cousin Apolonija came to visit us. We noticed that Apolonija, who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses, knew her Bible well, and Dalia began to ask her many questions. Before long, a Bible study was started with Dalia. Occasionally, I joined them in the study to help interpret Dalia's speech. I noticed, though, that everything that she was learning really benefited her. Soon I too requested a Bible study."

As Dalia began to understand Bible truths, one question started to bother her more and more. Finally, she spoke up and asked Apolonija: "How is one like me—being paralyzed—able to preach?" (Matt. 28:19, 20) Apolonija calmly reassured Dalia: "Do not be afraid. Jehovah will help you." And, indeed, Jehovah does.

How, then, does Dalia preach? In several ways. Christian sisters help her to prepare letters with a Bible message. First, Dalia expresses her thoughts to the sisters. Then, they compose a letter containing her thoughts. Dalia also witnesses by sending text messages on her mobile phone. And when the weather is favorable, congregation members take her outside to approach people they meet in local parks and on the street.

Dalia and her mother have continued to make spiritual progress. They both dedicated themselves to Jehovah and were baptized in November 2004. In September 2008, a Polish-speaking group was formed in Vilnius. Since the group had a need for more Kingdom publishers, Dalia and her mother joined it. Says Dalia: "Some months I get worried when I have not yet been out in service. But after praying to Jehovah about it, soon someone makes an appointment to go out with me in the ministry." How does our dear sister Dalia feel about her situation? She states: "The disease has paralyzed my body, but it has not paralyzed my mind. I am so happy to be able to tell others about Jehovah!"



Making Study Time More Enjoyable and Productive

How can we find more enjoyment in studying the Bible? How can we make our study periods more productive? Let us briefly consider three important steps that will help us to get the most out of our personal study of the Bible.



1 PRAY: The first step to take is to pray. (Ps. 42:8) Why? We should consider the study of God's Word to be part of our worship. Therefore, we need to ask Jehovah to put us in the proper frame of mind and to give us his holy spirit. (Luke 11:13) Says Barbara, a longtime missionary: "I always pray before I read or study the Bible. After that, I feel that Jehovah is with me and that he approves of what I am doing." Prayer before study opens our mind and heart to accept fully the abundant spiritual food that is before us.

2 MEDITATE: Because of lack of time, some limit themselves to a superficial reading of God's Word. However, they miss out on the benefits they could derive from studying the Bible. Carlos, who has been serving Jehovah for more than 50 years, has come to realize the importance of setting aside time for meditation to make his study more productive. He says: "I now read fewer pages of the Bible at a time—about two pages each day. Then I can devote more time to meditating on what I read so as to learn important lessons." (Ps. 77:12) When we take time to meditate, we enhance our knowledge and comprehension of God's will. —Col. 1:9-11.

3 APPLY: If we see the practical value of an activity, we benefit more from it. That certainly is true of Bible study. "Study helps me to overcome problems in daily life, and it prepares me to help others," says Gabriel, a young brother who has a regular Bible-study routine. He adds: "I try to apply in my personal life everything I learn." (Deut. 11:18; Josh. 1:8) Yes, there is a wealth of godly knowledge that we can absorb and apply.—Prov. 2:1-5.

REVIEW: What a privilege we have to delve into the knowledge provided by Jehovah, the Source of all wisdom! (Rom. 11:33) Therefore, the next time you study, make sure you first **pray** to Jehovah and ask him to give you the proper frame of mind and his holy spirit. Then pause at times to **meditate** on what you read. Also, follow through and **apply** in your daily life the things you learn. When you take these important steps, you will find that your study of the Bible becomes most enjoyable and productive.



LEARN FROM 'THE FRAMEWORK OF TRUTH'

"[You have] the framework of the knowledge and of the truth in the Law."

—ROM. 2:20.

LOOK FOR THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS:

What did the sacrifices stipulated by the Mosaic Law foreshadow?

What parallel exists between certain sacrifices made by the Israelites and by Christians today?

What factors determine whether a sacrifice will be acceptable or unacceptable to Jehovah?

WERE it not for the inspired writings of the apostle Paul, it would be hard for us to understand the significance of many aspects of the Mosaic Law. In his letter to the Hebrews, for example, he clarifies how Jesus as a "faithful high priest" could once and for all time offer a "propitiatory sacrifice" making it possible for those exercising faith in it to obtain "an everlasting deliverance." (Heb. 2:17; 9:11, 12) Paul explained that the tabernacle was merely "a shadow of the heavenly things" and that Jesus became the Mediator of "a better covenant" than that mediated by Moses. (Heb. 7:22; 8:1-5) In Paul's day, such explanations of the Law were invaluable to Christians, and they still are. They help us to grasp more fully the value of the provisions that God has made for us.

² When Paul wrote to Christians in Rome, he directed some of his comments to congregation members who were of Jewish stock and who had been instructed in the Mosaic Law. He acknowledged that because of their familiarity with that divine Law, such ones had the advantage of possessing a "framework of the knowledge and of the truth" concerning Jehovah and his righteous principles. A grasp of that 'framework of truth' and heartfelt respect for it enabled Jewish Christians, like faithful Jews before them, to guide, teach, and illuminate those who were in ignorance of the Law that Jehovah had given to his people.—**Read Romans 2: 17-20.**

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1. Why should we be interested in understanding the significance of the Mosaic Law?
 2. What advantage did Jewish Christians have over Gentiles?

SHADOWS OF JESUS' SACRIFICE

³ The framework of truth to which Paul referred is still important in order for us to understand Jehovah's purposes. The principles behind the Mosaic Law have not lost any significance or value. With this in mind, let us consider just one aspect of that Law—how various sacrifices and offerings led humble Jews to Christ and helped them to understand what God required of them. And since Jehovah's basic requirements for his servants never change, we will also see that God's laws to the Israelites regarding sacrifices and offerings can help us to analyze the quality of our sacred service.—Mal. 3:6.

⁴ It could hardly have been lost on the ancient Jews that many aspects of the Mosaic Law emphasized their sinfulness. For example, anyone who touched a human corpse was required to undergo purification. To this end, a sound red cow was slaughtered and burned. Its ashes were kept to make "water for cleansing," which was sprinkled on the person being purified on the third and the seventh day after contamination. (Num. 19:1-13) And as a reminder that human reproduction transmitted imperfection and sin, a woman who gave birth was required to observe a period of uncleanness, after which she was to make atonement by means of a sacrifice.—Lev. 12:1-8.

⁵ Animal sacrifices were required in many other situations of everyday life to atone for sins. Whether the worshipper realized it or not, these sacrifices—and

those later offered at Jehovah's temple—were "a shadow" of Jesus' perfect sacrifice.—Heb. 10:1-10.

THE SPIRIT BEHIND THE SACRIFICE

⁶ A fundamental standard concerning any animal that was to be sacrificed to Jehovah was that it be "sound" in all respects—not blind, injured, deformed, or sick. (Lev. 22:20-22) When the Israelites offered fruits or grains to Jehovah, they needed to be the "firstfruits," "the very best" of their harvests. (Num. 18:12, 29) A second-rate offering was not acceptable to Jehovah. The important

Jehovah's basic requirements for his servants never change

requirement regarding animal sacrifices pictured that Jesus' sacrifice would be spotless and unblemished and that Jehovah would sacrifice what was best and dearest to him in order to redeem mankind.—1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

⁷ If the person making a sacrifice was truly grateful to Jehovah for all of His goodness, then would he not be happy to select the very best that he possessed? The quality of the offering was left up to the individual. However, he knew that God would not be pleased with a defective offering because that would indicate that the man considered the sacrifice a mere formality, even a burden. (*Read Malachi 1:6-8, 13.*) This

3. How do we benefit from studying ancient Jewish sacrifices?

4, 5. (a) Of what did the Mosaic Law remind God's people? (b) God's law concerning sacrifices pointed to what?

6, 7. (a) What considerations guided the Israelites in their selection of sacrificial offerings, and what did this foreshadow? (b) What questions might we ask ourselves?



Which animal would you have offered to Jehovah?

should make us reflect on our service to God: ‘With what spirit am I serving Jehovah? Might it be appropriate for me to review the quality of my service and my motives for serving him?’

⁸ If an Israelite’s sacrifice was a *voluntary* manifestation of sincere gratitude to Jehovah or, as in the case of a burnt offering, a request for his approval, then making the appropriate choice of animal would likely present no challenge. The worshipper would be happy to give Jehovah his very best. Christians today do not make the literal sacrifices stipulated by the Mosaic Law; yet they do make sacrifices, in the sense that they use their time, energy, and resources to serve Jehovah. The apostle Paul referred to the “public declaration” of the Christian hope and “the doing of good and the sharing of things with others” as sacrifices that please God. (Heb. 13: 15, 16) The spirit with which Jehovah’s

people engage in such activities reveals how grateful and appreciative they are for all that God has given to them. So there is a parallel between the attitudes and motivations of those who engage in Christian service today and those who offered voluntary sacrifices in ancient times.

⁹ What can be said, though, of a situation in which the Mosaic Law *required* a sin offering or a guilt offering from an individual because of some shortcoming on his part? Do you think that the obligatory nature of the sacrifice would have made a difference to a person’s willingness and attitude in offering it? Might such sacrifices have been offered begrudgingly? (Lev. 4:27, 28) They would not have been if the person involved was sincere in wanting to maintain a good relationship with Jehovah.

¹⁰ Similarly today, you may realize that thoughtlessly, unwittingly, or carelessly, you may have offended a brother. Your conscience may tell you that you have fallen short in your conduct. Anyone who is serious about serving Jehovah would do all in his power to rectify the shortcoming, would he not? That could mean apologizing sincerely to the person offended or, in the case of serious wrongdoing, seeking the spiritual assistance of loving Christian overseers. (Matt. 5:23, 24; Jas. 5:14, 15) So it costs us something to rectify a sin committed against a fellow man or against God himself. Even so, when we make such “sacrifices,” we restore our relationship with Jehovah and our brother and we gain a clean conscience. This, in turn, reassures us that Jehovah’s way is the best way.

8, 9. Why should we consider the spirit with which the Israelites made their sacrifices?

10. What “sacrifices” might Christians have to make to repair damaged relationships?

¹¹ Certain sacrifices stipulated by the Mosaic Law were considered communion offerings. These signified peace with Jehovah. The person making such an offering and his family would eat the meat of the sacrificed animal, perhaps in one of the temple's dining rooms. The officiating priest received a portion of the meat, as did the other priests serving at the temple. (Lev. 3:1, ftn.; 7: 31-33) The worshipper made his sacrifice purely out of the desire to enjoy a good relationship with God. It was as though the worshipper, his family, the priests, and Jehovah himself were joyfully partaking of a meal together, in peace.

¹² What greater privilege could there be than, in a symbolic way, to invite Jehovah to such a meal and for him to accept? Naturally, the host would want to offer his very best to such an honored guest. The provision of communion sacrifices, part of the Law's framework of truth, pointed to the fact that by means of Jesus' greater sacrifice, all those of mankind who desire to attain an intimate, peaceful relationship with their Creator can do so. Today, we can enjoy Jehovah's friendship and company as we voluntarily sacrifice our resources and energies in his service.

CAUTIONS REGARDING SACRIFICES

¹³ Naturally, in order to be accepted by Jehovah, the sacrifices prescribed by the Mosaic Law had to be offered with the right spirit and heart condition. The

11, 12. (a) What provision characterized communion sacrifices? (b) What relevance do communion sacrifices have to modern-day pure worship?

13, 14. Why was King Saul's intended sacrifice not acceptable to Jehovah?

Bible, however, contains cautionary examples of sacrifices that were *not* acceptable to God. What made him reject them? Let us consider two situations.

¹⁴ The prophet Samuel told King Saul that the time had come for Jehovah to execute judgment on the Amalekites. Saul therefore was to exterminate this enemy nation along with its livestock. After his victory, however, Saul allowed his soldiers to preserve alive Agag, the king of the Amalekites. Saul also spared the best of their livestock as something that could be sacrificed to Jehovah. (1 Sam. 15:2, 3, 21) What was Jehovah's reaction? He rejected Saul for his disobedience. (**Read 1 Samuel 15:22, 23.**) What do we learn from this? That to be acceptable to God, a sacrifice must be accompanied by obedience to his commands.

Those who offer acceptable sacrifices to Jehovah enjoy his approval



¹⁵ A similar example is found in the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah's day, the Israelites were going through the motions of sacrificing to Jehovah. Their bad behavior, however, made their sacrifices invalid. "Of what benefit to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?" asked Jehovah. "I have had enough of whole burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed animals; and in the blood of young bulls and male lambs and he-goats I have taken no delight. . . . Stop bringing in any more valueless grain offerings. Incense—it is something detestable to me." What was the problem? God told them: "Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening; with bloodshed your very hands have become filled. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the badness of your dealings from in front of my eyes; cease to do bad."—Isa. 1:11-16.

¹⁶ Jehovah took no pleasure in sacrifices offered by unrepentant sinners. However, the prayers and offerings of those sincerely striving to live in harmony with God's commands were acceptable to him. The framework of the Law taught such individuals that they were sinful and in need of forgiveness. (Gal. 3:19) That realization appropriately produced a contrite heart. Similarly today, we need to recognize our need for Christ's sacrifice, which is truly capable of atoning for sins. If we understand and appreciate this, then Jehovah will be "delighted" with all that we offer him in our dedicated service.—**Read Psalm 51:17, 19.**

15. The bad conduct of certain Israelites who made sacrifices in Isaiah's day showed what?

16. What determines whether a sacrifice is acceptable to God?

EXERCISE FAITH IN JESUS' SACRIFICE!

¹⁷ The advantage we have over those who lived in pre-Christian times is that we no longer have to be content with seeing just "a shadow" of God's purposes. (Heb. 10:1) The laws concerning sacrifices encouraged the Jews to develop attitudes appropriate to attaining a good relationship with God—genuine gratitude to him, the desire to give him one's best, and recognition of the need for redemption. Thanks to the explanations in the Christian Greek Scriptures, we can understand that by means of the ransom, Jehovah will permanently remove the effects of sin and that even now he allows us to have a good conscience before him. Jesus' ransom sacrifice is a wonderful provision!—Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:9, 14.

¹⁸ Of course, more than a simple understanding of the ransom sacrifice is needed in order for us to benefit from it. "The Law has become our tutor leading to Christ, that we might be declared righteous due to *faith*," wrote the apostle Paul. (Gal. 3:24) And such faith cannot be devoid of works. (Jas. 2:26) Paul thus encouraged first-century Christians who possessed the framework of knowledge conveyed by the Mosaic Law to put that knowledge into practice. By so doing, their conduct would harmonize with the divine principles they taught.—**Read Romans 2:21-23.**

¹⁹ Although Christians today are not required to observe the Mosaic Law, they must still present sacrifices that are acceptable to Jehovah. How we can do this will be the subject of the following article.

17-19. (a) How can we appropriately show Jehovah our gratitude for Jesus' ransom sacrifice? (b) What will be considered in the next article?



MAKING WHOLE-SOULED SACRIFICES FOR JEHOVAH

“Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah.”—COL. 3:23.

SEE IF YOU CAN ANSWER:

How can we honor Jehovah in our everyday activities?

What sacrifices do we make in our worship of God?

How can we offer our material things to Jehovah?

IN THE first century C.E., Jehovah revealed to his people that Jesus’ ransom sacrifice had abolished the Mosaic Law. (Col. 2:13, 14) All the sacrificial offerings that the Jews had been making for hundreds of years were no longer necessary and no longer had any value. The Law had fulfilled its function as a “tutor leading to Christ.”—Gal. 3:24.

² That is not to say that Christians are no longer interested in sacrifices. On the contrary, the apostle Peter spoke of the need to “offer up *spiritual* sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet. 2:5) Moreover, the apostle Paul had made it clear that a dedicated Christian’s life—every aspect of it—may appropriately be considered “a sacrifice.”—Rom. 12:1.

³ So, then, a Christian makes sacrifices for Jehovah, either by offering up certain things to him or by giving up certain things for him. On the basis of what we know about the requirements that existed for the Israelites, how can we be sure that all our sacrifices today are acceptable to Jehovah?

IN EVERYDAY LIFE

⁴ As we go about our everyday lives, it might seem difficult to relate our activities to making sacrifices for Jehovah. Housework, schoolwork, secular work, shopping, and the like might on the surface seem to have little to do with spiritual concerns. However, if you have dedicated your life to Jehovah or hope to do so in the near future, then the spirit

1-3. (a) Did Jesus’ death on the torture stake mean that Jehovah no longer required any kind of sacrifice from us? Explain. (b) What question arises with regard to sacrifices today?

4. What must we remember about everyday activities of life?

with which you approach mundane activities is important. We are Christians 24 hours a day. Scriptural principles need to be applied in every aspect of our lives. Hence, Paul urged us: “Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men.”—**Read Colossians 3:18-24.**

⁵ A Christian’s day-to-day activities are not part of his sacred service. Yet, the fact that Paul urges us to work “whole-souled as to Jehovah” makes us think about our entire course of life. So how might we apply this to ourselves? Do we act and dress with proper decorum at all times? Or while engaging in day-to-day activities, might we be embarrassed to identify ourselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses, either because of the way we behave or because of the way

5, 6. What considerations should affect our everyday dress and conduct?

we dress? Never may that be! Jehovah’s people would not want to do anything that might reflect badly on God’s name.—Isa. 43:10; 2 Cor. 6:3, 4, 9.

⁶ Let us examine how a desire to work “whole-souled as to Jehovah” affects a number of different areas of life. As we do so, bear in mind that all sacrifices that the Israelites presented to Jehovah had to be the very best they had.—Ex. 23:19.

HOW YOUR LIFE IS AFFECTED

⁷ When you dedicated yourself to Jehovah, you made that decision without reservation, did you not? In effect, you said that in every aspect of your life, you would put Jehovah first. (**Read Hebrews 10:7.**) That was a good decision. Doubtless you have seen that when you seek Jehovah’s will in a matter and strive to work in harmony with it, the results are excellent. (Isa. 48:17, 18) God’s people are holy and joyful because they reflect the qualities of the One who instructs them.—Lev. 11:44; 1 Tim. 1:11.

⁸ The sacrifices that the Israelites made to Jehovah were considered to be holy. (Lev. 6:25; 7:1) The Hebrew term translated “holiness” conveys the idea of separateness, exclusiveness, or sanctification to God. In order for our sacrifices to be acceptable to Jehovah, they must be separate from and uncontaminated by worldly influences. We cannot be loving any of the things that Jehovah hates. (**Read 1 John 2:15-17.**) Clearly, this means that we have to avoid any associations or involvements that would defile us from God’s point of view. (Isa.

7. What is involved in Christian dedication?

8. Of what significance is it to us that Jehovah considered ancient sacrifices to be holy?



2:4; Rev. 18:4) It also means that we cannot allow our eyes to keep looking at that which is unclean or immoral or let our minds fantasize about such things. —Col. 3:5, 6.

⁹ Paul urged fellow believers: “Do not forget the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased.” (Heb. 13:16) So being good and doing good to others as a matter of course is something that Jehovah views as an acceptable sacrifice to him. Loving concern for others is a distinguishing mark of true Christians. —John 13:34, 35; Col. 1:10.

SACRIFICES IN WORSHIP

¹⁰ One of the most obvious ways in which we as Christians do good things for others is through “the public declaration of our hope.” Do you seize every opportunity to give a witness? Paul called this essential Christian activity “a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to [God’s] name.” (Heb. 10:23; 13:15; Hos. 14:2) Much could be said about the quantity and quality of the time that we spend preaching the good news of the Kingdom, and many Service Meeting parts are designed to stimulate our thinking on this matter. Briefly stated, however, since our field service and informal witnessing activities are “a sacrifice of praise,” a part of our worship, that sacrifice should be of the very best that we can offer. While circumstances vary, the amount of time that we devote to announcing the good news often

9. How important is a Christian’s conduct toward others, and why?

10, 11. How does Jehovah view our Christian ministry and worship, and what effect should this have on us?



Do you seize every opportunity to give a witness?

reflects our appreciation for spiritual things.

¹¹ Christians regularly spend time in private or group worship. Jehovah requires us to do so. It is true that we no longer have to observe a strict Sabbath rest or make regular trips to festivals in Jerusalem. However, those ancient observances do have their counterparts in Christian life. God still expects us to desist from dead works and to study his Word, pray, and attend Christian meetings. And Christian family heads take the initiative in conducting family worship with the members of their own

households. (1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 10:24, 25) Regarding our spiritual activities, we do well to ask ourselves, 'Could I improve the quality of my worship?'

¹² King David sang to Jehovah: "May my prayer be prepared as incense before you." (Ps. 141:2) Think for a moment about your prayers—about their regularity and their quality. The book of Revelation likens "the prayers of the holy ones" to incense in that acceptable prayers rise to Jehovah like a sweet-smelling and pleasant odor. (Rev. 5:8) In ancient Israel, the incense that was regularly offered on Jehovah's altar had to be carefully and precisely prepared. It was acceptable to Jehovah only if offered according to the guidelines that he had established. (Ex. 30:34-37; Lev. 10:1, 2) If our heartfelt prayers are similarly formulated, then we can be sure that they are acceptable to Jehovah.

GIVING AND RECEIVING

¹³ Financial contributions made to support the worldwide work can be likened to a sacrifice, whether we offer much or little. (Mark 12:41-44) In the first century C.E., the congregation in Philippi sent Epaphroditus to Rome in order to care for Paul's physical needs. That envoy of the Philippians evidently carried with him a monetary gift from the congregation. This was not the first time that the Philippians had shown generosity to Paul. By their kind-

12. (a) The offering of incense in ancient worship can be compared to what today? (b) How should this comparison affect the content of our prayers?

13, 14. (a) What service did Epaphroditus and the Philippian congregation perform for Paul, and how did the apostle feel about it? (b) How can we follow the example of Epaphroditus and the Philippians?

ness they intended to free Paul of financial worries so that he could devote more time to the ministry. How did Paul view the gift? He called it "a sweet-smelling odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God." (*Read Philippians 4:15-19.*) Paul truly appreciated the Philippians' kind gesture, and so did Jehovah.

¹⁴ Likewise today, Jehovah deeply appreciates our contributions to the worldwide work. Moreover, he promises that if we continue to put Kingdom interests first in our lives, he will take care of all our needs, spiritual and physical.—Matt. 6:33; Luke 6:38.

SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION

¹⁵ It would take a long time to enumerate the many reasons we have for being grateful to Jehovah. Is it not true that we should thank him each day for the gift of life? He gives us all that we need to sustain ourselves—food, clothing, and shelter as well as every breath that we take. Moreover, our faith, based on accurate knowledge, gives us hope. It is appropriate that we worship Jehovah and offer sacrifices of praise to him, simply because of who he is and what he has done for us.—*Read Revelation 4:11.*

¹⁶ As we have seen in the preceding article, an especially precious gift of God to mankind is Christ's ransom sacrifice. This is an outstanding manifestation of God's love for us. (1 John 4:10) What is the appropriate response to it? Paul declared: "The love the Christ has compels us, because this is what we

15. What are some of the things for which you are grateful to Jehovah?

16. How should we respond to Christ's ransom sacrifice?

have judged, that one man died for all; . . . and he died for all that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised up.” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15) In effect, Paul was saying that if we appreciate God’s undeserved kindness, we will use our lives to honor Him and His Son. Our love and appreciation for God and Christ is expressed through our obedience and by our desire to preach and make disciples.—1 Tim. 2:3, 4; 1 John 5:3.

¹⁷ Would it be possible for you to improve the sacrifice of praise that you offer to God? After reflecting on all the good that Jehovah has done for them, many have been moved to organize their time and activities to increase their participation in the Kingdom-preaching work or other theocratic activities. Some have been able to auxiliary pioneer for one or more months each year, while others have been able to enter the ranks of the regular pioneers. Still others have engaged in Kingdom construction projects. Are not these excellent ways to show one’s appreciation? If performed with the right motive—to show gratitude and give thanks—these acts of sacred service are acceptable to God.

¹⁸ Many Christians have felt a debt of gratitude to Jehovah and have been motivated by it. One such person is Morena. She searched for answers to her spiritual questions in Catholicism, the religion in which she was raised, and in Asian philosophy. But she found no satisfying answers in either. Only when

she began studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses was her spiritual thirst quenched. Morena was so grateful for the Scriptural answers to all her questions and for the stability that those answers gave to her life that she wanted to thank Jehovah by using all her energies in his service. She began auxiliary pioneering on a regular basis immediately

Does Jehovah’s goodness motivate you to improve your sacrifice of praise?

after her baptism, and as soon as her circumstances allowed for it, she became a regular pioneer. That was 30 years ago, and Morena is still in full-time service.

¹⁹ Of course, there are many faithful servants of Jehovah whose circumstances do not allow them to serve as pioneers. Whatever we can do in Jehovah’s service, all of us can offer acceptable spiritual sacrifices to him. In our *conduct*, we need to observe righteous principles carefully, mindful that we represent Jehovah at all times. In *faith*, we put full trust in the outworking of God’s purposes. In fine *works*, we help spread the good news. Out of our heart’s abundance and out of appreciation for all that Jehovah has done for us, let us continue to make whole-souled sacrifices for Jehovah.

17, 18. In what ways have some increased their sacrifice of praise to Jehovah? Give an example.

19. How might it be possible for you to increase your sacrifices to Jehovah?



A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD TO BENEFIT ALL MANKIND

"You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession.'"

—1 PET. 2:9.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

When was a royal priesthood first promised?

How does the new covenant produce the royal priesthood?

What benefits will the royal priesthood bring to mankind?

DURING the evening of Nisan 14 in the year 33 C.E., Jesus Christ and his 12 apostles observed the Jewish Passover for the last time. After dismissing the traitorous Judas Iscariot, Jesus introduced a different observance, later called "the Lord's evening meal." (1 Cor. 11:20) Jesus twice said: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." This event is also known as the Memorial, a memorial of Christ with emphasis on his death. (1 Cor. 11:24, 25) In obedience to this command, Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide observe the Memorial annually. In 2012, Nisan 14 of the Bible calendar begins at sundown, Thursday, April 5.

² The disciple Luke sums up in two verses what Jesus did and said on that occasion: "He took a loaf, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying: 'This means my body which is to be given in your behalf. Keep doing this in remembrance of me.' Also, the cup in the same way after they had the evening meal, he saying: 'This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood, which is to be poured out in your behalf.'" (Luke 22:19, 20) How would the apostles have understood these words?

³ As Jews, the apostles were well-acquainted with animal sacrifices that priests offered to God at the temple in Jerusalem. Such offerings were made to gain Jehovah's favor, and many served as a token covering for sin. (Lev. 1:4; 22:17-29) So the apostles could understand that when Jesus said that his

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1. Why is "the Lord's evening meal" also called the Memorial, and what is its purpose?
 2. What did Jesus say about the emblems he used?
 3. How would the apostles have understood the meaning of the emblems?

body and blood were 'to be given and to be poured out in their behalf,' he meant that he was to give his own perfect life as a sacrifice. It would be a sacrifice of far greater worth than that of animals.

⁴ What about Jesus' words "this cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood"? The apostles knew the prophecy about the new covenant, recorded at *Jeremiah 31:31-33*. (*Read.*) Jesus' words indicated that he was now introducing that new covenant, which would replace the Law covenant that Jehovah had established with Israel through Moses. Were the two covenants related?

⁵ Yes, their purposes were closely linked. When introducing the Law covenant, Jehovah told the nation: "If you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. And you yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Ex. 19:5, 6) What would these words have meant to the Israelites?

THE PROMISE OF A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

⁶ The Israelites understood the term "covenant," for Jehovah had concluded such solemn agreements with their forefathers Noah and Abraham. (Gen. 6:18; 9:8-17; 15:18; 17:1-9) As part of his covenant with Abraham, Jehovah had promised: "By means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless

themselves." (Gen. 22:18) The Law covenant was a further development of this promise. On the basis of it, Israel could become Jehovah's "special property out of all other peoples." For what purpose? To 'become to Jehovah a kingdom of priests.'

⁷ The Israelites were familiar with kings and priests, but Melchizedek was the only man of the past who had held both offices at the same time with Jehovah's approval. (Gen. 14:18) Jehovah now offered to the nation the opportunity of producing "a kingdom of priests." As inspired writings later indicated, this meant the opportunity to furnish a royal priesthood, kings who would also be priests.—1 Pet. 2:9.

⁸ A king, of course, rules. But what does a priest do? Hebrews 5:1 explains: "Every high priest taken from among men is appointed in behalf of men over the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." So a priest appointed by Jehovah represents sinful people before God by means of prescribed offerings, pleading with Him on their behalf. Conversely, a priest also represents Jehovah before people, instructing them in divine law. (Lev. 10:8-11; Mal. 2:7) In these ways, a divinely appointed priest works to reconcile people to God.

⁹ The Law covenant thus offered to Israel the opportunity to produce a royal

4. What did Jesus mean when he said: "This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood"?

5. What prospects did the Law covenant offer Israel?

6. Of what promise was the Law covenant a further development?

7. What was meant by the expression "a kingdom of priests"?

8. What services do divinely appointed priests provide?

9. (a) On what condition could Israel realize the promise of providing "a kingdom of priests"? (b) Why did Jehovah establish a priesthood within Israel? (c) What prevented Israel from furnishing "a kingdom of priests" under the Law covenant?

priesthood that would benefit “all other peoples.” This awesome prospect came with a condition, though: “If you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant.” Could the Israelites ‘strictly obey Jehovah’s voice’? Yes, to a certain degree. Could they do so perfectly? No. (Rom. 3:19, 20) For that reason, Jehovah established in the meantime a priesthood *within* Israel, separate from any kingship, to offer animal sacrifices for sins that the Israelites would inevitably commit. (Lev. 4:1–6:7) These sins included those of the priests themselves. (Heb. 5:1-3; 8:3) Jehovah accepted such sacrifices, but they could not fully compensate for the sins of the offerers. The priesthood under the Law covenant could not fully reconcile even sincere Israelites to God. The apostle Paul put it this way: “It is not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take sins away.” (Heb. 10:1-4) Because of their violating the Law, the Israelites actually came under a curse. (Gal. 3:10) They could hardly serve the world as a royal priesthood in such a condition.

¹⁰ Was Jehovah’s promise that they could furnish “a kingdom of priests” therefore an empty one? Not at all. If they sincerely tried to obey, they would have this opportunity—but not under the Law. Why not? (**Read Galatians 3:19-25.**) For those who faithfully endeavored to observe it, the Law had the effect of preserving pure worship. It made the Jews aware of their transgressions and of the need for a sacrifice greater than their high priest could offer. It was a tutor that would lead them to the Christ, or Messiah, titles that mean “Anointed One.” However, when the

Messiah arrived, he would introduce the new covenant foretold by Jeremiah. Those who accepted the Christ were invited to become party to the new covenant and would actually become “a kingdom of priests.” Let us see how.

THE NEW COVENANT PRODUCES A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

¹¹ In 29 C.E., the Messiah arrived in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. At about 30 years of age, he presented himself to do Jehovah’s special will for him, symbolizing this by water baptism. Jehovah acknowledged him as “my Son, the beloved,” anointing him, not with oil, but with holy spirit. (Matt. 3:13-17; Acts 10:38) That anointing commissioned him as High Priest for believing ones of the entire human family and as their future King. (Heb. 1:8, 9; 5:5, 6) He would be the foundation of a truly royal priesthood.

¹² As High Priest, what sacrifice could Jesus offer that would completely cover the inherited sin of believing ones? As he indicated when instituting the Memorial of his death, his own perfect human life was the sacrifice. (**Read Hebrews 9:11, 12.**) From the time of his baptism in 29 C.E., Jesus as High Priest submitted to tests and training until the time of his actual death. (Heb. 4:15; 5:7-10) After he was resurrected, he ascended to heaven and presented the value of his sacrifice to Jehovah himself. (Heb. 9:24) Thereafter, Jesus could plead with Jehovah on behalf of those exercising faith in his sacrifice and assist them to serve God with everlasting life in view. (Heb. 7:25) His sacrifice also served to

11. How did Jesus become the foundation of a royal priesthood?

12. What did Jesus’ sacrifice make possible?

10. What purpose did the Law covenant serve?

validate the new covenant.—Heb. 8:6; 9:15.

¹³ Those invited to be in the new covenant were also to be anointed with holy spirit. (2 Cor. 1:21) Faithful Jews and then Gentiles were included. (Eph. 3: 5, 6) What were the prospects of those in the new covenant? They would receive true forgiveness of their sins. Jehovah had promised: “I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more.” (Jer. 31:34) With their sins legally canceled, they would be in a position to become “a kingdom of priests.” Addressing anointed Christians, Peter wrote: “You *are* ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies’ of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Pet. 2:9) Peter here quotes Jehovah’s words to Israel when introducing the Law and applies them to Christians in the new covenant.—Ex. 19:5, 6.

13. What were the prospects of those invited to be in the new covenant?

A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD BRINGS BENEFITS TO ALL MANKIND

¹⁴ Where would those in the new covenant serve? On earth, where, as a group, they would serve as a priesthood, representing Jehovah to people by ‘declaring abroad his excellencies’ and providing spiritual food. (Matt. 24: 45; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5) After their death and resurrection, they would serve with Christ in heaven as both kings and priests, fully carrying out the functions of both offices. (Luke 22:29; 1 Pet. 1: 3-5; Rev. 1:6) Confirming this, the apostle John saw in vision a number of spirit creatures near Jehovah’s throne in heaven. In “a new song” addressed to “the Lamb,” they sing: “With your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth.” (Rev. 5:8-10) In a later vision, John says of these rulers: “They will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with

14. Where would the royal priesthood serve?

The royal priesthood will bring eternal benefits to mankind



him for the thousand years." (Rev. 20:6) Together with Christ, they make up a royal priesthood to benefit all mankind.

¹⁵ What benefits will the 144,000 bring to those on earth? Revelation chapter 21 portrays them as a heavenly city, New Jerusalem, called "the Lamb's wife." (Rev. 21:9) Verses 2 to 4 state: "I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: 'Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And 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. The former things have passed away.'" What wonderful blessings! The elimination of death will remove the principal cause of tears, mourning, outcry, and pain. It will mean lifting faithful humans to perfection, completely reconciling them to God.

¹⁶ Further describing the blessings this royal priesthood will bring, Revelation 22:1, 2 states: "He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of [New Jerusalem's] broad way. And on this side of the river and on that side there were trees of life producing twelve crops of fruit, yielding their fruits each month. And the leaves of the trees were for the curing of the nations." With these symbolic provisions, "the nations," or family groups of mankind, will be completely cured of the imperfection inherited

from Adam. Truly, 'the former things will have passed away.'

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD COMPLETES ITS WORK

¹⁷ By the end of 1,000 years of beneficial service, the royal priesthood will have elevated its earthly subjects to human perfection. As High Priest and King, Christ will then present the completely restored human family to Jehovah. (*Read 1 Corinthians 15:22-26.*) The royal priesthood will have fully accomplished its purpose.

¹⁸ Thereafter, how will Jehovah use these highly privileged associates of Christ? According to Revelation 22:5, "they will rule as kings forever and ever." Over whom? The Bible does not say. But the quality of life that they possess and their experience in helping a world of imperfect people will equip them to hold a regal position in Jehovah's purposes forever.

¹⁹ When we gather to observe the Memorial of Jesus' death on Thursday, April 5, 2012, these Bible teachings will be on our minds. The small remnant of anointed Christians still on earth will partake of the emblems of unleavened bread and red wine, signifying their being party to the new covenant. These symbols of Christ's sacrifice will remind them of their awesome privileges and responsibilities in God's eternal purpose. May all of us attend with profound appreciation for Jehovah God's provision of a royal priesthood to benefit all mankind.

¹⁷. What will the royal priesthood eventually accomplish?

¹⁸. After the royal priesthood has accomplished its work, how will Jehovah use Christ's associates?

¹⁹. Of what will those present at the Memorial be reminded?

^{15, 16}. What benefits will the royal priesthood bring to mankind?

Preserving Gems From Our Past



JEHOVAH'S people have a very rich spiritual heritage. The fascinating record of that heritage can be gleaned not only from publications but also from photographs, letters, personal accounts, and

artifacts related to our worship, our preaching work, and our history. But of what benefit is it to preserve such material and delve into our past? Well, family heads in ancient Israel were to make known to their sons the laws and wonderful acts of Jehovah so that they might "set their confidence in God himself."—Ps. 78:1-7.

Archival research has long played a role in the outworking of Jehovah's purpose. When opposers tried to stop work on the temple in Jerusalem, for instance, an official search of records in the archives at the Median capital of Ecbatana brought to light a document issued by King Cyrus authorizing such construction. (Ezra 6:1-4, 12) Thus, the temple was rebuilt in harmony with God's will. Archival sources were also used by the Gospel writer Luke, who "traced all things from the start with accuracy."—Luke 1:1-4.

The Governing Body is keenly interested in our theocratic history. In commenting on the need to preserve, document, and pass on our

A Closer Look

During the preparation of Christian literature, DVDs, and other Bible-based material, our writers, artists, researchers, and others draw on archival resources. Writing Archives therefore takes great care and practical steps to gather and preserve a wide range of historical materials from such sources as branch offices, Bethel departments, congregations, individuals, and secular institutions. Consider the following overview of this work:

Acquisition and Analysis: Unique items are continually being added to the Archives collection. Many of these are kindly donated or are loaned by individuals whose families have decades-long records of faithful service to Jehovah. Analyzing and comparing such material helps to increase our understanding of our history and of those who lived through it.

Cataloging: The Writing Archives collection is made up of thousands of items, some more than a

century old. They come in different shapes, sizes, and formats and must be carefully cataloged for future use.

Restoration and Preservation: Fragile books

and artifacts are repaired and preserved using professional restoration methods. Documents, photographs, news clippings, films, and recordings are digitized. They can therefore be accessed electronically to avoid handling original documents or other items of historical value.

Storage and Retrieval: Archival materials are stored in an orderly and secure way to prevent loss and to protect them against damage from light and moisture. A database is being developed as an aid in research and retrieval of these precious gems from our past.



spiritual heritage, one member of the Governing Body said, "To know where we are going, we have to know where we have come from." To that end, Writing Archives was recently set up at world headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, and is under the direction of the Writing Committee.

OUR "FAMILY ALBUM" AND "HEIRLOOMS"

With time, the past recedes, and most of us likely wish we had kept a more complete personal family record. In Writing Archives, diligent work is now under way to preserve and document our rich and growing legacy. Photographs carefully held in the Archives could be considered part of our "family album." Our early publications, thrilling first-person accounts, and priceless memorabilia are also among the gems held in the Archives. Such items are "heirlooms" that enlighten us about our theocratic heritage and help us to look forward with confidence to the future of our spiritual family.

We invite you to look into Writing Archives through the new feature "From Our Archives." It will appear periodically in the study edition of *The Watchtower*. In a coming issue, for example, we plan to publish an illustrated account designed to answer these questions: What was a Dawn Mobile? By whom was it used? When was it in use, and for what purpose?

Like a family album of memories, the Archives collection tells us much about us and our spiritual forebears—about the faith and courage of those who have gone before us, about the joys and challenges of serving our loving heavenly Father, and about God's guidance and unfailing support of his people. (Deut. 33:27) We are confident that Jehovah will bless ongoing efforts to preserve our spiritual history so that we are ever more united and strengthened to carry out his will.

1. Poster for the "Photo-Drama of Creation." 2. Subscription register. 3. Sound car. 4. Cover of the April 15, 1912, *Watch Tower*. 5. J. F. Rutherford's prison notice. 6. WBBR microphone. 7. Phonograph. 8. Carrying case for books. 9. Personal notes. 10. Telegram to J. F. Rutherford.

