

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MARCH 15, 1999



THE  
LAST DAY  
OF JESUS'  
HUMAN  
LIFE

# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

March 15, 1999

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

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## WATCHTOWER STUDIES

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- APRIL 26-MAY 2: Teach With Insight and Persuasiveness. Page 15. Songs to be used: 107, 91.

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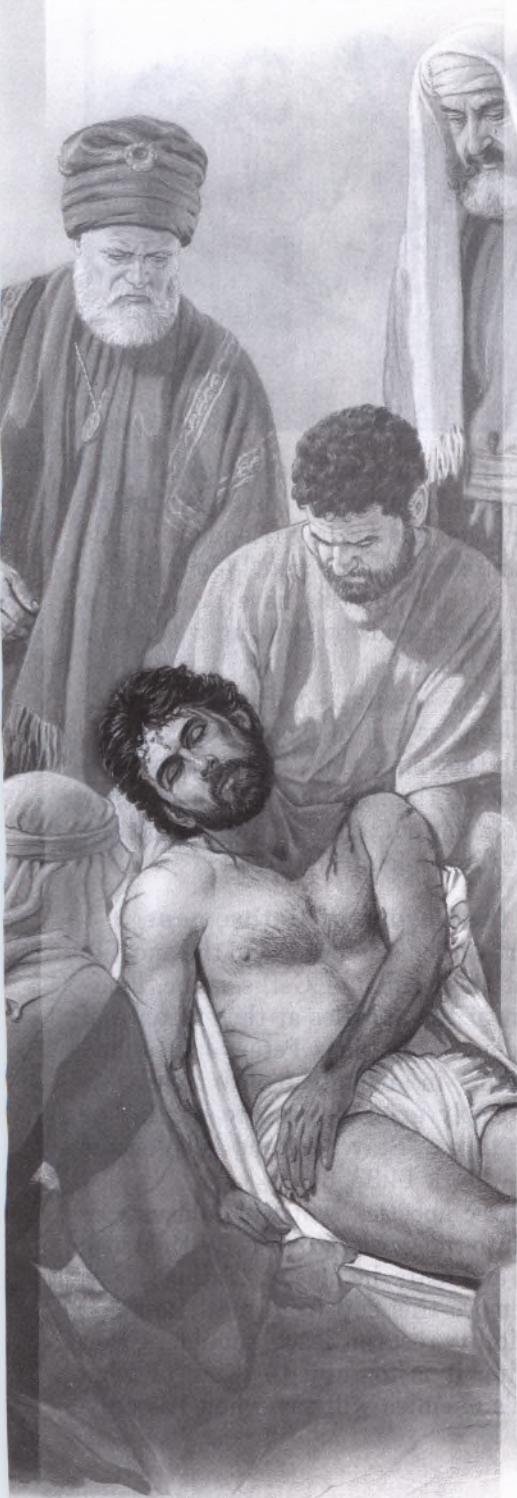
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# THE LAST DAY OF JESUS' HUMAN LIFE

*It is late Friday afternoon, Nisan 14, 33 C.E. A group of men and women are about to bury a dear friend. One of the men, Nicodemus, has brought spices to prepare the body for burial. A man named Joseph has supplied clean linen to wrap the bruised and battered corpse.*

**W**HO are these people, and who are they burying? Does all of this affect you? To answer these questions, let us go back to the beginning of that momentous day.

## Thursday Evening, Nisan 14

A bright full moon is rising slowly over Jerusalem. The crowded city is settling down after a busy day. This evening the air is filled with the aroma of roasting lamb. Yes, thousands of people are preparing for a special event—the annual celebration of the Passover.

In a large guest room, we find Jesus Christ and his 12 apostles at a prepared table. Listen! Jesus is speaking. "I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," he says. (Luke 22:15) Jesus knows that his religious enemies are intent on having him killed. But before that happens, something very significant will take place this evening.

After the Passover has been observed, Jesus announces: "One of you will betray me." (Matthew 26:21) This distresses the apostles. Who could it possibly be? After some discussion, Jesus tells Judas Iscariot: "What you are doing get done more quickly." (John 13:27) Although the others do not realize it, Judas is a traitor. He leaves to carry out his dastardly role in the plot against Jesus.

### A Special Observance

Jesus now institutes an entirely new observance—one that will commemorate his death. Taking a loaf of bread, Jesus says a prayer of thanks over it and divides it up. "Take, eat," he directs. "This means my body which is to be given in your behalf." When each of them has eaten some of the bread, he takes a cup of red wine



and says a blessing over it. "Drink out of it, all of you," Jesus tells them, explaining: "This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood, which is to be poured out in your behalf." He instructs the remaining 11 faithful apostles: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me."—Matthew 26:26-28; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25.

That evening Jesus kindly prepares his loyal apostles for what lies ahead and confirms his deep love for them. "No one has

love greater than this," he explains, "that someone should surrender his soul in behalf of his friends. You are my friends if you do what I am commanding you." (John 15:13-15) Yes, the 11 apostles have proved that they are true friends by sticking with Jesus during his trials.

Late in the evening—perhaps past midnight—Jesus says a memorable prayer, after which they sing songs of praise to Jehovah. Then, by the light of a full moon, they make their way out of the city and across the Kidron Valley.—John 17:1-18:1.

### In the Garden of Gethsemane

A short while later, Jesus and the apostles arrive at the garden of Gethsemane. Leaving eight of the apostles at the entrance of the garden, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John farther in among the olive trees. "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death," he tells the three. "Stay here and keep on the watch."—Mark 14:33, 34.

The three apostles wait while Jesus goes deeper into the garden to pray. With strong outcries and tears, he pleads: "Father, if you wish, remove this cup from me." Immense responsibility rests on Jesus' shoulders. How distressing it is for him to think of what Jehovah's enemies will say when His only-

begotten Son is impaled as though he were a criminal! Even more agonizing to Jesus is the thought of the reproach that would be heaped on his dear heavenly Father if he failed this excruciating test. Jesus prays so earnestly and gets into such an agony that his sweat becomes as drops of blood falling to the ground.—Luke 22:42, 44.

Jesus has just finished praying a third time. Men carrying torches and lamps now approach. The one walking in front is none other than Judas Iscariot, who comes straight to Jesus. "Good day, Rabbil!" he says, kissing Jesus very tenderly. "Judas," Jesus responds, "do you betray the Son of man with a kiss?"—Matthew 26:49; Luke 22:47, 48; John 18:3.

Suddenly, the apostles realize what is happening. Their Lord and dear friend is about to be arrested! So Peter grabs a sword and cuts off the ear of the high priest's slave. "Let it go as far as this," Jesus quickly calls out. Reaching forward, he heals the slave and commands Peter: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Luke 22:50, 51; Matthew 26:52) The officers and soldiers grab hold of Jesus and bind him. Seized by fear and confusion, the apostles abandon Jesus and flee into the night.—Matthew 26:56; John 18:12.

#### Friday Morning, Nisan 14

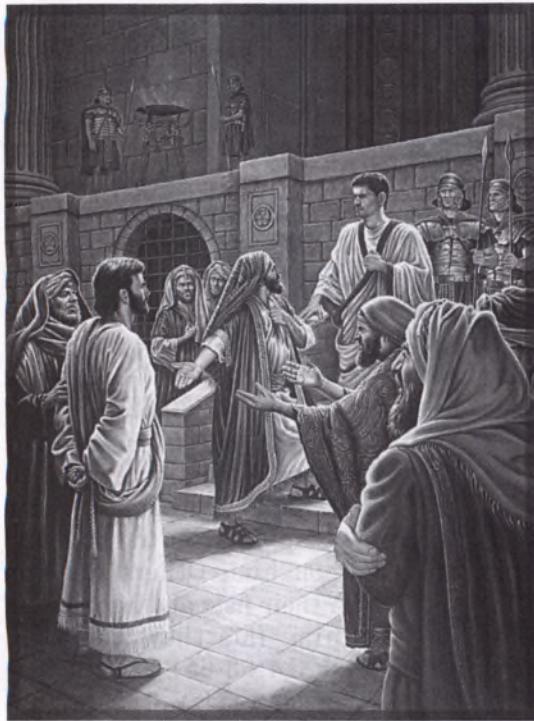
It is well past midnight in the early hours of Friday. Jesus is first led to the home of the former High Priest Annas, who still wields great influence and power. Annas questions him and then has him taken to the home of High Priest Caiaphas where the Sanhedrin has assembled.



The religious leaders now try to find witnesses to fabricate a case against Jesus. However, even the false witnesses cannot agree in their testimony. All the while, Jesus remains silent. Changing tactics, Caiaphas demands: "By the living God I put you under oath to tell us whether you are the Christ the Son of God!" This is a fact that cannot be denied, so Jesus courageously replies: "I am; and you persons will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven."—Matthew 26:63; Mark 14:60-62.

"He has blasphemed!" cries Caiaphas. "What further need do we have of witnesses?" Some now slap Jesus in the face and spit on him. Others hit him with their fists and heap abuse on him. (Matthew 26:65-68; Mark 14:63-65) Soon after dawn on Friday, the Sanhedrin reconvenes, possibly to give some semblance of legality to the illegal nighttime trial. Again Jesus courageously indicates that he is the Christ, the Son of God.—Luke 22:66-71.

Next, the chief priests and older men haul Jesus off to be tried by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. They accuse Jesus of subverting the nation, forbidding the paying of taxes to Caesar, and "saying he himself is Christ a king." (Luke 23:2; compare Mark 12:17.) After questioning Jesus, Pilate announces: "I find no crime in this man." (Luke 23:4) When Pilate hears that Jesus is a Galilean, he has him sent to Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, who is in Jerusalem for the Passover. Herod is not intent on seeing justice done. He merely wants to see Jesus perform a miracle. Since Jesus does not satisfy his curiosity and remains silent, Herod and



his soldiers make fun of him and send him back to Pilate.

"What bad thing did this man do?" asks Pilate again. "I found nothing deserving of death in him; I will therefore chastise and release him." (Luke 23:22) So he has Jesus scourged with a multithonged whip that rips painfully into Jesus' back. Then the troops press a crown of thorns onto his head. They mock him and hit him with a sturdy reed, pushing the crown of thorns deeper into his scalp. Through all the indescribable pain and abuse, Jesus maintains outstanding dignity and strength.

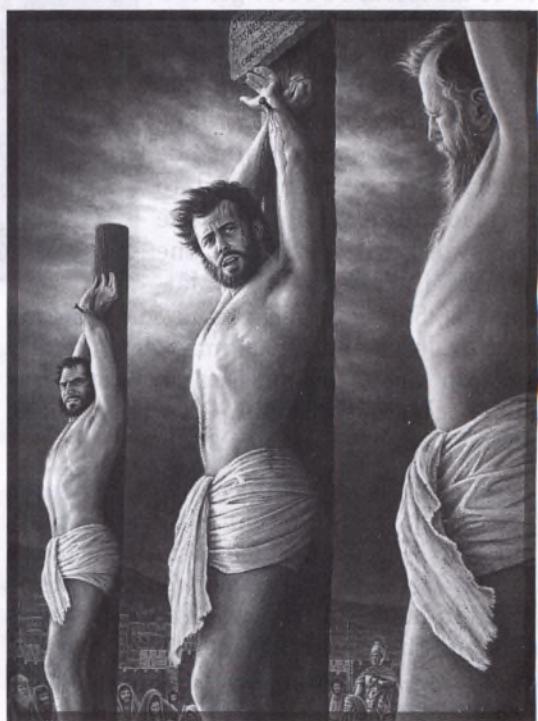
Pilate—maybe in hopes that Jesus' battered condition will elicit some sympathy—again presents him to the crowd. "See!" Pilate exclaims, "I bring him outside to you in order for you to know I find no fault in him." But the chief priests shout: "Impale him! Impale him!" (John 19:4-6) As the crowd

gets more and more insistent, Pilate capitulates and hands Jesus over to be impaled.

### An Agonizing Death

By now it is midmorning, possibly approaching noon. Jesus is taken outside Jerusalem to a place called Golgotha. Large nails are hammered through Jesus' hands and feet into a torture stake. Words cannot describe the agony as the weight of his body tears at the nail wounds when the torture stake is lifted up. A crowd gathers to observe Jesus and two criminals being impaled. Many speak abusively of Jesus. "Others he saved," the chief priests and others mock, "himself he cannot save!" Even the soldiers and the two impaled criminals ridicule Jesus.—Matthew 27:41-44.

Suddenly at midday, after Jesus has been on the stake for a while, an eerie darkness of divine origin settles over the land for three





## JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

NISAN 33 C.E.

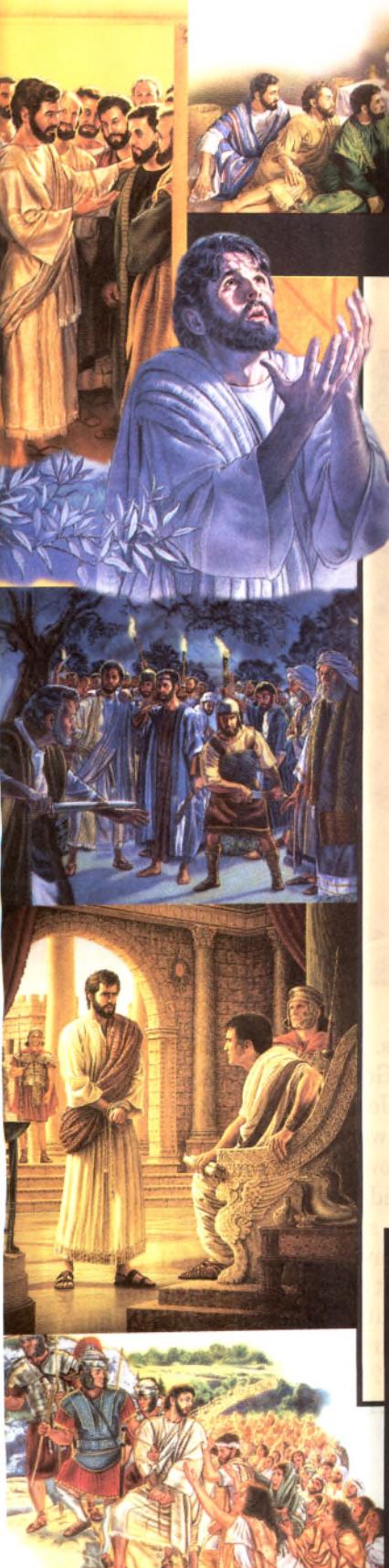
EVENTS

GREATEST MAN\*

14 Thursday evening	Passover celebration; Jesus washes feet of apostles; Judas goes out to betray Jesus; Christ institutes Memorial of his death (observed this year on Thursday, April 1, after sundown); exhortation to prepare apostles for his departure	113, par. 2 to 117, par. 1
Midnight to predawn	After prayer and songs of praise, Jesus and apostles go to garden of Gethsemane; Jesus prays with strong outcries and tears; Judas Iscariot arrives with large crowd and betrays Jesus; apostles flee as Jesus is bound and taken to Annas; Jesus taken to High Priest Caiaphas to appear before Sanhedrin; sentenced to death; verbally and physically abused; Peter denies Jesus three times	117 to 120
Friday morning	At dawn, Jesus again appears before Sanhedrin; taken to Pilate; sent to Herod; back to Pilate; Jesus scourged, insulted, and assaulted; under pressure Pilate hands him over for impalement; led to Golgotha for execution late in the morning	121 to 124
Midday to midafternoon	Impaled shortly before noon; darkness from noon until about three o'clock, when Jesus dies; violent earthquake; temple curtain rent in two	125, 126
Late afternoon	Jesus' body is laid in a garden tomb before the Sabbath	127, pars. 1-7
15 Friday evening	Sabbath begins	
Saturday	Pilate permits guards for Jesus' grave	127, pars. 8-9

16 Sunday	Early in morning Jesus' tomb is found empty; resurrected Jesus appears to (1) a group of female disciples, including Salome, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; (2) Mary Magdalene; (3) Cleopas and his companion; (4) Simon Peter; (5) a gathering of apostles and other disciples	127, par. 10 to 129, par. 10
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\* Listed here are numbers identifying chapters in the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*. For a chart containing the detailed Scriptural references for Jesus' final ministry, see "All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial," page 290. These books are published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.





hours.\* Perhaps it is this that moves the one evildoer to rebuke the other. Then, turning to Jesus, he begs: "Remember me when you get into your kingdom." What amazing faith in the face of imminent death! "Truly I tell you today," Jesus responds, "You will be with me in Paradise."—Luke 23:39-43.

At about three o'clock in the afternoon, Jesus feels that his end is near. "I am

thirsty," he says. Then with a loud voice, he cries out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus can sense that his Father has, as it were, withdrawn protection from him to allow his integrity to be tested to the limit, and he quotes David's words. Someone puts a sponge soaked in sour wine to Jesus' lips. Having had some of the wine, Jesus gasps: "It has been accomplished!" Then he cries out, "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit," bows his head, and expires.—John 19:28-30; Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:46; Psalm 22:1.

\* The darkness could not have been caused by a solar eclipse because Jesus died at the time of the full moon. Solar eclipses last only a few minutes and take place when the moon is between the earth and the sun at the time of the new moon.



Since it is late in the afternoon, hurried arrangements are made to bury Jesus before the Sabbath (Nisan 15) begins at sunset. Joseph of Arimathea, a well-known member of the Sanhedrin who has been a secret disciple of Jesus, gets permission to bury him. Nicodemus, also a member of the Sanhedrin who has secretly confessed faith in Jesus, assists with a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes. Carefully, they lay Jesus' body in a new memorial tomb nearby.

### Alive Again!

It is still dark early Sunday morning when Mary Magdalene and some other women approach Jesus' tomb. But look! The stone in front of the tomb has been rolled away. Why, the tomb is empty! Mary Magdalene rushes off to tell Peter and John. (John 20: 1, 2) No sooner has she left than an angel appears to the other women. He says: "Do not you be fearful." He also urges: "Go quickly and tell his disciples that he was raised up from the dead."—Matthew 28:2-7.

As they hurry along, whom do they meet but Jesus himself! "Go, report to my brothers," he tells them. (Matthew 28:8-10) Later, Mary Magdalene is at the tomb weeping when Jesus appears to her. She can barely contain her joy and rushes off to tell the other disciples the wonderful news. (John 20:11-18) In fact, five times on that unfor-

gettable Sunday, the resurrected Jesus appears to various disciples, leaving no doubt that he is, indeed, alive again!

### How You Are Affected

How can events of 1,966 years ago affect you now at the threshold of the 21st century? An eyewitness of those events explains: "By this the love of God was made manifest in our case, because God sent forth his only-begotten Son into the world that we might gain life through him. The love is in this respect, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins."—1 John 4:9, 10.

In what way is Christ's death "a propitiatory sacrifice"? It is propitiatory because it makes a favorable relationship with God possible. The first man, Adam, rebelled against God and therefore passed on to his offspring a legacy of sin and death. Jesus, on the other hand, gave his life as a ransom to pay the price for mankind's sin and death, thus providing a basis for God to extend mercy and favor. (1 Timothy 2:5, 6) By exercising faith in Jesus' sin-aton ing sacrifice, you can be released from the condemnation that you have inherited from sinner Adam. (Romans 5:12; 6:23) In turn, this opens up the wonderful opportunity of having a personal relationship with your loving heavenly Father, Jehovah God. In short, Jesus' supreme sacrifice can mean never-ending life for you.—John 3: 16; 17:3.

These and related matters will be discussed on Thursday evening, April 1, at tens of thousands of places around the world when millions of people will gather to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. You are invited to be present. Jehovah's Witnesses in your area will gladly tell you where and when you can attend. Being present will no doubt deepen your appreciation for what our loving God and his dear Son did on the last day of Jesus' human life.

# PAY CONSTANT ATTENTION TO YOUR TEACHING

*“Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.”*

—1 TIMOTHY 4:16.

**G**O... and make disciples of people of all the nations, ... teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you.”

(Matthew 28:19, 20) In view of this command of Jesus Christ, all Christians should endeavor to become teachers. Zealous teachers are needed to help honesthearted ones come to a knowledge of God before it is too late. (Romans 13:11) The apostle Paul urged: “Preach the word, be at it urgently in favorable season, in troublesome season.” (2 Timothy 4:2) This calls for teaching both inside and outside the congregation. Indeed, the preaching commission itself involves more than simply announcing God’s message. Effective teaching is needed if interested ones are to become disciples.

<sup>2</sup> We live in “critical times hard to deal with.” (2 Timothy 3:1) People have been brainwashed by secular philosophies and false teachings. Many are “in darkness

1, 2. Why are zealous teachers urgently needed today?



**Good teachers are themselves students of God’s Word**

mentally” and are “past all moral sense.” (Ephesians 4:18, 19) Some have painful emotional wounds. Yes, people are truly “skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.”

(Matthew 9:36) Nevertheless, by employing the art of teaching, we can help honesthearted ones to make needed changes.

## Teachers Within the Congregation

<sup>3</sup> By means of the home Bible study arrangement, millions are receiving personal instruction. After their baptism, though, new ones need further help to become “rooted and established on the foundation.” (Ephesians 3:17) As we carry out Jesus’ commission recorded at Matthew 28:19, 20 and direct new ones to Jehovah’s organization, they benefit from being taught within the congregation itself. According to Ephesians 4:11-13, men have been appointed to serve “as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the readjustment

3. (a) What does Jesus’ commission to teach include? (b) Who have the primary responsibility to teach within the congregation?

of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ." At times, their art of teaching involves the need to "reprove, reprimand, exhort, with all long-suffering." (2 Timothy 4:2) The work of teachers was so important that, in writing to the Corinthians, Paul lists teachers right after apostles and prophets.—1 Corinthians 12:28.

<sup>4</sup> True, not all Christians serve as elders, or overseers. Nonetheless, all *are* encouraged to incite one another "to love and fine works." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Doing so at meetings involves well-prepared, heartfelt comments that can build up and encourage others. Experienced Kingdom publishers may also 'incite to fine works' by sharing their knowledge and experience with new ones when working with them in the field ministry. At such times and on informal occasions, valuable instruction can be imparted. For example, mature women are urged to be "teachers of what is good."—Titus 2:3.

### Persuaded to Believe

<sup>5</sup> True Christianity thus stands in stark contrast with false religions, many of which seek to control the thinking of their members. When Jesus was on earth, the religious leaders sought to control virtually every aspect of people's lives through oppressive man-made traditions. (Luke 11:46) The clergy of Christendom have often done likewise.

<sup>6</sup> True worship, however, is "sacred service" that we offer with our "power of reason." (Romans 12:1) Jehovah's servants are "*persuaded to believe.*" (2 Timothy 3:14) At times, those taking the lead may need to initiate some guidelines and procedures for the

4. How does the ability to teach help us to obey Paul's exhortation recorded at Hebrews 10:24, 25?

5, 6. (a) How does true Christianity contrast with false worship? (b) How do elders help new ones to make wise decisions?

smooth functioning of the congregation. Instead of seeking to make decisions for fellow Christians, however, elders teach them "to distinguish both right and wrong." (Hebrews 5:14) Elders do this primarily by nourishing the congregation "with the words of the faith and of the fine teaching."—1 Timothy 4:6.

### Paying Attention to Your Teaching

<sup>7</sup> Let us return, though, to our general commission to teach. Does it require any particular skills, education, or abilities to share in this work? Not necessarily. For the most part, this worldwide teaching work is being carried on by ordinary individuals of modest abilities. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29) Paul explains: "We have this treasure [the ministry] in earthen vessels [imperfect bodies], that the power beyond what is normal may be God's and not that out of ourselves." (2 Corinthians 4:7) The enormous success that the global Kingdom-preaching work has enjoyed is a testimony to the power of Jehovah's spirit!

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it takes concerted personal effort to become "a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." (2 Timothy 2:15) Paul urged Timothy: "Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you." (1 Timothy 4:16) Just how does one pay attention to his teaching, whether inside or outside the congregation? Does doing so necessarily involve mastering certain skills or teaching techniques?

<sup>9</sup> Jesus certainly demonstrated an extraordinary grasp of teaching methods in

7, 8. (a) How are people of modest abilities able to serve as teachers? (b) What indicates that personal effort is necessary to become an effective teacher?

9. What is more important than natural abilities?

his famous Sermon on the Mount. When he had finished speaking, "the crowds were astounded at his way of teaching." (Matthew 7:28) Of course, none of us can teach as well as Jesus did. However, we do not need to be eloquent speakers to be effective teachers. Why, according to Job 12:7, even "domestic animals" and "winged creatures" can teach silently! Along with any natural abilities or skills we might have, what especially counts is "what sort of persons" we are—what qualities we possess and what spiritual habits we have cultivated that students can imitate.—2 Peter 3:11; Luke 6:40.

### Students of God's Word

<sup>10</sup> An effective teacher of Scriptural truths must be a student of God's Word. (Romans 2:21) Jesus Christ set an extraordinary example in this regard. During his ministry, Jesus referred to or expressed thoughts that paralleled passages in about half of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures.\* His familiarity with God's Word was evident at age 12, when he was found "sitting in the midst of the teachers and listening to them and questioning them." (Luke 2:46) As an adult, it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue, where God's Word was read.—Luke 4:16.

<sup>11</sup> Are you an avid reader of God's Word? Digging into it is the means by which "you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:4, 5) So develop good study habits. Try reading a portion of God's Word every day. (Psalm 1:2) Make it a habit to read

\* See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 1071, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

10. How did Jesus set a fine example as a student of God's Word?
11. What good study habits should a teacher cultivate?

each issue of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* as soon as it is received. Pay close attention at congregation meetings. Learn to do careful research. By learning to 'trace all things with accuracy,' you can avoid exaggerations and inaccuracies when you teach.—Luke 1:3.

### Love and Respect for Those Being Taught

<sup>12</sup> Another important quality is the proper attitude toward those whom you instruct. The Pharisees felt contempt for those who listened to Jesus. "This crowd that does not know the Law are accursed people," they said. (John 7:49) But Jesus had deep love and respect for his disciples. He said: "I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master does. But I have called you friends, because all the things I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." (John 15:15) This indicated how Jesus' disciples should carry on their teaching activity.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Paul did not maintain a cold, businesslike relationship with his students. He told the Corinthians: "Though you may have ten thousand tutors in Christ, you certainly do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have become your father through the good news." (1 Corinthians 4:15) At times, Paul even shed tears while admonishing those whom he taught! (Acts 20:31) He also displayed extraordinary patience and kindness. He could therefore tell the Thessalonians: "We became gentle in the midst of you, as when a nursing mother cherishes her own children."—1 Thessalonians 2:7.

12. What was Jesus' attitude toward his disciples?
13. How did Paul feel about those whom he taught?

## **Take a personal interest in Bible students**

<sup>14</sup> Do you imitate Jesus and Paul? Sincere love for our students can more than make up for any deficiencies in natural abilities that we might have. Do our Bible students sense that we have a sincere interest in them personally? Do we take the time to get to know them? When one Christian woman was having difficulty helping a student to progress spiritually, she kindly asked: "Is something worrying you?" The woman began pouring her heart out, relating numerous concerns and anxieties. That loving conversation turned out to be the turning point for the woman. In such cases Scriptural thoughts and words of comfort and encouragement are appropriate. (Romans 15:4) A word of caution, though: A Bible student may be progressing rapidly but may still have some unchristian ways to overcome. So it may not be wise to be unduly close socially with the individual. Proper Christian boundaries should be maintained.—1 Corinthians 15:33.

<sup>15</sup> Respect for our students includes that we do not try to control their personal lives. (1 Thessalonians 4:11) For instance, we may be studying with a woman who is living with a man out of wedlock. Perhaps they have had children together. Having come to an accurate knowledge of God, the woman wants to set matters straight with Jehovah. (Hebrews 13:4) Should she marry the man or separate from him? Perhaps we strongly feel that marrying a man with little or no spiritual interest would hinder her future progress. On the other hand, we may fear for the

14. Why is a personal interest in our Bible students so important? Illustrate.

15. How can we show respect for our Bible students?



welfare of her children and think that she would be better off marrying him. In any event, it is disrespectful and unloving to intrude into a student's life and try to impose our own opinions in such matters. After all, she is the one who must live with the consequences of the decision. Would it not be best, then, to train such a student to use her own "perceptive powers" and decide for herself what she should do?—Hebrews 5:14.

<sup>16</sup> It is particularly important for congregation elders to treat the flock with love and respect. In writing to Philemon, Paul said: "Though I have great freeness of speech in connection with Christ to order you to do what is proper, I am exhorting you rather on the basis of love." (Philemon 8, 9) At times, frustrating situations may arise in the congregation. Firmness may even be necessary. Paul urged Titus to "keep on reproofing [erring ones] with severity, that they may be healthy in the faith." (Titus 1:13) Even so, overseers must take pains never to speak

16. How can elders show love and respect for God's flock?

unkindly to the congregation. "A slave of the Lord does not need to fight," wrote Paul, "but needs to be gentle toward all, qualified to teach, keeping himself restrained under evil."—2 Timothy 2:24; Psalm 141:3.

<sup>17</sup> Overseers must continually remind themselves that they are dealing with "*the flock of God*." (1 Peter 5:2) Moses, humble though he was, briefly lost this perspective. The Israelites "embittered his spirit and he began to speak rashly with his lips." (Psalm 106:33) God was greatly displeased with this mistreatment of His flock, even though they were far from blameless. (Numbers 20:2-12) When faced with similar challenges today, elders should strive to teach and instruct with insight and kindness. Our brothers respond best when they are treated with consideration and as individuals needing help, not as those who are beyond recovery. Elders need to maintain the positive viewpoint that Paul had when he said: "We have confidence in the Lord regarding you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things we order."—2 Thessalonians 3:4.

17. What mistake did Moses make, and what can elders learn from it?

### Do You Recall?

- Why are skilled Christian teachers needed today?
- What good study habits can we cultivate?
- Why are love and respect for those whom we teach so important?
- How can we respond to the needs of our Bible students?
- Why are enthusiasm and conviction vital when teaching others?

### Responsive to Their Needs

<sup>18</sup> An effective teacher is willing to adapt to the abilities and limitations of his students. (Compare John 16:12.) In Jesus' illustration of the talents, the master gave privileges "to each one according to his own ability." (Matthew 25:15) We can follow a similar pattern when conducting Bible studies. Naturally, it is desirable to cover a Bible-based publication in a reasonably short period of time. It must be acknowledged, though, that not all have good reading skills or the ability to assimilate new ideas quickly. Therefore, discernment is needed as to when to move from one point to another in the study if responsive individuals have difficulty keeping up a fast pace. More important than covering material at a fixed pace is helping students to get the sense of what they are learning.—Matthew 13:51.

<sup>19</sup> The same can be said for Bible students who have difficulty with specific matters, such as the Trinity or religious holidays. While it is generally unnecessary to include Bible-based research material at our studies, we may occasionally do so if this would clearly be beneficial. Good judgment should be used so as to prevent unnecessarily slowing down a student's progress.

### Be Enthusiastic!

<sup>20</sup> "Be aglow with the spirit," says Paul. (Romans 12:11) Yes, whether we are conducting a home Bible study or we are sharing in a part at a congregation meeting, we should do so with zeal and enthusiasm. Paul told the Thessalonians: "The good news we preach did not turn up among you with speech alone but also with power and with

18, 19. (a) How should we respond to the needs of Bible students with limited abilities? (b) How might we assist students who have difficulty with specific matters?

20. How did Paul set an example in displaying enthusiasm and conviction in his teaching?

holy spirit and strong conviction." (1 Thessalonians 1:5) Paul and his companions thus imparted "not only the good news of God, but also [their] own souls."—1 Thessalonians 2:8.

<sup>21</sup> Genuine enthusiasm comes from being firmly convinced that our Bible students need to hear what we have to say. Let us never view any teaching assignment as routine. The scribe Ezra certainly paid attention to

21. How can we maintain an enthusiastic attitude toward our teaching assignments?

his teaching in this regard. He "prepared his heart to consult the law of Jehovah and to do it and to teach in Israel." (Ezra 7:10) We should do likewise by preparing thoroughly and reflecting on the importance of the material. Let us pray to Jehovah to fill us with faith and conviction. (Luke 17:5) Our enthusiasm can help Bible students to develop a real love for the truth. Of course, paying attention to our teaching may involve using specific teaching techniques. Our next article will discuss some of these.

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## TEACH WITH INSIGHT AND PERSUASIVENESS

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*"The heart of the wise one causes his mouth to show insight, and to his lips it adds persuasiveness."*—PROVERBS 16:23.

OUR goal as teachers of God's Word is to illuminate not only the minds of our students but also their hearts. (Ephesians 1:18) Teaching therefore involves more than simply conveying information. Proverbs 16:23 says: "The heart of the wise one causes his mouth to show insight, and to his lips it adds persuasiveness."

<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul certainly applied this principle in his teaching work. When he was in Corinth, "he would give a talk in the synagogue every sabbath and would persuade Jews and Greeks." (Acts 18:4) According to one authority, the Greek word here rendered

1. Why does teaching God's Word involve more than simply conveying information?
2. (a) What does it mean to persuade? (b) How is it possible for all Christians to be persuasive teachers?

"persuade" means "bringing about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral considerations." By means of convincing arguments, Paul was able to move people to change their very way of thinking. His ability to persuade was so formidable that he was feared by his enemies. (Acts 19:24-27) Nevertheless, Paul's teaching was not a display of human ability. He told the Corinthians: "My speech and what I preached were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of spirit and power, that your faith might be, not in men's wisdom, but in God's power." (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5) Since all Christians have the help of Jehovah God's spirit, all of them may become persuasive teachers. But how? Let us look at some effective teaching techniques.



**A good teacher listens so as to gain insight**

### **Be a Good Listener**

<sup>3</sup> The first teaching technique involves, not speaking, but listening. As noted at Proverbs 16:23, to be persuasive we must have insight. Jesus certainly had insight regarding the people he taught. John 2:25 says: "He himself knew what was in man." But how can we know what is in the hearts of those whom we teach? One way is by being a good listener. James 1:19 says: "Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking." True, not all people readily express their thoughts. As our Bible students become convinced of our genuine interest in them, they may be more inclined to express their true feelings. Kind but perceptive questions can often help us to reach

3. Why is insight needed when teaching others, and how can we reach the heart of a Bible student?

the heart and 'draw up' such expressions.—Proverbs 20:5.

<sup>4</sup> It is particularly important that Christian elders be good listeners. Only then can they truly "know how [they] ought to give an answer to each one." (Colossians 4:6) Proverbs 18:13 warns: "When anyone is replying to a matter before he hears it, that is foolishness on his part and a humiliation." Two well-intentioned brothers once gave a sister counsel on worldliness because she had missed some meetings. The sister was deeply hurt that they did not ask her why she had not been present. She was recovering from recent surgery. How important, then, that we listen before giving counsel!

<sup>5</sup> For elders, teaching often involves giv-

4. Why must Christian elders be good listeners?  
5. How can elders handle disputes that arise among brothers?

ing counsel to others. Here, too, it is important to be a good listener. Listening is especially necessary when disputes arise among fellow Christians. Only after listening can elders imitate "the Father who judges impartially." (1 Peter 1:17) Emotions often run high in such situations, and an elder does well to bear in mind the counsel of Proverbs 18:17: "The one first in his legal case is righteous; his fellow comes in and certainly searches him through." An effective teacher will listen to both parties. By offering a prayer, he helps to establish a calm atmosphere. (James 3:18) If emotions become heated, he might suggest that each brother address his concerns directly to him, instead of the two wrangling with each other. By means of appropriate questions, the elder may be able to clarify the issues under consideration. In many cases, poor communication, not maliciousness, turns out to be the cause of disputes. But if Bible principles have been violated, a loving teacher can now instruct with insight, having heard both sides.

### The Value of Simplicity

<sup>6</sup> Keeping things simple is another valuable teaching skill. True, we want Bible students to become "thoroughly able to grasp mentally with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth" of the truth. (Ephesians 3:18) There are aspects of Bible doctrines that are fascinating and often challenging. (Romans 11:33) Nevertheless, when Paul preached to Greeks, he focused on the simple message of 'Christ impaled.' (1 Corinthians 2:1, 2) Similarly, Jesus preached in a clear, appealing way. He used a simple vocabulary in his Sermon on the Mount. Yet, it contains some of the most pro-

<sup>6</sup>. How did Paul and Jesus set an example in teaching with simplicity?

found truths ever uttered.—Matthew, chapters 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> We can likewise keep things simple when teaching on Bible studies. How? By focusing on "the more important things." (Philippians 1:10) When covering deep subjects, we should try to express ourselves in plain language. We should focus on key scriptures instead of trying to read and discuss every Bible text cited in a publication. This requires good preparation on our part. We need to avoid overwhelming the student with details, not allowing ourselves to get sidetracked by issues of minor importance. If a student has a question that is not directly related to the lesson, we can tactfully suggest that it be discussed when the lesson is finished.

### Effective Use of Questions

<sup>8</sup> Another useful teaching skill involves asking effective questions. Jesus Christ used questions extensively in his teaching. For example, Jesus asked Peter: "'What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth receive duties or head tax? From their sons or from the strangers?' When he said: 'From the strangers,' Jesus said to him: 'Really, then, the sons are tax-free.'" (Matthew 17:24-26) As the only-begotten Son of the One worshiped at the temple, Jesus was really not obliged to pay a temple tax. But Jesus conveyed this truth through an effective use of questions. Jesus thus helped Peter to come to a proper conclusion based on information he already had.

<sup>9</sup> We can put questions to good use during Bible studies. If a student gives a wrong answer, it may be tempting to supply the correct one, but will he really retain the

7. How can we keep things simple when conducting Bible studies?
8. How did Jesus use questions effectively?
9. How might we use questions during Bible studies?



**Jesus drew his illustrations from everyday life**

information? Often it is best to try to lead the student to the right conclusion by asking questions. For instance, if he is having difficulty grasping why he should use the divine name, we might ask, 'Is your name important to you? . . . Why? . . . How would you feel if someone refused to use your name? . . . Is it not reasonable for God to require that we use his personal name?'

<sup>10</sup> Elders can also put questions to good use when shepherding the flock. Many in the congregation have been emotionally bruised and battered by Satan's world and may feel unclean and unlovable. An elder might rea-

son with such a person by saying: 'Though you say that you feel unclean, how does Jehovah feel about you? If our loving heavenly Father allowed his Son to die and provide a ransom for you, does that not mean that God loves you?'—John 3:16.

<sup>11</sup> Rhetorical questions are another useful teaching technique. Listeners are not expected to answer these out loud but are thereby helped to reason on matters. The prophets of old often asked such questions to get their listeners to think deeply. (Jeremiah 18:14, 15) Jesus used rhetorical questions effectively. (Matthew 11:7-11) Such questions

10. How might elders use questions when helping individuals who have been wounded emotionally?

11. What purpose is served by rhetorical questions, and how can they be used in public speaking?

are particularly effective in public speaking. Instead of simply telling an audience that they must be whole-souled in order to please Jehovah, it may be more effective to ask, 'If we are not truly whole-souled in our service, will Jehovah be pleased?'

<sup>12</sup> Viewpoint questions are useful in determining whether a Bible student really believes what he is learning. (Matthew 16:13-16) A student may correctly answer that fornication is wrong. But why not follow that up with such questions as, How do you personally feel about God's standard of morality? Do you feel that it is too restrictive? Would you say that it really matters whether you follow God's standards or not?

### Illustrations That Reach the Heart

<sup>13</sup> Another way to reach the heart of listeners and Bible students is through effective illustrations. The Greek expression rendered "illustration" literally means "a placing beside or together." When you illustrate, you explain something by 'placing it beside' something similar. For example, Jesus asked: "With what are we to liken the kingdom of God, or in what illustration shall we set it out?" In answer, Jesus mentioned the familiar mustard seed.—Mark 4:30-32.

<sup>14</sup> God's prophets used many powerful illustrations. When the Assyrians, who had served as God's instrument in punishing the Israelites, resorted to wanton cruelty, Isaiah exposed their presumptuousness with this illustration: "Will the ax enhance itself over the one chopping with it, or the saw magnify itself over the one moving it back and forth?" (Isaiah 10:15) When teaching others, Jesus likewise used illustrations extensively. It is reported that "without an illustration he would not speak to them." (Mark 4:34)

12. What is the value of asking viewpoint questions?

13, 14. (a) What does it mean to illustrate something? (b) Why are good illustrations effective?

Good illustrations are effective because they engage both the mind and the heart. They allow listeners to absorb new information readily by comparing it with something already familiar to them.

<sup>15</sup> How can we use illustrations that truly reach the heart? First of all, an illustration must reasonably parallel the thing being explained. If the comparison does not really fit, the illustration will distract rather than enlighten listeners. A well-meaning speaker once tried to convey the submissiveness of the anointed remnant to Jesus Christ by comparing them to a faithful pet dog. But is such a demeaning comparison really appropriate? The Bible conveys the same thought in a much more appealing and dignified way. It compares Jesus' 144,000 anointed followers to "a bride adorned for her husband."—Revelation 21:2.

<sup>16</sup> Illustrations are most effective when they relate to the lives of people. Nathan's illustration of the slaughtered lamb touched the heart of King David because he loved sheep, having served as a shepherd in his youth. (1 Samuel 16:11-13; 2 Samuel 12:1-7) If the illustration had involved a bull, it might not have been nearly as effective. In a similar way, illustrations based on scientific phenomena or obscure historical incidents may be of little significance to our listeners. Jesus drew his illustrations from everyday life. He spoke of such commonplace things as a lamp, the birds of heaven, and lilies of the field. (Matthew 5:15, 16; 6:26, 28) Jesus' hearers could easily relate to such things.

<sup>17</sup> In our ministry, we have many opportunities to use simple but effective illustrations. Be observant. (Acts 17:22, 23) Perhaps

15, 16. What will make illustrations most effective? Give examples.

17. (a) On what might we base our illustrations? (b) How might we adapt illustrations used in our publications to the circumstances of our students?

an illustration could be based on a listener's children, home, job, or hobby. Or we may use our personal knowledge of a Bible student to enhance the illustrations already provided for us in our study material. Take, for example, the effective illustration used in paragraph 14 of chapter 8 in the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. It involves a loving parent who is slandered by a neighbor. We can well give some thought to how we might adapt that illustration to the circumstances of a Bible student who himself is a parent.

### Reading Scriptures With Skill

<sup>18</sup> Paul exhorted Timothy: "Continue applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching." (1 Timothy 4:13) Since the Bible is the foundation of our teaching, it is beneficial to be able to read it fluently. The Levites had the privilege of reading the Mosaic Law to God's people. Did they stumble through such reading or read in a monotone? No, the Bible says at Nehemiah 8:8: "They continued reading aloud from the book, from the law of the true God, it be-

18. Why should we strive to be fluent readers?

#### Do You Recall?

- How can being a good listener help us in our teaching?
- How can we imitate Paul and Jesus in teaching with simplicity?
- What kinds of questions can we use when teaching others?
- What kind of illustrations are most effective?
- How can we improve our skill as public readers?

ing expounded, and there being a putting of meaning into it; and they continued giving understanding in the reading."

<sup>19</sup> Some Christian men who are fluent speakers fall short when it comes to reading. How can they make improvement? By practicing. Yes, by reading out loud over and over again until they can do so fluently. If audiocassettes of the Bible are available in your language, it is wise to listen to the reader's sense stress and modulation and to note how names and unusual words are pronounced. Those who have the *New World Translation* in their language can also take advantage of its pronunciation aids.\* With practice, even names like Ma'her-shal'al-hash-baz can be read with relative ease.—Isaiah 8:1.

<sup>20</sup> As Jehovah's people, what a privilege we have to be used as teachers! Let each of us, then, take that responsibility seriously. May we 'pay constant attention to ourselves and to our teaching.' (1 Timothy 4:16) We can be fine teachers by being good listeners, by keeping things simple, by asking insightful questions, by using effective illustrations, and by reading scriptures with skill. May all of us benefit from the training provided by Jehovah through his organization, for this can help us to have "the tongue of the taught ones." (Isaiah 50:4) By taking full advantage of all the tools provided for our ministry, including brochures, audiocassettes, and videocassettes, we can learn to teach with insight and persuasiveness.

\* Proper names are broken into syllables, each syllable being separated by a dot or an accent mark. The emphasis is placed on the syllable marked by the accent. If the syllable ends in a vowel, the vowel is given its long sound. If a syllable ends in a consonant, the vowel is given its short sound.

19. How can we improve our reading of the Scriptures?
20. How can we 'pay attention to our teaching'?

# *Do Not Be Overcome by*

## **ANXIETY**

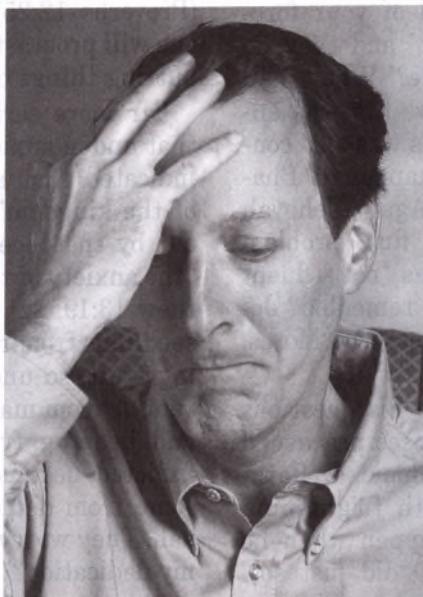
**N**EVER be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties. Sufficient for each day is its own badness." (Matthew 6:34) That counsel given by Jesus Christ certainly is practical for all of us living in today's fast-paced and stressful society.

Realistically, though, is it possible for us not to be anxious about our problems, decisions, obligations, and responsibilities? Millions of people feel depressed, distressed, and burdened. That is why tranquilizers and sedatives are a multimillion-dollar business.

### **Where to Draw the Line**

We need to plan and prepare for our obligations, assignments, decisions, and problems—be they urgent or otherwise. The Bible encourages us to "sit down and calculate the expense" before embarking on any major undertaking. (Luke 14:28-30) This includes weighing the available choices, analyzing the possible effects of the outcome, and assessing the cost in terms of time, energy, and money.

While one should carefully consider what is likely to occur, it is not possible or constructive to try to think of every eventuality. For example, in the interests of family



safety, you might consider what to do in case of a fire in your home. You might purchase and install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. You might plan and rehearse escape routes from different parts of the house. But when does sensible, practical planning end and excessive, unwarranted anxiety begin? Such anxiety begins when you start to agonize over an endless number of hypothetical situations, many of which may be the product of a fertile imagination. Disquieting thoughts may overtake you, convincing you that you must have overlooked something or that you have not done enough to protect your family. This self-inflicted anguish can weigh so heavily on your mind that you may lose sleep over it.

### **Moses Before Pharaoh**

Jehovah God gave his prophet Moses a difficult assignment. First, Moses had to appear before the Israelites and convince them that Jehovah had appointed him to lead them out of Egypt. Next, Moses had to appear before Pharaoh and request that he let the Israelites go. Finally, Moses had to lead a throng numbering in the millions through the wilderness into a land occupied by hostile people. (Exodus 3:1-10) All of this could have been most intimidating, but

did Moses allow this responsibility to fill his mind with undue anxiety?

Obviously, Moses was concerned about a number of issues. He asked Jehovah: "Suppose I am now come to the sons of Israel and I do say to them, 'The God of your forefathers has sent me to you,' and they do say to me, 'What is his name?' What shall I say to them?" Jehovah gave him the answer. (Exodus 3:13, 14) Moses was also concerned about what might happen if Pharaoh refused to believe him. Again, Jehovah answered the prophet. One final problem—Moses admitted that he was "not a fluent speaker." How could this be remedied? Jehovah provided Aaron to speak for Moses.—Exodus 4:1-5, 10-16.

Prepared with answers to his questions and having faith in God, Moses proceeded to do as Jehovah had commanded. Rather than torture himself with frightening thoughts of what might happen when he confronted Pharaoh, Moses "did just so." (Exodus 7:6) If he had allowed anxieties to take over, these could well have weakened the faith and boldness needed to carry out his assignment.

Moses' balanced way of tackling his assignment is an example of what the apostle Paul called "soundness of mind." (2 Timothy 1:7; Titus 2:2-6) If Moses had not exercised soundness of mind, he could easily have become so overwhelmed by the enormity of his assignment that he would probably not have accepted it.

### Taking Control of Your Thoughts

How do you react when in your daily life you are confronted with tests of your faith or with trials? Do you tend to become panicky just thinking of the obstacles and challenges looming ahead? Or do you view them in a balanced way? As some would say, 'Do not cross the bridge until you come to it.'

There may be no need to cross that imaginary bridge after all! So why be tormented by something that may never occur? The Bible says: "Anxious care in the heart of a man is what will cause it to bow down." (Proverbs 12:25) The result often is that one will procrastinate in making a decision, putting things off until it is too late.

Far more serious is the spiritual harm that undue anxiety may cause. Jesus Christ indicated that appreciation for "the word of the kingdom" can be completely choked out by the deceptive power of wealth and "the anxiety of this system of things." (Matthew 13:19, 22) Just as thorns can prevent seedlings from reaching maturity and bearing fruit, so uncontrolled anxiety can prevent us from making spiritual advancement and bearing fruit to God's praise. Self-inflicted, destructive anguish has even kept some from dedicating themselves to Jehovah. They worry, 'What if I do not live up to my dedication?'

The apostle Paul told us that in our spiritual warfare, we are endeavoring to bring "every thought into captivity to make it obedient to the Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5) Our archenemy, Satan the Devil, would be very pleased to capitalize on our worries in order to discourage us and to weaken us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He is a master at using doubts to trap the unwary. That is why Paul also warned Christians not to "allow place for the Devil." (Ephesians 4:27) As "the god of this system of things," Satan has successfully "blinded the minds of the unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 4:4) May we never allow him to control our minds!

### Help Is Available

When facing problems a child can go to a loving father and receive direction and comfort. Similarly, we can go to our heavenly Father, Jehovah, with our problems. In fact,

**Do you, like David, throw your burdens  
and anxieties on Jehovah?**

Jehovah invites us to throw our burdens and anxieties upon him. (Psalm 55:22) Like a child who no longer worries about his problems after he has received assurances from his father, we should not only throw our burdens upon Jehovah but also leave them with him.—James 1:6.

How do we throw our anxieties upon Jehovah? Philippians 4:6, 7 answers: “Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.” Yes, in response to our persistent prayers and supplications, Jehovah can give us an inner calm that protects our minds from being disturbed by unnecessary anxieties.—Jeremiah 17:7, 8; Matthew 6:25-34.

To work in harmony with our prayers, though, we should not isolate ourselves either physically or mentally. (Proverbs 18:1) Rather, we would do well to consider Bible principles and directions that touch on our problem, thus avoiding reliance upon our own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Young and old alike can turn to the Bible and Watch Tower publications for a wealth of information on making decisions and dealing with problems. Additionally, in the Christian congregation, we are blessed with wise and experienced elders and other mature Christians who are always willing to talk to us. (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22) Those who are not emotionally involved and who have God’s mind on a matter can often help us to look at our problems from a different perspective. And while they will not make decisions for us, they can be a great source of encouragement and support.



**“Wait for God”**

No one can deny that there is enough stress in dealing with our real problems each day without adding to them by worrying about imaginary ones. If anxiety over what might happen makes us feel apprehensive and uneasy, then let us turn to Jehovah in prayer and supplication. Look to his Word and organization for direction, wisdom, and soundness of mind. We will find that whatever circumstance may arise, there is help available to deal with it.

Feeling heavy of heart and agitated, the psalmist sang: “Why are you in despair, O my soul, and why are you boisterous within me? Wait for God, for I shall yet laud him as the grand salvation of my person and as my God.” (Psalm 42:11) Let those be our sentiments.

Yes, plan for what can reasonably be expected, and leave the unexpected to Jehovah. “Throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.

# Building on Pagan Foundations



**A**MONG the many impressive monuments that are visited by tourists to Rome, Italy, is the Pantheon. This masterpiece of Roman architecture is one of the few buildings there that remain substantially as they were in ancient times. Begun by Agrippa in about 27 B.C.E., it was rebuilt by Hadrian about 120 C.E. One remarkable feature of this structure is its huge 142-foot-diameter dome, surpassed in width only in modern times. The Pantheon was originally a pagan temple, a "place for all gods," which is the meaning of the original Greek word. Today, it is still considered a Roman Catholic church. How was such a surprising transformation possible?

In 609 C.E., Pope Boniface IV rededicated this long-unused temple as a "Christian" church. At that time, it was given the name Church of the Santa Maria Rotunda. According to an article published in 1900 in the Italian Jesuit magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica*, the particular use Boniface had in mind for it was that of "glorifying together all the martyrs of the Christian sphere, or rather, all the saints, but first and foremost the Virgin Mother of God." The names given to the Pantheon by the Roman Catholic Church today—Santa Maria ad Martyres or, alternatively, Santa Maria Rotunda—reflect that unscriptural intention.—Compare Acts 14:8-15.

To adapt the Pantheon to its new use, "very little needed to be done," continues the same article. "Boniface followed the simple and generous rules already established by St. Gregory the Great [Pope Gregory I], his predecessor, a *maestro* and exemplary in the adaptation of pagan temples to use in Christian worship." What rules were those?

In a letter to a missionary bound for pagan Britain in 601 C.E., Gregory gave this direction: "The temples of the idols in the said country ought not to be broken; but the idols alone which be in them . . . If the said temples be well built, it is needful that they be altered from the worshipping of devils into the service of the true God." Gregory's idea was that if pagan peoples saw their former temples unspoiled, they might be more inclined to continue frequenting them. Whereas pagans used "to kill many oxen in sacrifice to the devils," wrote the pope, it was now hoped that "they no more sacrifice animals to the devil but kill them to the refreshing of themselves to the praise of God."

Roman Catholicism also "countered" pagan worship by founding, in close proximity to former temples, churches dedicated to "Christian" patrons. Ancient celebrations were adopted and given a "Christian" significance. To express it in the words of *La Civiltà Cattolica*: "That some customs and religious observances of the early Christians were closely related to certain pagan practices and ways is known to all scholars nowadays. They were practices too dear to the people, customs too deeply rooted and intertwined in the public and private life of the ancient world. The mother church, kind and wise, did not believe that she had to uproot them; rather, by transforming them in a Christian sense, raising them to new nobility and new life, she prevailed over them by means that were powerful yet gentle, so

as to win to herself without uproar the souls of both the masses and the cultured."

One well-known example of the adoption of a pagan festivity is, of course, that of Christmas. December 25 was, in fact, the date on which the ancient Romans observed the *dies natalis Solis Invicti*, that is, "the birthday of the invincible sun."

In her desire to win pagan hearts, the church therefore did not adhere to the truth. She justified the practice of syncretism, the absorption of heathen beliefs and practices "dear to the masses." The result was a hybrid, apostate church, far removed from the teachings of true Christianity. In this light, perhaps it is not so surprising that a former Roman temple to "all gods"—the Pantheon—should become a Roman Catholic church dedicated to Mary and all the "saints."

It ought to be obvious, however, that changing the dedication of a temple or the name of a celebration is not sufficient to transform the 'worship of devils into the service of the true God.' "What agreement does God's temple have with idols?" asked the apostle Paul. "'Get out from among them, and separate yourselves,' says Jehovah, 'and quit touching the unclean thing'; 'and I will take you in.' 'And I shall be a father to you, and you will be sons and daughters to me,' says Jehovah the Almighty."—2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

## In Our Next Issue

A Book of Wisdom  
With a Message for Today

In Search of Paradise

Baal Worship—The Battle for the  
Israelites' Hearts



Text: Per gentile concessione del Ministero dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali

# RASHI

## An Influential Bible Commentator

**W**HAT was one of the first books ever printed in Hebrew? A commentary on the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses). It was published in Reggio Calabria, Italy, in 1475. Its author? A man known as Rashi.

Why would a commentary be granted this unique distinction? In his book *Rashi—The Man and His World*, Esra Shereshevsky states that Rashi's commentary "became a basic text in the Jewish home and in the house of study. No other work of Jewish literature has ever been accorded such appreciation . . . More than 200 supercommentaries are known that deal directly with Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch."

Have only Jews been affected by Rashi's commentary? Though not discerned by many, Rashi's commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures has influenced Bible translations for centuries. But who was Rashi, and how did he come to have so much influence?

### Who Was Rashi?

Rashi was born at Troyes, France, in the year 1040.\* As a young man, he went to Jew-

ish religious academies at Worms and Mainz in the Rhineland. There he studied under some of the most prominent Jewish scholars in Europe. At about the age of 25, his personal circumstances necessitated returning to Troyes. Already acknowledged as an outstanding scholar, Rashi quickly became the religious leader of the local Jewish community and established his own religious academy. In time, this new center of Jewish learning became even more influential than those of Rashi's teachers in Germany.

At that time the Jews in France enjoyed relative peace and harmony with their neighbors who professed Christianity, allowing greater freedom for Rashi's scholarly pursuits. Yet, he was no aloof scholar. Despite his prestige as a teacher and head of the academy, Rashi earned a living as a wine maker. This intimate knowledge of common trades put him in closer touch with average Jews, helping him to understand and sympathize with their circumstances. The location of Troyes also contributed to Rashi's insights. Situated along major trade routes, the city served as a cosmopolitan center, and this enabled Rashi to become

\* "Rashi" is a Hebrew acronym formed from the initial letters of the words "Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaqi" [Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac].

well-acquainted with manners and customs of various nations.

### Why Was a Commentary Needed?

The Jews were known as the people of the book. But "the book"—the Bible—was in Hebrew, and "the people" now spoke Arabic, French, German, Spanish, and a multitude of other languages. Though most Jews were still taught Hebrew from childhood, they did not clearly understand many Biblical terms. Additionally, for centuries a strong trend within rabbinic Judaism led people away from looking into the literal meaning of the Bible text. Allegories and legends relating to Biblical words and verses abounded. Many such comments and stories were recorded in voluminous writings, collectively called the Midrash.\*

Rashi's grandson, Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (*Rashbam*), was also a Bible scholar. In his commentary on Genesis 37:2, he said that "the older commentators [before Rashi] . . . were inclined to preach sermons (*derashot*), which they regarded as the most important objective, [but] were not accustomed to delve into the depths of the literal meaning of the Biblical text." Commenting on this trend, Dr. A. Cohen (chief editor of the *Soncino Books of the Bible*) writes: "It is true that the Rabbis laid down a rule that no interpretation was to be admitted which was incompatible with the *peshat* or plain meaning of the text; but in practice they paid little regard to this rule." In such a religious environment, the average Jew felt lost when approaching the Biblical text and felt a need for some explanatory tool.

### Rashi's Goal and Methods

Rashi's lifelong goal was to make the text of the Hebrew Scriptures understandable

\* The word "Midrash" comes from a Hebrew root meaning "to inquire, study, investigate," and by extension "to preach."

to all Jews. To accomplish this, he began to collect notebooks of comments on specific words and verses that he felt would present difficulty to the reader. Rashi's notes mention his teachers' explanations and draw from his encyclopedic knowledge of the full gamut of rabbinic literature. In linguistic research, Rashi exhausted all available sources. He gave attention to how the pointing and accent marks of the Masoretes affect textual understanding. To elucidate the meaning of a word, his commentary on the Pentateuch often refers to the Aramaic translation (Targum of Onkelos). Rashi displayed flexibility and ingenuity as he examined previously unexplored possibilities in explaining prepositions, conjunctions, verb meanings, and other aspects of grammar and syntax. Such comments made a valuable contribution to understanding the syntax and grammar of the Hebrew language.

In contrast with the dominant trend in rabbinic Judaism, Rashi always sought to highlight the simple, literal meaning of a text. But the vast Midrashic literature, so well-known by the Jews, could not be ignored. A striking feature of Rashi's commentary is the way he relates to the very Midrashic writings that had often obscured the literal meaning of the Bible text.

In his comment on Genesis 3:8, Rashi explains: "There are many aggadic\* *midrashim* which our Sages have already arranged suitably in *Bereshit Rabbah* and other midrashic anthologies. I, however, am concerned exclusively with the straightforward meaning (*peshat*) of the verse, and with such *aggadot* as explain the Scriptural account in its context." By selecting and editing only those midrashim that in his opinion helped

\* *Aggadah* (plural *aggadot*) literally means "narration" and refers to the nonlegal elements in rabbinic writings, often involving non-Biblical tales of Biblical characters or legends about rabbis.

to clarify the meaning or context of a verse, Rashi edited out, or excluded, midrashim that caused contradiction and confusion. As a result of this editing, future generations of Jews became familiar mostly with Rashi's choice selections of the Midrash.

While generous in giving credit to his teachers, Rashi was not hesitant to disagree when he felt that their explanations contradicted clear reasoning on a text. When he did not understand a certain passage or felt that he had previously explained it incorrectly, he was willing to admit this, even mentioning cases where his students helped correct his understanding.

### Influenced by His Times

Rashi was very much a man of his times. One author summed it up this way: "[Rashi's] great contribution to Jewish life was his reinterpretation of all relevant passages into the vernacular of the day, in such clear, lucid language, with such warmth and humanity, with such rare skill and scholarship, that his commentaries became revered as scripture and loved as literature. Rashi wrote Hebrew as though it were French, with wit and elegance. Whenever he lacked the precise Hebrew word, he used a French word instead, spelling it with Hebrew letters." These transliterated French terms—Rashi used over 3,500 of them—have become a valuable source for students of Old French philology and pronunciation.

Although Rashi's life began in an atmosphere of relative tranquillity, his later years witnessed increasing tension between Jews and professed Christians. In 1096 the First Crusade brought devastation to the Jewish communities of the Rhineland, where Rashi had studied. Thousands of Jews were massacred. It seems that news of these massacres had an impact on Rashi's health (which steadily deteriorated until his death

in 1105). From that point on, there was a marked change in his Scripture commentaries. One outstanding example is Isaiah chapter 53, which speaks of Jehovah's suffering servant. Earlier, Rashi applied these texts to the Messiah, as does the Talmud. But it appears that after the Crusades, he thought that these verses had an application to the Jewish people, who had faced unjust suffering. This proved to be a turning point in Jewish interpretation of these texts.\* Thus, Christendom's unchristian behavior was turning many, including Jews, away from the truth about Jesus.—Matthew 7:16-20; 2 Peter 2:1, 2.

### How Did He Influence Bible Translation?

Rashi's influence was soon felt beyond Judaism. The French Franciscan Bible commentator Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349) referred so frequently to the views of "Rabbi Solomon [Rashi]" that he was nicknamed "the Ape of Solomon." In turn, many commentators and translators were influenced by Lyra, including the forerunners of the translators of the English *King James Version* and reformer Martin Luther, who revolutionized Bible translation in Germany. Luther leaned so heavily on Lyra that a popular rhyme went: "Had Lyra not played the lyre, Luther would not have danced."

Rashi was deeply influenced by rabbinic thought that is out of harmony with Christian truth. Yet, with his deep insight into Biblical Hebrew terms, syntax, and grammar and his constant effort to discern the plain and literal meaning of the text, Rashi provides a meaningful source of comparison for Bible researchers and translators.

\* For further information on this Scriptural passage, see the box "My Servant"—Who Is He?, on page 28 of the brochure *Will There Ever Be a World Without War?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



# "In DANGERS at SEA"

**I**N THE darkness of night, a sailing ship carrying 276 people nears an island in the Mediterranean. The crew and passengers are exhausted from being tossed to and fro in the stormy waters for 14 days. Upon seeing a bay at daybreak, they try to beach the vessel. But the prow gets stuck beyond movement, and the waves break the stern to pieces. All on board abandon ship and manage to reach the shores of Malta by swimming or by hanging on to planks or other objects. Cold and battered, they haul themselves out of the raging surf. Among the passengers is the Christian apostle Paul. He is being transported to Rome for trial.—Acts 27:27-44.

For Paul, the shipwreck at the island of Malta was not the first life-threatening episode at sea. A few years earlier, he wrote: “Three times I experienced shipwreck, a night and a day I have spent in the deep.” He added that he had been “in dangers at sea.” (2 Corinthians 11:25-27) Journeying by sea had helped Paul to fulfill his God-given role as “an apostle to the nations.” —Romans 11:13.

Just how extensive was sea travel in the first century? What part did it play in the spreading of Christianity? How safe was it?

What kind of vessels were in use? And how were passengers accommodated?

### Rome's Need for Maritime Trade

The Romans called the Mediterranean *Mare Nostrum*—Our Sea. Control over sea-lanes was imperative to Rome for more than military reasons. Many cities of the Roman Empire either were ports or were served by them. For example, Rome had her seaport in nearby Ostia, while Corinth used Lechaeum and Cenchreae, and Syrian Antioch was served by Seleucia. Good maritime connections between these ports ensured rapid communication with key cities and facilitated effective administration of Roman provinces.

Rome also depended upon the shipping industry for its food supply. With a population of about one million, Rome had huge grain requirements—somewhere between 250,000 and 400,000 tons a year. Where did all that grain come from? Flavius Josephus quotes Herod Agrippa II as remarking that North Africa fed Rome for eight months of the year, while Egypt sent enough grain to support the city for the other four. Thousands of seagoing vessels were involved in supplying grain to that city.

Catering to the Roman taste for luxury, the flourishing seaborne trade supplied all kinds of merchandise. Minerals, stone, and marble were shipped from Cyprus, Greece, and Egypt, and lumber was transported from Lebanon. Wine came from Smyrna, nuts from Damascus, and dates from Palestine. Ointments and rubber were loaded in Cilicia, wool in Miletus and Laodicea, textiles in Syria and Lebanon, purple cloth in Tyre and Sidon. Dyes were sent from Thyatira and glass from Alexandria and Sidon. Silk, cotton, ivory, and spices were imported from China and India.

What can be said of the ship that was wrecked at Malta with Paul on board? It was a grain ship, "a boat from Alexandria that was sailing for Italy." (Acts 27:6, footnote) The grain fleets were privately owned by Greeks, Phoenicians, and Syrians, who commanded and equipped them. However, the ships were hired by the State. "As in the collection of taxes," says historian William M. Ramsay, "the government found it easier to give out the work to contract than to organize for itself the enormous machinery in men and equipment needed for that great service."

Paul completed his voyage to Rome on a vessel with the figurehead "Sons of Zeus." This too was an Alexandrian ship. It docked at Puteoli in the Gulf of Naples, the port where the grain fleets normally landed. (Acts 28:11-13) From Puteoli—modern-day Pozzuoli—the cargo was either hauled overland or transported on smaller vessels northward along the coast and up the Tiber River into the heart of Rome.

### **Passengers on Freighters?**

Why did Paul and his soldier guards travel on a freighter? To answer that question, we need to know what it meant to travel by sea as a passenger in those days.

In the first century C.E., there was no such thing as a passenger ship. Vessels used by travelers were merchant ships. And all kinds of people—including State functionaries, intellectuals, preachers, sorcerers, artists, athletes, merchants, tourists, and pilgrims—might have sailed in them.

There were, of course, small boats that transported passengers and cargo in coastal waters. Paul may have used such a craft to "step over into Macedonia" from Troas. Small vessels may have conveyed him to and from Athens on more than one occasion. Paul may also have used small craft in his later voyage from Troas to Patara through the islands near the coast of Asia Minor. (Acts 16:8-11; 17:14, 15; 20:1-6, 13-15; 21:1) The use of such small vessels saved time, but they could not venture very far from land. So the ships that took Paul to Cyprus and then to Pamphylia and those in which he voyaged from Ephesus to Caesarea and from Patara to Tyre must have been considerably larger. (Acts 13:4, 13; 18:21, 22; 21:1-3) The vessel on which Paul experienced shipwreck at Malta would also have been considered large. How big could such ships be?

Literary sources led one scholar to say: "The smallest capacity [ship] found generally useful by the ancients was about 70 to 80 tons. A very popular size, at least in the Hellenistic age, was 130 tons. A 250-tonner, although a common sight, was definitely larger than average. In Roman times the ships used in the imperial transport service were still greater, the desirable capacity being 340 tons. The largest ships afloat ran to 1300 tons, possibly a bit larger." According to a description penned in the second century C.E., the Alexandrian grain carrier *Isis* was over 180 feet long, was about 45 feet wide, had a hold some 44 feet deep, and could probably carry over a thousand

tons of grain and perhaps a few hundred passengers.

How were the travelers cared for on a grain ship? Since the ships were principally for cargo, passengers were a secondary consideration. No food or services, except water, were supplied for them. They would sleep on deck, perhaps under tentlike shelters erected at night and taken down each morning. Though voyagers may have been allowed to use the galley for cooking, they would have had to equip themselves with everything needed to cook, eat, bathe, and sleep—from pots and pans to bedding.

### Travel by Sea—How Safe?

Lacking instruments—even a compass—navigators in the first century operated strictly by sight. Therefore, travel was the safest when visibility was the best—generally from late May to mid-September. During the two months before and after that time, merchants might chance sailing. But during wintertime, mist and clouds often obscured landmarks and the sun by day and the stars by night. Navigation was considered closed (Latin, *mare clausum*) from November 11 to March 10, except in cases of absolute necessity or urgency. Those traveling late in the season ran a risk of having to winter in a foreign port.—Acts 27:12; 28:11.

Despite being hazardous and seasonal, did sailing offer any advantages over land travel? Yes, indeed! Traveling by sea was less tiring, cheaper, and faster. When winds were favorable, a ship could cover perhaps 100 miles a day. The ordinary rate for a long journey on foot was 15 to 20 miles a day.

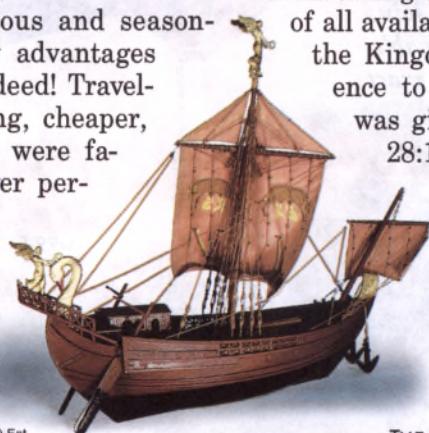
Sailing speed depended almost entirely

on the wind. The journey from Egypt to Italy was a continual fight against head winds, even at the best of times. The shortest route was usually via Rhodes or Myra or some other port on the coast of Lycia in Asia Minor. After encountering storms and losing her way, on one occasion the grain ship *Isis* anchored in Piraeus 70 days after putting out from Alexandria. With prevailing northwesterly winds behind her, the return leg from Italy could probably be made in 20 to 25 days. By the overland route, the same journey in either direction would require over 150 days in good weather.

### The Good News Carried Far Overseas

Paul was evidently aware of the dangers of out-of-season sea travel. He even advised against sailing in late September or early October, saying: “Men, I perceive that navigation is going to be with damage and great loss not only of the cargo and the boat but also of our souls.” (Acts 27:9, 10) However, the army officer in charge ignored these words, and this resulted in the shipwreck at Malta.

By the end of his missionary career, Paul had been shipwrecked at least four times. (Acts 27:41-44; 2 Corinthians 11:25) Yet, undue anxiety about such eventualities did not prevent early preachers of the good news from taking to the sea. They made full use of all available means of travel to spread the Kingdom message. And in obedience to Jesus’ command, a witness was given far and wide. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8) Thanks to their zeal, the faith of those who have followed their example, and the guidance of Jehovah’s holy spirit, the good news has reached the most far-flung corners of the inhabited earth.



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## A DAY TO REMEMBER

*The evening before he died, Jesus passed a loaf of unleavened bread and a cup of wine to his apostles and instructed them to eat and to drink. He also told them: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me."—Luke 22:19.*

*This year the anniversary of this event falls on Thursday, April 1, after sundown. Jehovah's Witnesses around the world will be gathered on this special night to observe this Memorial in the manner Jesus commanded. You are most warmly invited to join us. Please check with Jehovah's Witnesses locally for the exact time and place of this special meeting.*

