

NOVEMBER 15, 2003

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Can You  
Believe  
in a Paradise  
Earth?





# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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# CAN YOU BELIEVE in a Paradise Earth?



**F**EW people believe that the earth will ever be a paradise. Many think that it will not continue to exist at all. According to the book *The Sacred Earth*, by Brian Leigh Molyneaux, this globe came into existence because of 'a great cosmic explosion' millions of years ago. And if man himself does not destroy the earth, many believe that it and the whole universe may eventually "collapse back into a fiery, imploding ball."

The 17th-century English poet John Milton had no

*The poet John Milton believed that Paradise would be regained*

such pessimistic thoughts.

In his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, he wrote that God created the earth to be a paradise home for the human family. That original Paradise was lost. However, Milton believed that it would be restored—that a redeemer in the person of Jesus Christ would one day "reward his faithful, and receive them into bliss . . . in Heaven or Earth." Milton confidently declared: "For then the Earth shall all be Paradise."

## Paradise—In Heaven or on Earth?

Many religious people share Milton's view that they will eventually receive some kind of compensation for the horrors and pain that they have had to endure here on earth. But where will they enjoy that reward? Will it be "in Heaven or Earth"? For some, the

earth hardly enters the picture. They say that people will enjoy "bliss" only after they leave the earth and live in a spirit realm in heaven.

In the book *Heaven—A History*, authors C. McDannell and B. Lang say that second-century theologian Irenaeus believed that life in a restored paradise "would not take place in some distant heavenly realm, but on earth." According to that book, although such religious leaders as John Calvin and Martin Luther hoped to go to heaven, they also believed that "God would renew the earth." Members of other religions have held similar beliefs. McDannell and Lang also say that some Jewish people believed that in God's due time, all human hardships "will be erased and a full life will be lived on earth." According to ancient Persian belief, "the pristine state of the earth will be restored and people will live in peace once more," says *The Encyclopaedia of Middle Eastern Mythology and Religion*.

What happened to the hope of a paradise earth? Is our earthly existence meant to be only a passing phase? As the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo held, is it to be just "a brief, often unfortunate, episode" in a journey to a spirit realm? Or did God have something else in mind when he created the earth and put humans on it in paradise conditions? Can mankind find genuine spiritual fulfillment and bliss right here on earth? Why not examine what the Bible says about this subject? You may well conclude, as millions already have, that to hope for a restored earthly paradise is reasonable indeed.

# YOU CAN BELIEVE in a Paradise Earth



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,  
Washington, D.C./NASA

THROUGHOUT history, millions of people have believed that they would eventually leave the earth and go to heaven. Some have felt that our Creator never intended that the earth should be our permanent dwelling place. Ascetics have gone even further. To many of them, the earth and all material things are evil—a barrier to real spiritual fulfillment and closeness to God.

Those who developed the foregoing ideas were either unaware of what God said on the matter of a paradise earth or chose to ignore it. Today, in fact, many show no interest in examining what God inspired men to record on this subject in his Word, the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) But is it not wise to trust God's Word instead of adopting theories of men? (Romans 3:4) It is, in fact, vital that we do so, since the Bible warns us that a powerful but invisible evil creature has blinded people spiritually and is now "misleading the entire inhabited earth."—Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4.

## Why the Confusion?

Conflicting ideas about the soul have caused people to be confused about God's purpose for the earth. Many believe that we have an immortal soul—something that is separate from the human body and that survives death. Others believe that the soul existed before the human body was created. According to one reference work, the Greek philosopher Plato felt that the soul "is incarcerated in the body as a punishment for the sins which it committed in its heavenly state." Similarly, the third-century theolo-

gian Origen said that "souls sinned [in heaven] before they were united with a body" and were "imprisoned [in that body on earth] as a punishment for their sins." And millions believe that the earth is simply some kind of testing ground on man's journey to heaven.

There are also various ideas about what happens to the soul when a person dies. According to the book *History of Western Philosophy*, the Egyptians developed the view that "the souls of the dead descend into the underworld." Philosophers later argued that the souls of the dead did not descend into a dark underworld but actually ascended to a higher spirit realm. The Greek philosopher Socrates is said to have held that at death the soul "departs into [an] invisible region . . . and spends the rest of its existence with the gods."

## What Does the Bible Say?

Nowhere does God's inspired Word, the Bible, say that humans have an immortal soul. Read the account at Genesis 2:7 for yourself. It says: "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul." That is clear and unambiguous. When God created the first man, Adam, He did not put some kind of immaterial principle into him. No, for the Bible says that "the man came to be a living soul." The man did not house a soul. He was a soul.

In creating the earth and the human family, Jehovah never intended that man should die. God's purpose was that humans would

live on earth forever amid Paradise conditions. Adam died only because he disobeyed God's law. (Genesis 2:8, 15-17; 3:1-6; Isaiah 45:18) When the first man died, did he go to some spirit realm? No! He—the soul Adam—returned to the inanimate dust from which he was created.—Genesis 3:17-19.



*Adam and Eve were designed to live forever on a paradise earth*

All of us have inherited sin and death from our forefather Adam. (Romans 5:12) This death is a cessation of existence, just as it was for Adam. (Psalm 146:3, 4) In fact, in all its 66 books, the Bible never links the terms "immortal" or "everlasting" with the word "soul." On the contrary, the Scriptures clearly state that the soul—the person—is mortal. The soul dies.—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4.

## Are Material Things Inherently Evil?

What about the idea that material things, including the earth, are evil? Such a view was held by adherents of Manichaeism, a religious movement founded in Persia during the third century C.E. by an individual named Mani. Says *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*: "Manichaeism arose out of the anguish inherent in the human condition." Mani believed that being human was "alien, unbearable, and radically evil." He also held that the only way to get out of this "anguish" was for the soul to escape the body, leave the earth, and attain to spiritual existence in a spirit world.

In contrast, the Bible tells us that in God's view "everything he had made" when creating the earth and humankind was "very good." (Genesis 1:31) At that time, there was no barrier between humans and God. Adam and Eve enjoyed close communion with Jehovah, even as the perfect man Jesus Christ enjoyed an intimate relationship with his heavenly Father.  
—Matthew 3:17.

If our first parents, Adam and Eve, had not pursued a course of sin, they would have had a close relationship with Jehovah God eternally on a paradise earth. They started life in Paradise, for the Scriptures tell us: "Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed." (Genesis 2:8) It was in that paradisaic garden that Eve was brought into existence. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, they and their perfect

offspring could have worked together happily until the entire earth became a paradise. (Genesis 2:21; 3:23, 24) The earthly Paradise would have been mankind's home eternally.

### Why Do Some Go to Heaven?

'But,' you may say, 'the Bible does speak about people going to heaven, doesn't it?' Yes. After Adam sinned, Jehovah purposed to set up a heavenly Kingdom in which some of Adam's descendants would "rule as kings over the earth" alongside Jesus Christ. (Revelation 5:10; Romans 8:17) They were to be resurrected to immortal life in heaven. Their final number is 144,000, and the first ones among them were Jesus' faithful first-century disciples.—Luke 12:32; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; Revelation 14:1-5.

However, it was not God's original purpose for upright humans to leave the earth and go to heaven. In fact, when Jesus was on earth, he stated: "No man has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man." (John 3:13) Through "the Son of man," Jesus Christ, God provided a ransom that makes everlasting life possible for those exercising faith in Jesus' sacrifice. (Romans 5:8) But where will millions of such humans live eternally?

### God's Original Purpose Will Be Fulfilled

Though God purposed to take some from the human family to serve as co-rulers with Jesus Christ in the heavenly Kingdom, that does not mean that all good people go to heaven. Jehovah created the earth to be the Paradise home of the human family. Very soon now, God will have that original purpose fulfilled.—Matthew 6:9, 10.

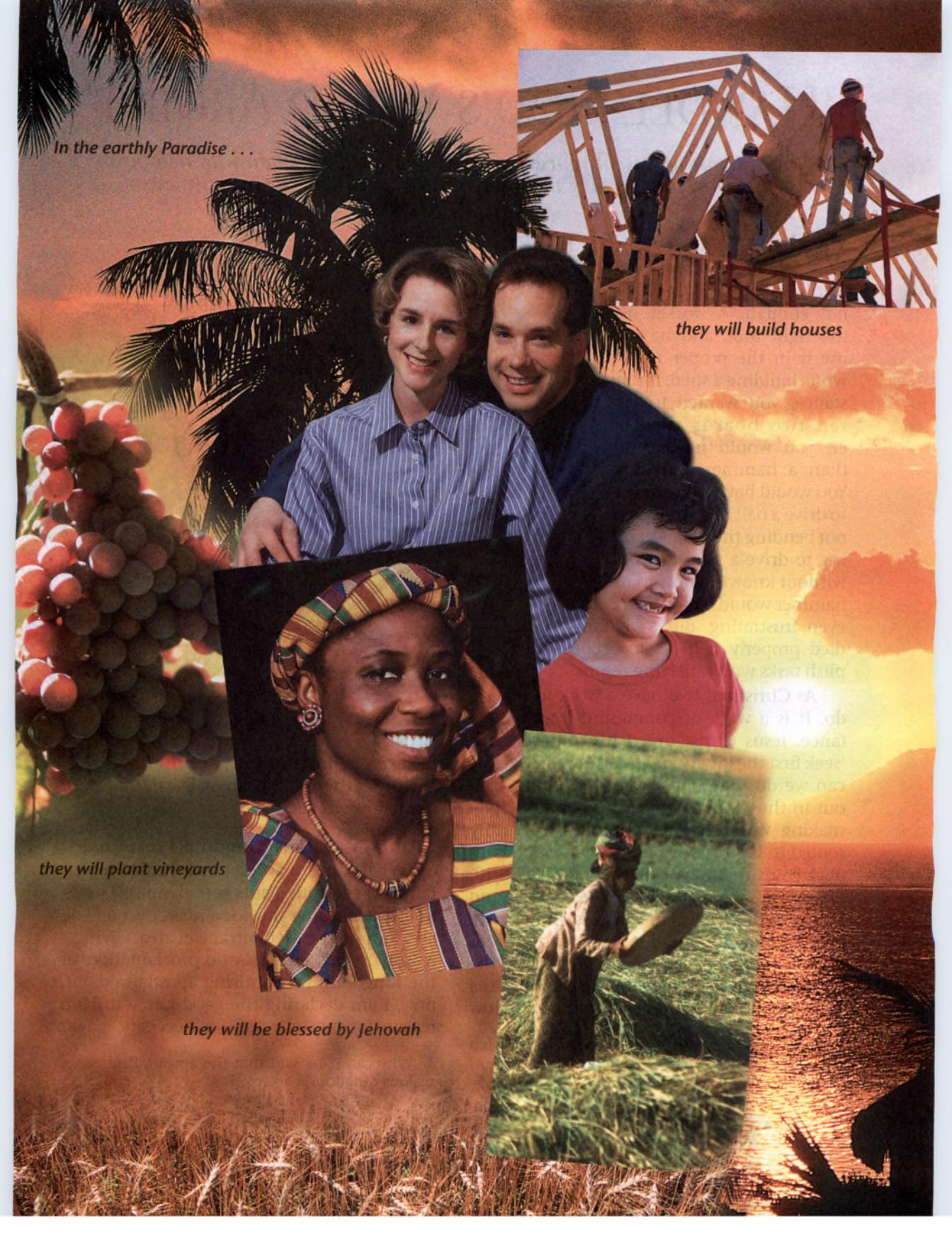
Under the rule of Jesus Christ and his heavenly co-rulers, peace and happiness will prevail in all the earth. (Psalm 37:9-11)

Those in God's memory will be resurrected and will enjoy perfect health. (Acts 24:15) By their faithfulness to God, obedient mankind will be granted what our original parents lost—everlasting life in human perfection on a paradise earth.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Jehovah God never fails to accomplish what he purposes to do. Through his prophet Isaiah, he declared: "Just as the pouring rain descends, and the snow, from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth and makes it produce and sprout, and seed is actually given to the sower and bread to the eater, so my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it."—Isaiah 55:10, 11.

In the Bible book of Isaiah, we get a preview of what life will be like in the Paradise earth. No inhabitant of Paradise will say, "I am sick." (Isaiah 33:24) Animals will pose no danger to man. (Isaiah 11:6-9) People will build beautiful homes and inhabit them and will plant crops and eat to satisfaction. (Isaiah 65:21-25) Moreover, God "will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces."—Isaiah 25:8.

Soon, obedient mankind will live under such blessed conditions. They "will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God." (Romans 8:21) How wonderful it will be to live forever in the promised earthly Paradise! (Luke 23:43) You can be there if you act upon accurate knowledge of the Scriptures and exercise faith in Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. And you can have confidence that it does make sense to believe in a paradise earth.



*In the earthly Paradise . . .*

*they will build houses*



*they will plant vineyards*



*they will be blessed by Jehovah*



# 'HANDLE GOD'S WORD ARIGHT'

*"Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright."—2 TIMOTHY 2:15.*

WORKERS need tools to help them get their jobs done. Just having any tool, though, is not enough. A worker needs the right tool, and he must use it in the proper way. If while building a shed, for instance, you wanted to fasten two boards together, you would need more than a hammer and nails. You would have to know how to drive a nail into wood without bending the nail. Attempting to drive a nail into wood without knowing how to use a hammer would be very difficult, even frustrating. But tools handled properly help us to accomplish tasks with satisfying results.

<sup>2</sup> As Christians, we have a work to do. It is a work of paramount importance. Jesus Christ urged his followers to 'seek first the kingdom.' (Matthew 6:33) How can we do that? One way is by being zealous in the Kingdom preaching and disciple-making work. Having our ministry firmly rooted in God's Word is another. Good conduct is a third way. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; Acts 8:25; 1 Peter 2:12) To be effective and happy in this Christian work assignment, we need suitable tools and knowledge of how to handle them properly. In this respect, the apostle Paul set an outstanding example as a Christian laborer, and he encouraged fellow

1, 2. (a) Why do workers need tools? (b) In what work are Christians engaged, and how do they show that they seek first the Kingdom?

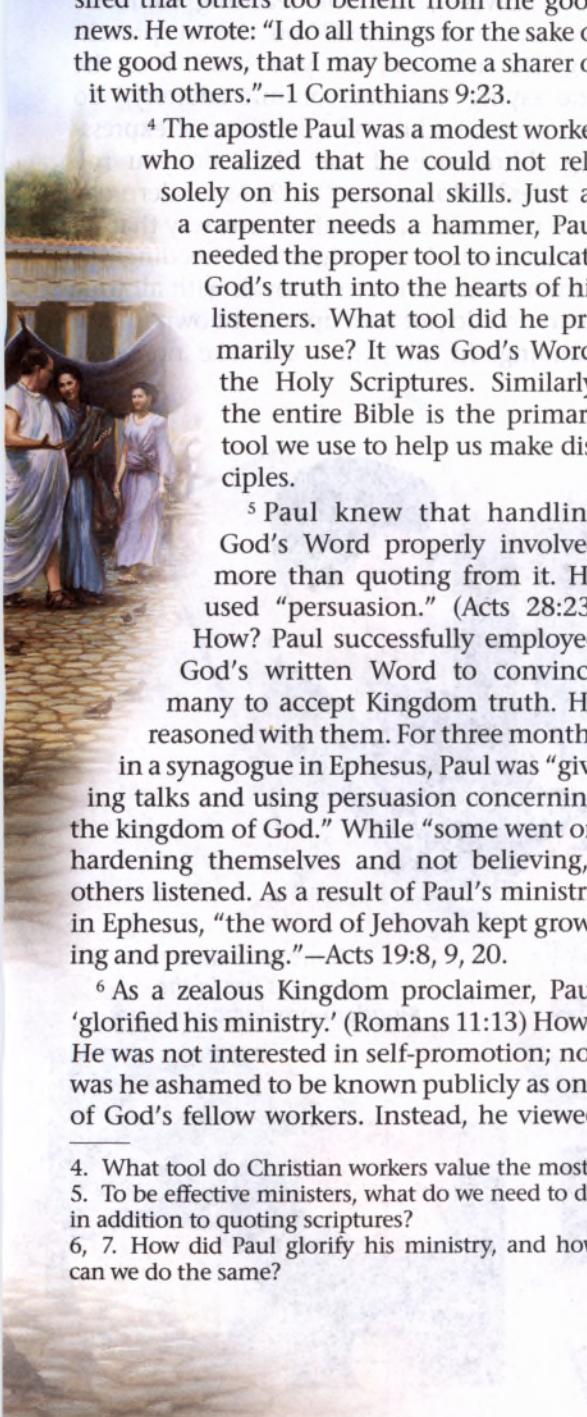


believers to imitate him. (1 Corinthians 11:1; 15:10) So, then, what can we learn from Paul, our fellow worker?

## Paul—A Zealous Kingdom Proclaimer

<sup>3</sup> What kind of worker was Paul? He certainly was zealous. Paul exerted himself strenuously, spreading the good news over a wide area around the Mediterranean area. Giving a reason for his enthusiastic proclamation of the Kingdom, this untiring apostle said: "If, now, I am declaring the good news, it is no reason for me to boast, for necessity is laid

3. Why can it be said that the apostle Paul was a zealous Kingdom worker?



upon me. Really, woe is me if I did not declare the good news!" (1 Corinthians 9:16) Was Paul interested in saving only his own life? No. He was not a selfish person. Rather, he desired that others too benefit from the good news. He wrote: "I do all things for the sake of the good news, that I may become a sharer of it with others."—1 Corinthians 9:23.

<sup>4</sup> The apostle Paul was a modest worker who realized that he could not rely solely on his personal skills. Just as a carpenter needs a hammer, Paul needed the proper tool to inculcate God's truth into the hearts of his listeners. What tool did he primarily use? It was God's Word, the Holy Scriptures. Similarly, the entire Bible is the primary tool we use to help us make disciples.

<sup>5</sup> Paul knew that handling God's Word properly involved more than quoting from it. He used "persuasion." (Acts 28:23) How? Paul successfully employed God's written Word to convince many to accept Kingdom truth. He reasoned with them. For three months

in a synagogue in Ephesus, Paul was "giving talks and using persuasion concerning the kingdom of God." While "some went on hardening themselves and not believing," others listened. As a result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, "the word of Jehovah kept growing and prevailing."—Acts 19:8, 9, 20.

<sup>6</sup> As a zealous Kingdom proclaimer, Paul 'glorified his ministry.' (Romans 11:13) How? He was not interested in self-promotion; nor was he ashamed to be known publicly as one of God's fellow workers. Instead, he viewed

4. What tool do Christian workers value the most?
5. To be effective ministers, what do we need to do in addition to quoting scriptures?
- 6, 7. How did Paul glorify his ministry, and how can we do the same?

his ministry as an honor of the highest order. Paul handled God's Word skillfully and effectively. His fruitful activity provided incentive for others, helping to motivate them to accomplish their ministry more fully. In this way too, his ministry was glorified.

<sup>7</sup> Like Paul, we can glorify our work as ministers by making frequent and effective use of the Word of God. In all features of our field ministry, our goal should be to share something from the Scriptures with as many people as possible. How can we do this with persuasion? Consider three important ways: (1) Direct attention to God's Word in a way that creates respect for it. (2) Tactfully explain and apply what the Bible says. (3) Reason from the Scriptures in a way that is convincing.

<sup>8</sup> Present-day Kingdom proclaimers have tools that were not available to Paul during his ministry. These include books, magazines, brochures, handbills, tracts, and audio and video recordings. In the past century, testimony cards, phonographs, sound cars, and radio broadcasts were also used. Of course, our best tool is the Bible, and we need to make good and proper use of this indispensable tool.

### Our Ministry Must Be Rooted in God's Word

<sup>9</sup> How can we use God's Word as an effective tool? By heeding these words of Paul directed to his coworker Timothy: "Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." (2 Timothy 2:15) What is entailed in "handling the word of the truth aright"?

<sup>10</sup> The Greek word rendered "handling aright" literally means "straightly cutting" or

8. What Kingdom-preaching tools do we have available today, and how have you used them?
- 9, 10. Regarding the use of God's Word, what can we learn from Paul's counsel to Timothy?

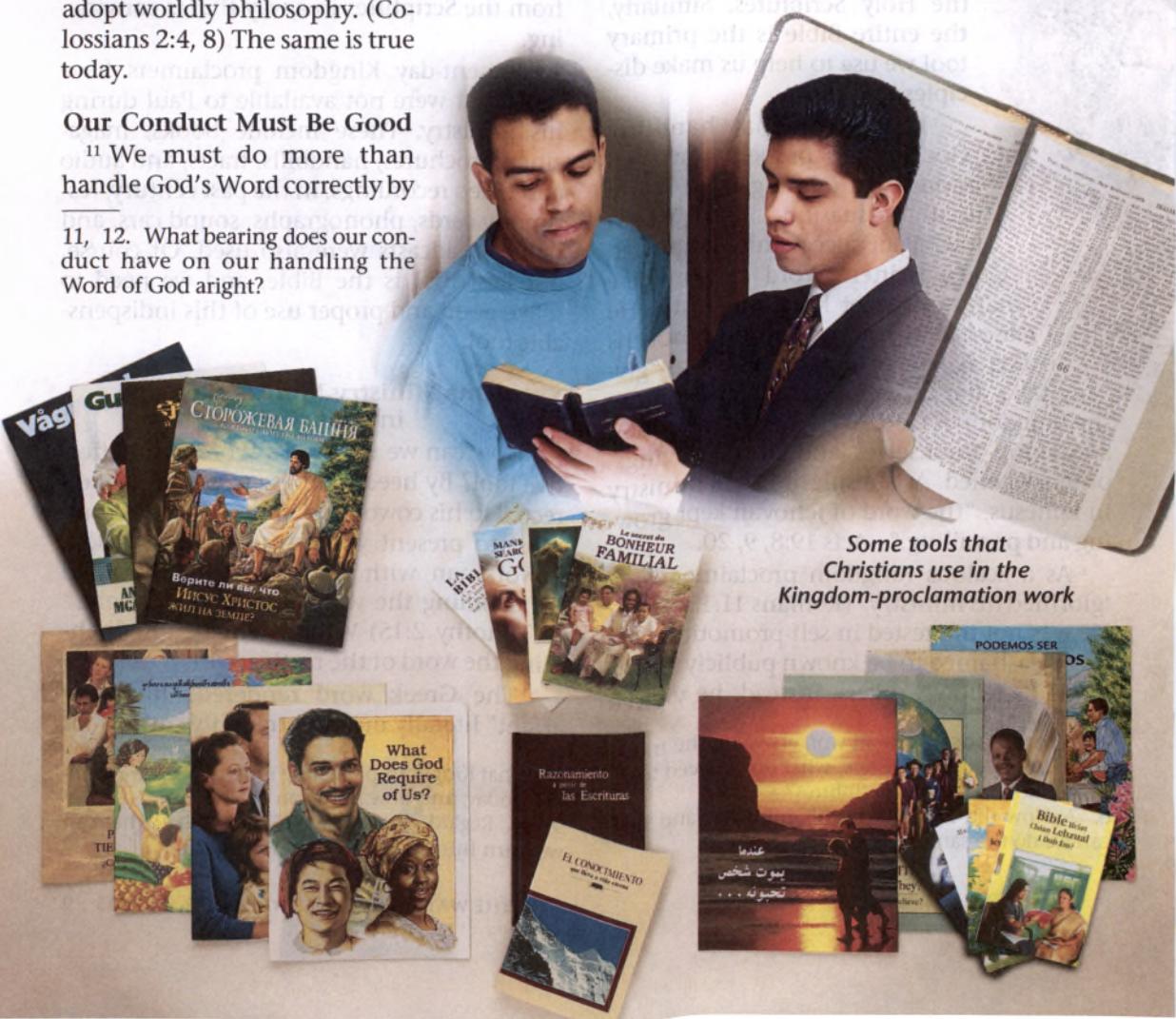
"to cut a path in a straight direction." Only in Paul's admonition to Timothy is that term used in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The same word could be used to describe plowing a straight furrow across a field. A crooked row would certainly prove to be an embarrassment to a seasoned farmer. To be "a workman with nothing to be ashamed of," Timothy was reminded that no deviation from the true teachings of God's Word would be allowed. Timothy was not to permit his personal views to shape his teaching. He was to center his preaching and teaching strictly on the Scriptures. (2 Timothy 4:2-4) In this way, honesthearted individuals would be directed to have Jehovah's mind on matters, not to adopt worldly philosophy. (Colossians 2:4, 8) The same is true today.

### Our Conduct Must Be Good

<sup>11</sup> We must do more than handle God's Word correctly by

11, 12. What bearing does our conduct have on our handling the Word of God aright?

proclaiming its truths. Our conduct must conform to it. "We are God's fellow workers," so we must not be hypocritical workmen. (1 Corinthians 3:9) God's Word says: "Do you, however, the one teaching someone else, not teach yourself? You, the one preaching 'Do not steal,' do you steal? You, the one saying 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You, the one expressing abhorrence of the idols, do you rob temples?" (Romans 2:21, 22) As modern-day workmen of God, therefore, one way that we handle God's Word aright is by heeding this admonition: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of



him, and he himself will make your paths straight.”—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

<sup>12</sup> What results can we expect from handling God’s Word aright? Consider the power that the written Word of God can have on the lives of honesthearted individuals.

### God’s Word Has Transforming Power

<sup>13</sup> When accepted as authoritative, the message of God’s Word exerts a dynamic influence that helps people to make remarkable changes in their lives. Paul had seen God’s word in action and had witnessed its good effect upon those who had become Christians in ancient Thessalonica. He therefore told them: “We also thank God incessantly, because when you received God’s word, which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God, which is also at work in you believers.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13) For those Christians—indeed, for all true followers of Christ—the puny logic of man is no match for the supreme wisdom of God. (Isaiah 55:9) The Thessalonians “accepted the word under much tribulation with joy of holy spirit” and became examples to other believers.—1 Thessalonians 1:5-7.

<sup>14</sup> The Word of God is dynamic, as is its Source, Jehovah. It comes from “the living God,” the one by whose word “the heavens themselves were made,” and that word always ‘has success in that for which it is sent.’ (Hebrews 3:12; Psalm 33:6; Isaiah 55:11) One Bible scholar commented: “God does not separate himself from his Word. He does not disown it as if it were a foreign thing to him. . . . Therefore it is never dead matter, insensible to what is done with it; for it is a bond of union with the living God.”

13. What can application of God’s Word produce in a person?

14, 15. How powerful is the message of God’s Word, and why?

<sup>15</sup> How powerful is the message emanating from God’s Word? It has tremendous power. Fittingly, Paul wrote: “The word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart.”—Hebrews 4:12.

<sup>16</sup> The message in God’s written Word is “sharper than any two-edged sword.” Thus, it has such tremendous penetrating power that it exceeds any human instrument or tool. The Word of God pierces the innermost parts of a person and can change him inwardly, affecting how he thinks and what he loves, making him an acceptable, godly worker. What a powerful tool!

<sup>17</sup> The Word of God exposes what a person really is at his core as compared with what he thinks he is or what he allows others to see. (1 Samuel 16:7) Even a wicked person can sometimes shroud his inner self with a covering of benevolence or piety. Evil ones put up false fronts for wicked reasons. Proud people masquerade with mock humility while yearning to hear the applause of men. By laying bare what is really in the heart, however, God’s Word can powerfully move a humble individual to strip off the old personality and “put on the new personality which was created according to God’s will in true righteousness and loyalty.” (Ephesians 4:22-24) The teachings of God’s Word can also transform the timid of heart into bold Witnesses of Jehovah and zealous Kingdom proclaimers.—Jeremiah 1:6-9.

<sup>18</sup> The transforming power of God’s Word has a good effect on people everywhere. For

16. How thoroughly can God’s Word change a person?

17. Explain the transforming power of God’s Word.

18, 19. Based on these paragraphs or a personal field service experience, show how Scriptural truth can change a person’s attitude.

example, Kingdom proclaimers from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, preached in the province of Kompong Cham twice a month. After hearing others of the clergy speak against Jehovah's Witnesses, a local pastor arranged to meet with the Witnesses the next time they visited the province. She barraged them with questions about the celebrating of holidays and listened closely as they reasoned with her from the Scriptures. Then she exclaimed: "I know now that what my fellow pastors said about you is not true! They claimed that you don't use the Bible, but this morning that's all you have used!"

<sup>19</sup> This woman continued her Bible discussions with the Witnesses and did not allow threats of removal as pastor to stop her. She mentioned her Scriptural discussions to a friend, who then began to study the Bible with the Witnesses. The friend became so enthusiastic about what she was learning that at one of her church services, she was moved to say, "Come, study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses!" Soon thereafter, she withdrew from membership in the church. The former pastor, her friend, and others began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses.

<sup>20</sup> The power of God's Word is also illustrated in the case of Paulina, a woman in

20. How does the experience of a woman in Ghana illustrate the power of God's Word?

### Do You Recall?

- What tools are available to Kingdom proclaimers?
- In what ways was Paul an example as a Kingdom worker?
- What is involved in handling God's Word properly?
- How powerful a tool is Jehovah's written Word?

Ghana. A full-time Kingdom proclaimer held a Bible study with her in the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*.<sup>\*</sup> Paulina was involved in a polygamous marriage and saw the need to make changes, but her husband and all her relatives violently opposed her. Her grandfather, a high-court judge and a church elder, tried to dissuade her by resorting to a misapplication of Matthew 19:4-6. The judge sounded authoritative, but Paulina quickly realized that this was similar to Satan's twisting of the Scriptures when he tempted Jesus Christ. (Matthew 4:5-7) She recalled Jesus' clear statement on marriage, to the effect that God created humans male and female, not male and females, and that the two, not the three, were to become one flesh. She stuck to her decision and was finally granted the customary divorce from the polygamous marriage. Soon, she was a happy baptized Kingdom proclaimer.

### Keep On Handling God's Word Aright

<sup>21</sup> God's written Word is indeed a powerful tool for our use in helping others to make changes in their lives in order to draw close to Jehovah. (James 4:8) Just as skilled workers use tools to achieve good results, may it be our determination to put forth earnest effort to use God's Word, the Bible, skillfully in our God-given work as Kingdom proclaimers.

<sup>22</sup> How can we handle the Scriptures more effectively in our disciple-making work? One way is by developing our abilities as convincing teachers. Please direct your attention to the next article, for it suggests ways to teach and help others to accept the Kingdom message.

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

21, 22. (a) What determination do we want to have as Kingdom proclaimers? (b) What will we consider in the following article?



## HELP OTHERS TO ACCEPT THE KINGDOM MESSAGE

*"Agrippa said to Paul: 'In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian.'"*—ACTS 26:28.

AT CAESAREA in 58 C.E., Roman Governor Porcius Festus was visited by King Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice. At the invitation of Governor Festus, they came from Jerusalem. The next day, "with much pompous show," they "entered into the audience chamber together with military commanders as well as men of eminence in the city." At the command of Festus, the Christian apostle Paul was brought into their presence. How did it come about that this follower of Jesus Christ stood before the judgment seat of Governor Festus?—Acts 25:13-23.

<sup>2</sup> What Festus told his guests provides an answer to that question. He said: "King Agrippa and all you men who are present with us, you are beholding this man concerning whom all the multitude of the Jews together have applied to me both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any

longer. But I perceived he had committed nothing deserving of death. So when this man himself appealed to the August One, I decided to send him. But concerning him I have nothing certain to write to my Lord. Therefore I brought him forth before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, in order that, after the judicial examination has taken place, I might get something to write. For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner and not also to signify the charges against him."—Acts 25:24-27.

<sup>3</sup> The words of Festus indicate that Paul faced trumped-up charges of sedition—a crime that carried the death penalty. (Acts 25:11) However, Paul was innocent. The charges stemmed from the jealousy of religious leaders in Jerusalem. They opposed Paul's work as a Kingdom proclaimer and deeply resented that he helped others to become followers of Jesus Christ. Under heavy guard, Paul was

1, 2. How did the apostle Paul come to appear before Governor Festus and King Herod Agrippa II?

3. Why did religious leaders bring charges against Paul?

brought from Jerusalem to the seaport city of Caesarea, where he appealed to Caesar. From there he would be taken to Rome.

<sup>4</sup> Imagine Paul in the governor's palace before a group that includes the ruler of an important part of the Roman Empire. King Agrippa turns to Paul and says: "You are permitted to speak." As words flow from Paul's mouth, an extraordinary thing happens. What Paul says begins to affect the king. Indeed, King Agrippa says: "In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian."—Acts 26:1-28.

<sup>5</sup> Just think! As a result of Paul's skillful defense, a ruler was affected by the penetrating power of God's Word. (Hebrews 4:12) What was it about Paul's defense that was so effective? And what can we learn from Paul that can help us in our disciple-making work? If we analyze his defense, two main elements clearly stand out: (1) Paul was persuasive in his presentation. (2) He employed his knowledge of God's Word skillfully, even as an artisan uses a tool effectively.

### Use the Art of Persuasion

<sup>6</sup> In the book of Acts, Greek terms for persuasion are repeatedly used in association with Paul. What meaning does this have as far as our disciple-making work is concerned?

<sup>7</sup> In the original language of the Christian Greek Scriptures, "persuade" means to "win over" or bring about "a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral considerations," states Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Examining the root meaning provides further enlightenment. It conveys the idea of trust. Therefore if you persuade a person to accept a Bible teaching, you have

4. What surprising statement did King Agrippa utter?
5. Why were Paul's words to Agrippa so effective?
- 6, 7. (a) As used in the Bible, what does "persuasion" mean? (b) What role does persuasion play in helping others to accept a Bible teaching?

won over his trust, so that he puts faith in the truthfulness of that teaching. Obviously, it is not enough to tell a person what the Bible says in order for him to believe it and act upon it. Your listener must be convinced that what you say is true, whether that individual is a child, a neighbor, a work associate, a schoolmate, or a relative.—2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

<sup>8</sup> How can you convince a person that what you proclaim from God's Word is the truth? By means of logical reasoning, sound argument, and earnest entreaty, Paul endeavored to bring about a change of mind in individuals to whom he spoke.\* Rather than merely declaring that something is true, therefore, you need to supply satisfying evidence to support your statement. How may this be done? Be sure that your statement is based squarely on God's Word and not on personal opinion. Also, use corroborative evidence to back up your heartfelt Scriptural statements. (Proverbs 16:23) If you point out that obedient mankind will enjoy life in a paradise earth, for instance, back that statement up with a Scriptural reference, such as Luke 23:43 or Isaiah 65:21-25. How can you corroborate your Scriptural point? You may use examples from your listener's experience. You might remind him of the simple and cost-free pleasures derived from the beauty of a sunset, the sweet smell of a flower, the savory taste of a fruit, or the joy of watching a mother bird feed her young. Help him to see that such pleasures are evidence that the Creator wants us to enjoy life on earth.—Ecclesiastes 3:11, 12.

<sup>9</sup> When trying to persuade a person to accept a certain Bible teaching, be careful that your enthusiasm does not cause you to sound

\* For more information on persuasion, see studies 48 and 49 of the book *Benefit From Theocratic Ministry School Education*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

8. What is involved in convincing a person of a Scriptural truth?
9. How can we show reasonableness in our preaching work?



*Paul used persuasion when he was before Governor Festus and King Agrippa*

unreasonable, thus closing your listener's mind and heart. The *Ministry School* book gives this word of caution: "A blunt statement of truth that exposes as false a cherished belief of another person, even when buttressed with the recitation of a long list of Scripture texts, is generally not well received. For example, if popular celebrations are simply denounced as being of pagan origin, this may not change how other people feel about them. A reasoning approach is usually more successful." Why make a concerted effort to be reasonable? The textbook says: "A reasoning manner encourages discussion, gives people something to think about later, and leaves the way open for future conversations. It can be powerfully persuasive."—Colossians 4:6.

### Persuasion That Appeals to the Heart

<sup>10</sup> Let us now take a closer look at Paul's

10. In what manner did Paul introduce his defense before Agrippa?

words of defense in Acts chapter 26. Notice how he began his discourse. To introduce his subject, Paul found a legitimate basis on which to commend Agrippa, even though the king was in a scandalous relationship with his sister Bernice. Paul said: "Concerning all the things of which I am accused by Jews, King Agrippa, I count myself happy that it is before you I am to make my defense this day, especially as you are expert on all the customs as well as the controversies among Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently."—Acts 26:2, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Did you notice that Paul acknowledged Agrippa's high office by addressing him by his title, King? This showed respect, and by his wise choice of words, Paul accorded Agrippa honor. (1 Peter 2:17) The apostle recognized Agrippa as an expert on the complex customs and laws of his Jewish subjects and said that he was happy that he could make

11. How did Paul's words to Agrippa demonstrate respect, and what benefit resulted?

his defense before such a well-informed ruler. Paul, a Christian, did not act as if he felt superior to Agrippa, who was not a Christian. (Philippians 2:3) Rather, Paul begged the king to hear him patiently. Thus, Paul created an atmosphere in which Agrippa, as well as the other listeners, would be more likely to accept what he was about to present. He was laying a foundation, a common ground on which to build his arguments.

<sup>12</sup> Like Paul before Agrippa, from the introduction to the conclusion of our presentation of the Kingdom message, let us make an appeal to the heart. We can do this by displaying sincere respect for the person to whom we are preaching and by showing genuine interest in his or her particular background and thinking.—1 Corinthians 9: 20-23.

12. In the Kingdom proclamation work, how can we appeal to the heart of our listeners?

### Use God's Word Skillfully

<sup>13</sup> Paul desired to motivate his listeners to act upon the good news. (1 Thessalonians 1: 5-7) To that end, he appealed to their figurative heart, the seat of motivation. Returning to Paul's defense before Agrippa, notice how Paul 'handled God's word aright' by referring to things stated by Moses and the prophets. —2 Timothy 2:15.

<sup>14</sup> Paul knew that Agrippa was nominally a Jew. Appealing to Agrippa's knowledge of Judaism, Paul reasoned that his preaching really involved "saying nothing except things the Prophets as well as Moses stated were going to take place" regarding the Messiah's death and resurrection. (Acts 26:22, 23) Addressing Agrippa directly, Paul asked: "Do you, King Agrippa, believe the Prophets?"

13. How can you, like Paul, motivate your listeners?
14. Explain how Paul used persuasion when before Agrippa.

### How to Be Successful in Making Return Visits

- Show a sincere personal interest in people.
- Select an appealing Bible subject to discuss.
- Lay the groundwork for each successive visit.
- Keep thinking about the person after you leave.
- Return soon, perhaps in a day or two, in order to follow up the interest.
- Keep in mind that your objective is to start a home Bible study.
- Pray that Jehovah will make the interest grow.



Agrippa faced a dilemma. If he said that he rejected the prophets, his reputation as a Jewish believer would be ruined. But if he concurred with Paul's reasoning, he would be taking a position of public agreement with the apostle and would risk being called a Christian. Paul wisely answered his own question, saying: "I know you believe." How did Agrippa's heart move him to answer? He responded: "In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian." (Acts 26: 27, 28) Although Agrippa did not become a Christian, Paul evidently affected his heart to some extent with his message.—Hebrews 4:12.

<sup>15</sup> Have you noticed that Paul's presentation of the good news consisted of both proclamation and persuasion? Because Paul used that approach as he 'handled the word of God aright,' some who heard him turned from being mere listeners to becoming believers. This was the case in Thessalonica, where Paul sought out Jews and God-fearing Gentiles at the synagogue. The account at Acts 17:2-4 says: "According to Paul's custom he went inside to them, and for three sabbaths he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving by references that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead . . . As a result some of them became believers." Paul was persuasive. He reasoned, explained, and proved by means of the Scriptures that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah. The result? A congregation of believers was established.

<sup>16</sup> Can you become more adept in the art of persuasion when explaining God's Word? If so, you will find more personal fulfillment and enjoyment in your work of preaching and teaching people about God's Kingdom.

15. How was Paul able to start a congregation in Thessalonica?

16. How can you find greater enjoyment in proclaiming the Kingdom?

This has been the experience of publishers of the good news who have applied suggestions to use the Bible more in the preaching work.

<sup>17</sup> For example, a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses wrote: "Quite a number of brothers and sisters are now carrying a Bible in their hand when they witness from door to door. This has helped the publishers to read a scripture to many of the people with whom they come in contact. It has helped both the householder and the publisher to associate the Bible, not just magazines and books, with our ministry." Of course, whether we have the Bible visible when we engage in the preaching activity depends on various factors, including local customs. Nevertheless, we should want to have a reputation for skillful use of God's Word to persuade others to accept the Kingdom message.

### Have God's View of the Ministry

<sup>18</sup> Another way to reach the heart of our listeners involves seeing the ministry from

17. To show how using the Bible in our ministry is beneficial, relate a personal experience or give the essence of the one in this paragraph.

18, 19. (a) How does God regard our ministry, and why should we cultivate his viewpoint? (b) What will help us to make successful return visits? (See the box entitled "How to Be Successful in Making Return Visits," on page 16.)

### Do You Recall?

- What made Paul's defense before King Agrippa effective?
- How can our message appeal to the heart?
- What will help us to use God's Word effectively in reaching the heart?
- How can we view the ministry from God's standpoint?

God's standpoint and being patient. God's will is that all sorts of men "come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Is that not our desire? Jehovah is also patient, and his patience affords opportunities for many to attain to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) Thus, when we find someone who is willing to lend a hearing ear to the Kingdom message, it may be necessary to call again and again in order to cultivate that interest. It takes time and patience to watch the seeds of truth grow. (1 Corinthians 3:6) The accompanying box entitled "How to Be Successful in Making Return Visits" offers

suggestions for developing such interest. Remember, people's lives—their problems and situations—are constantly changing. It may take many attempts to find them at home, but it is worth the effort. We want to give them an opportunity to hear God's message of salvation. Therefore, pray to Jehovah God for the wisdom to develop your skills of persuasion in your work of helping others to accept the Kingdom message.

<sup>19</sup> Once a person is found who desires to hear more of the Kingdom message, what else can we as Christian workers do? Our next article offers help.

## PREACH TO MAKE DISCIPLES

*"When Priscilla and Aquila heard [Apollos], they took him into their company and expounded the way of God more correctly to him."*—ACTS 18:26.

PRISCILLA and Aquila, a first-century Christian married couple, observed Apollos giving a speech at a synagogue in the city of Ephesus. With his eloquent words and power of persuasion, Apollos had captured the attention of his audience. He was "aglow with the spirit," and was "teaching with correctness the things about Jesus." However, it was evident that Apollos was "acquainted with only the baptism of John." What Apollos preached about the Christ was true as far as it went. The problem was that it did not go far enough. Apollos needed to increase his knowledge of the role of Jesus Christ in the outworking of Jehovah's purpose.  
—Acts 18:24-26.

1. (a) Although he was "aglow with the spirit," what did Apollos lack? (b) What did Apollos need to fill his spiritual deficiency?



Priscilla and Aquila "expounded the way of God more correctly" to Apollos

<sup>2</sup> Without hesitation, Priscilla and Aquila made themselves available to help Apollos become one who could observe "all the things" Christ commanded. (Matthew 28:19, 20) The account says that they took Apollos "into their company and expounded the way of God more correctly to him." However, there were facts about Apollos that would have led some Christians to be reluctant to teach him. What facts? And what can we learn from the efforts of Priscilla and Aquila to discuss the Scriptures with Apollos? How can a review of this historical account help us focus on starting home Bible studies?

### Focus on People

<sup>3</sup> Born of Jewish stock, Apollos had apparently been reared in the city of Alexandria. Alexandria was then the capital of Egypt and a center of higher learning, renowned for its great library. The city had a large Jewish population, including scholars. Hence, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the *Septuagint* was produced there. No wonder Apollos was "well versed in the Scriptures"! Aquila and Priscilla were tent-makers. Did the eloquence of Apollos intimidate them? No. Out of love they considered the person, his needs, and how they could help him.

<sup>4</sup> No matter how eloquent Apollos was, he needed instruction. The help he needed was not to be found in any university but was found among fellow members of the Christian congregation. Apollos was about to benefit from points that would result in a more accurate understanding of God's arrangement for salvation. Priscilla and Aquila "took him into their company and expounded the way of God more correctly to him."

2. What challenge did Priscilla and Aquila accept?
3. Why did the background of Apollos not prevent Priscilla and Aquila from teaching him?
4. Where and how did Apollos receive the help he needed?

<sup>5</sup> Priscilla and Aquila were spiritually strong and well-grounded in the faith. Very likely, they were 'always ready to make a defense before everyone that demanded a reason for their hope,' whether that be a rich man, a poor person, a scholar, or a slave. (1 Peter 3:15) Aquila and his wife were able to 'handle the word of the truth aright.' (2 Timothy 2:15) Evidently, they were serious students of the Scriptures. Apollos was deeply touched by the instruction based on 'the word of God, which is alive and exerts power,' affecting the heart.—Hebrews 4:12.

<sup>6</sup> Apollos appreciated the example of his teachers and became even more adept at making disciples. He used his knowledge to full advantage in the work of proclaiming the good news, especially among the Jewish population. Apollos was exceptionally useful in persuading the Jews about Christ. 'Being powerful in the Scriptures,' he was able to prove to them that all the prophets of old looked forward to the coming of the Christ. (Acts 18:24, *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*) The account adds that Apollos next went to Achaia, where "he greatly helped those who had believed on account of God's undeserved kindness; for with intensity he thoroughly proved the Jews to be wrong publicly, while he demonstrated by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ." —Acts 18:27, 28.

### Learn From the Example of Other Teachers

<sup>7</sup> How did Aquila and Priscilla become proficient teachers of the Word of God? Besides their diligence in personal study and

- 
5. What can you say about the spirituality of Priscilla and Aquila?
  6. How do we know that Apollos appreciated the help he received?
  7. How did Aquila and Priscilla become skilled teachers?

meeting attendance, their close association with the apostle Paul must have helped greatly. For 18 months Paul resided in the home of Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth. They worked together making and repairing tents. (Acts 18:2, 3) Imagine the deep Scriptural conversations that must have ensued. And what a boost to their spirituality such association with Paul afforded them! “He that is walking with wise persons will become wise,” says Proverbs 13:20. Good association had a fine effect on their spiritual habits.—1 Corinthians 15:33.

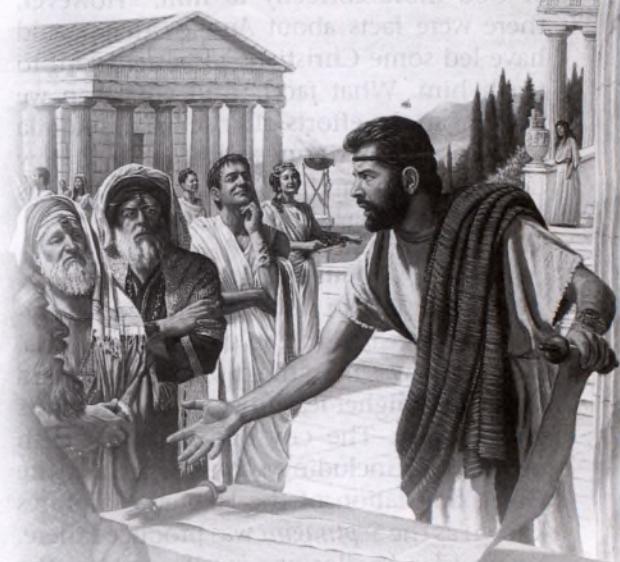
<sup>8</sup> When Priscilla and Aquila observed Paul as a Kingdom proclaimer, they saw a good teacher in action. The account in Acts states that Paul “would give a talk in the synagogue [in Corinth] every sabbath and would persuade Jews and Greeks.” Later, when he was joined by Silas and Timothy, Paul “began to be intensely occupied with the word, witnessing to the Jews to prove that Jesus is the Christ.” When little interest was found among the members of the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila noticed that Paul transferred the center of his preaching activity to a more favorable location, a house adjoining the synagogue. There Paul was able to help Crispus, “the presiding officer of the synagogue,” to become a disciple. Very likely, Priscilla and Aquila noted that the making of that one disciple had a profound and fruitful effect on the territory. The account states: “Crispus . . . became a believer in the Lord, and so did all his household. And many of the Corinthians that heard began to believe and be baptized.”—Acts 18:4-8.

<sup>9</sup> Paul’s example in the field ministry was imitated by other Kingdom proclaimers,

8. What did Priscilla and Aquila learn from observing Paul in his ministry?

9. How did Priscilla and Aquila react to Paul’s example?

*Apollos became adept at making disciples*



such as Priscilla and Aquila. The apostle exhorted other Christians: “Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1) In harmony with Paul’s example, Priscilla and Aquila helped Apollos to understand Christian teachings more correctly. In turn, he assisted still others. Priscilla and Aquila no doubt helped to make disciples in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus.—Acts 18:1, 2, 18, 19; Romans 16:3-5.

<sup>10</sup> What can we learn from our consideration of Acts chapter 18? Well, just as Aquila and Priscilla may have learned from Paul, we can improve our ability to make disciples by following the example of good teachers of God’s Word. We can associate with those who are “intensely occupied with the word”

10. What have you learned from Acts chapter 18 that will help you in the disciple-making work?

and who are “thoroughly witnessing” to others. (Acts 18:5, *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*) We can observe how they reach the heart of people by using persuasive teaching skills. Such skills can help us to make disciples. When a person is studying the Bible with us, we might suggest that he invite other members of his family or neighbors to join in the study. Or we might ask him to let us know of others to whom we could offer a Bible study.—Acts 18:6-8.

### Create Opportunities to Make Disciples

<sup>11</sup> Paul and his fellow Christians sought to make disciples by preaching from house to house, in the marketplace, and on their travels—really, everywhere. As a zealous Kingdom worker seeking to make disciples, can you expand your field service activities? Can you take advantage of opportunities to search for deserving ones and preach to

#### 11. Where can new disciples be found?

*Paul preached everywhere he went*



them? What are some ways in which our fellow publishers of the good news have found disciples? Let us first take a look at the field of telephone witnessing.

<sup>12</sup> While witnessing from house to house in Brazil, a Christian whom we will call Maria handed a tract to a young woman who was leaving an apartment building. Using the tract’s title as an introduction, Maria asked, “Would you like to know more about the Bible?” The woman replied: “I would love to. The problem is that I am a teacher, and giving lessons takes up all my time.” Maria explained that they could consider Bible topics over the telephone. The woman gave Maria her phone number, and that very evening, she started a study by telephone using the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?*\*

<sup>13</sup> While engaged in telephone witnessing, a full-time minister in Ethiopia was startled when she spoke to a man but heard a commotion in the background. The man asked her to call back later. When she did, he apologized and said that at the time of her earlier call, he and his wife were in the middle of a heated quarrel. The sister used this remark as an opportunity to point to the wise guidance the Bible gives for handling family problems. She told him that many families had been helped by *The Secret of Family Happiness*, a book published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. A few days after the book was delivered, the sister telephoned the man again. He exclaimed: “This book has saved my marriage!” In fact, he had held a family meeting so as to pass on the good points he had read in the book. A home Bible study was started, and soon the man began to attend Christian meetings regularly.

\* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

12-14. To illustrate the benefits of telephone witnessing, relate your own experience or one found in these paragraphs.

<sup>14</sup> A Kingdom proclaimer in Denmark who started a Bible study by witnessing over the telephone says: "The service overseer encouraged me to participate in telephone witnessing. In the beginning I held back, saying: 'That is not my cup of tea.' However, one day I mustered up courage and began dialing the first householder. Sonja answered and, after a short conversation, agreed to receive Bible-based literature. One evening we discussed the subject of creation, and she wanted to read *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation.*\* I said that it would be nice if we could meet in person and discuss the subject. She agreed. Sonja was ready for the study when I came, and we have studied every week since that time." Our Christian sister concludes: "For many years I had prayed for a Bible study, but I did not expect to get one by witnessing on the phone."

<sup>15</sup> Many are enjoying success because of applying suggestions to witness to people wherever they are. A Christian woman in the United States stopped her car next to a commercial van in a parking lot. When the wom-

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

15, 16. What experiences can you relate to show the benefit of being alert to different ways to start Bible studies?

### Do You Recall?

- Why did Apollos need to have the way of God expounded more completely to him?
- In what ways did Priscilla and Aquila learn from the apostle Paul?
- From Acts chapter 18, what have you learned about the disciple-making work?
- How can you create opportunities to make disciples?

an in the van saw her, the sister started to explain the nature of our Bible educational work. The woman listened, got out of the van, and stepped over to the sister's car. She said: "I'm so glad you stopped to talk with me. I haven't had any of your Bible literature for a long time. Besides, I want to study the Bible again. Will you study with me?" Our sister thus created a favorable situation for sharing the good news.<sup>dw of asst to work</sup>

<sup>16</sup> A sister in the United States had the following experience when she visited a nursing home: She approached a director of certain activities in the facility and told him that she would like to volunteer her help in meeting the spiritual needs of the residents. Our sister added that she would be pleased to conduct a free weekly Bible study with all who wished to attend. The director gave her permission to visit the rooms of different residents. Soon, she was conducting a Bible study three times a week with a total of 26 residents, one of whom is able to attend our meetings regularly.

<sup>17</sup> For some Kingdom proclaimers, a direct offer of a Bible study produces good results. One morning a congregation with 105 publishers made a special effort to offer a Bible study to each householder they met. Eighty-six publishers participated in field service, and after spending two hours in the preaching work, they found that at least 15 new Bible studies had been started.

### Keep On Searching for Deserving Ones

<sup>18</sup> As a Kingdom proclaimer, you may wish to try the suggestions mentioned in this article. Of course, it would be wise to take into account local customs when consider-

17. What approach is often effective in starting home Bible studies?

18, 19. What important direction from Jesus should we keep in mind, and to that end what should we be determined to do?



*Create opportunities to preach*



ing methods of witnessing. Above all, let us keep in mind Jesus' direction to search out deserving ones and help such individuals to become disciples.—Matthew 10:11; 28:19.

<sup>19</sup> To that end, may we 'handle the word of the truth aright.' We can do so by using persuasion based solidly on the Scriptures. This will help us to touch the heart of receptive ones and move them to action. As we prayerfully rely on Jehovah, we can share in helping some to become disciples of Jesus Christ. And how rewarding this work is! Let us therefore 'do our utmost to present ourselves approved to God,' always honoring Jehovah as zealous Kingdom proclaimers, who preach with the purpose of making disciples. —2 Timothy 2:15.



BEFORE AND AFTER

## Bible Principles Made a Difference

**A**S A youth, Adrian was full of rage and resentment. His quick temper led to stormy outbursts of anger. He drank, smoked, and led an immoral life. Adrian was known as a punk and got a tattoo that reflected his belief in anarchy. Describing those years, he states: "I cut my hair in the traditional punk way, superglued it, and sometimes dyed it red or another color." Adrian also had his nose pierced.

Adrian moved into a run-down house with a few other rebellious youths. There they drank and took drugs. "I took speed and injected it with Valium and anything else I could get my hands on," recalls Adrian. "When drugs or glue were not available, I siphoned gasoline from people's cars and got high on that." Living a life of street crime, Adrian became intimidating and extremely violent. People in general did not want anything to do with him. At the same time, his reputation drew the wrong crowd.

Gradually, Adrian realized that his "friends" associated with him only for what they could get. Moreover, he concluded that "all the anger and violence hadn't achieved anything." Feeling empty and frustrated, he left his associates. When he found a copy of *The Watchtower* at a construction site, he was attracted by its Bible-based message, and this led to a study of the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Adrian eagerly responded to the invitation: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you." (James 4:8) As a result, Adrian soon saw the need to start applying the principles found in the Holy Scriptures.



A growing knowledge of the Bible had a good effect on Adrian's conscience and redirected his course in life. He was helped to subdue his quick temper and develop self-control. Thanks to the power of God's Word, Adrian's personality became quite different.—Hebrews 4:12.

How, though, could the Bible have such a powerful effect? Knowledge of the Scriptures helps us to "put on the new personality." (Ephesians 4:24) Yes, our personality is changed by applying accurate knowledge found in the Bible. But how does such knowledge change people?

First, the Bible identifies undesirable personality traits that need to be shed. (Proverbs 6:16-19) Second, the Scriptures urge us to display the desirable qualities produced by God's holy spirit. These include "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control."—Galatians 5:22, 23.

Deeper understanding of God's requirements helped Adrian to examine himself and see the personality traits that he needed to cultivate and those he should eliminate. (James 1:22-25) But that was only a beginning. In ad-

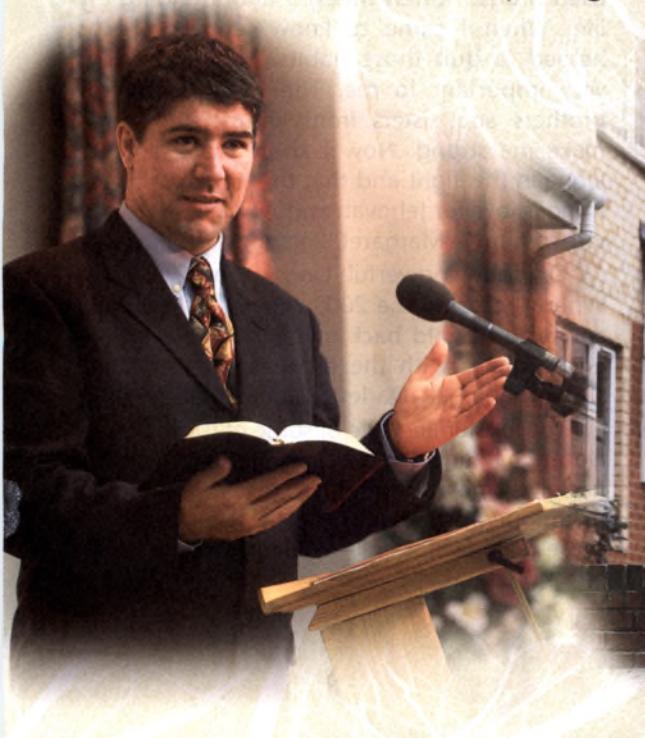


dition to knowledge, motivation was needed—something to move Adrian so that he would want to change.

Adrian learned that the desirable new personality is molded “according to the image of the One who created it.” (Colossians 3:10) He came to realize that a Christian’s personality must resemble God’s own personality. (Ephesians 5:1) Through a study of the Bible, Adrian learned about Jehovah’s dealings with mankind and took note of God’s fine qualities, such as his love, kindness, goodness, mercy, and righteousness. Such knowledge moved Adrian to love God and to strive to be the kind of person that Jehovah approves.—Matthew 22:37.

In time and with the help of God’s holy spirit, Adrian managed to bring his violent temper under control. He and his wife are now busy helping others to clean up their lives with the help of Bible knowledge. “Unlike many of my former friends who are now dead, I am alive and enjoying a happy family life,” says Adrian. He is living proof of the Bible’s power to change lives for the better.

► *“All the anger and violence hadn’t achieved anything”*



#### ◀ Bible Principles at Work ▶

Following are some Bible principles that have helped many wrathful and violent people to become peaceable:

*“Be peaceable with all men. Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath.”* (Romans 12:18, 19) Let God determine when and upon whom vengeance is to be brought. He can do so with full knowledge of the facts, and any retribution originating with him will reflect his perfect justice.

*“Be wrathful, and yet do not sin; let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil.”* (Ephesians 4:26, 27) A person might justifiably become angry on occasion. If this does happen, he should not remain “in a provoked state.” Why? Because this could incite him to do something evil, thus allowing “place for the Devil,” resulting in Jehovah God’s disapproval.

*“Let anger alone and leave rage; do not show yourself heated up only to do evil.”* (Psalm 37:8) Unrestrained emotions lead to uncontrolled acts. If a person gives way to rage, he or she is likely to say or do things that will hurt everyone involved.



# "How POWERFUL GOD'S WORD REALLY IS!"

**T**HE word of God is alive and exerts power." (Hebrews 4:12) Attesting to the irresistible power of God's Word, the 2003 *Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses* featured six real-life stories from around the world. Under the heading "Before and After," the calendar showed how the educational work of Jehovah's Witnesses helps people to improve their morals, abandon ruinous life-styles, strengthen their family life, and nurture a personal relationship with God.

Several letters of appreciation have been received regarding the 2003 calendar. Here are some of these comments:

"This calendar is a testimony to true Christians that there are others just like them who have had to put up a hard fight for the faith. Now they can look at the pictures as reminders of the changes some have made."—Steven, United States.

"I really wanted to write these few words in order to let you know how much the 2003 calendar has touched my heart. Never did a calendar have such an impact on me. These life stories will become part of the material that I carry in my witnessing case in order to show people the living and impressive proof of the influence the Bible can have on individuals."—Marc, Belgium.

"I was so very moved by the calendar. I was choked with emotion to read and see how Jehovah

has transformed these individuals. As a result, I am inspired to continue making changes in my own life. Now more than ever, I feel part of our worldwide brotherhood."—Mary, United States.

"Jesus was deeply moved by the spiritual plight of the crowds. Thank you for imitating Christ's example by featuring the life stories appearing in our 2003 calendar. Never before in my life has a calendar moved me to tears."—Cassandra, United States.

"When I was 11, I started smoking; later I used drugs. I often thought about ending my life. When I came to know Jehovah, I was helped to quit those habits. This calendar is very important to me. The examples of my brothers and sisters from around the world make me strong. Now I know that I am not alone in this fight and that the most important thing is love for Jehovah and wholehearted service to him."—Margaret, Poland.

"Oh, how powerful God's Word really is! When I received the 2003 calendar, it was all I could do to hold back my tears. These experiences, along with the pictures, are very faith strengthening."—Darlene, United States.

"The former life-style of some of these people closely paralleled my former life-style. Jehovah has given me the strength to give up seemingly unconquerable vices. Thank you so much for these real-life stories."—William, United States.

## Questions From Readers

### How should Christians view the use of birthstones?

In some cultures, birthstones are associated with the month of one's birth. Whether a Christian will wear a ring with a certain gemstone is a matter for personal decision. (Galatians 6:5) In making that decision, there are significant factors to consider.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes that a birthstone is a "gemstone associated with the date of one's birth, the wearing of which is commonly thought to bring good luck or health." This reference work adds: "Supernatural powers have long been attributed by astrologers to certain gemstones."

Especially in ancient times did many believe that a birthstone brought the wearer good luck. Does a true Christian believe this? No, for he realizes that Jehovah condemned those who left him and who were trusting in "the god of Good Luck."—Isaiah 65:11.

During the Middle Ages, fortune-tellers chose a gem for each month of the year. They encouraged people to wear the gem of the month of their birth, supposedly to protect the wearer from harm. But it would be Scripturally wrong for Christians to follow the leading of professional foretellers of events, for the Bible condemns them.—Deuteronomy 18:9-12.

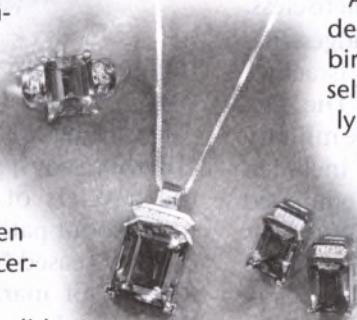
It would also be inappropriate for Christians to attach special significance to the fact that a ring had a birthstone. Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate birthdays. This is because such celebrations focus too much attention on the individual and the only birthdays of Bible rec-

ord are those of rulers who did not serve God.—Genesis 40:20; Matthew 14:6-10.

Some people think that wearing a ring set with a birthstone has a good influence on the wearer's personality. However, true Christians do not believe this, for they realize that "the new personality" is put on under the influence of God's holy spirit and by applying Scriptural principles.—Ephesians 4:22-24.

A very important factor is motive. In deciding whether to wear a ring with a birthstone, a Christian might ask himself, 'Do I want to wear this ring merely because the gem appeals to me, although it also happens to be a so-called birthstone? Or have I been somewhat influenced by the superstitious ideas that certain people have attached to such gems?' *bapt*

A Christian should examine his heart in order to determine his motive. "More than all else that is to be guarded, safeguard your heart," say the Scriptures, "for out of it are the sources of life." (Proverbs 4:23) In making his decision regarding birthstones, each Christian would do well to consider his motive and the possible effects of his course on himself and others.—Romans 14:13.



### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Why They Go to Church

"Show Yourselves Thankful"

Do You Always Need a  
Bible Command?

# THROUGH FAITH, BARAK ROUTED A MIGHTY ARMY

**I**MAGINE yourself face-to-face with a battalion of hostile soldiers. They are armed with the latest in military hardware, and they stand ready to use it. Before them, you and your companions are practically defenseless.

During the period of Israel's judges, Barak, Deborah, and 10,000 fellow Israelites lived through such an experience. The enemy forces were Canaanites led by the military commander Sisera. Their arsenal included chariots, the wheels of which were equipped with deadly iron scythes. The locale was Mount Tabor and the torrent valley of Kishon. What happened there identifies Barak as a man of exemplary faith. Consider the events leading up to this confrontation.

## Israel Cries Out to Jehovah

The book of Judges tells of Israel's repeated abandonment of pure worship and the disastrous consequences of such actions. In each case, sincere appeal for God's mercy was followed by divine appointment of a savior, liberation, and then renewed revolt. True to that pattern, "the sons of Israel again began to do what was bad in Jehovah's eyes now that Ehud [a judge who saved them from Moabite oppression] was dead." In fact, "they proceeded to choose new gods." The result? "Jehovah sold them into the hand of Jabin the king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the chief of his army was Sisera . . . And the sons of Israel began to cry out to Jehovah, because [Sisera] had nine hundred war chariots with iron scythes, and he himself oppressed

the sons of Israel with harshness twenty years."—Judges 4:1-3; 5:8.

Regarding life in Israel, the Scriptures say: "[In those days] pathways had no traffic, and the travelers of roadways would travel by roundabout pathways. The dwellers in open country ceased." (Judges 5:6, 7) People were terrified of marauding charioteers. "Public life in Israel was governed by fear," says one scholar, "the whole community seemed paralyzed and helpless." So as they had often done before, the demoralized Israelites cried to Jehovah for aid.

## Jehovah Appoints a Leader

The Canaanite oppression became a time of national crisis for Israel. God used the prophetess Deborah to convey his judgments and his instruction. Jehovah thus accorded her the privilege of acting as a figurative mother in Israel.—Judges 4:4; 5:7.

Deborah sent for Barak and said to him: "Has not Jehovah the God of Israel given the command? 'Go and you must spread yourself out on Mount Tabor, and you must take with you ten thousand men out of the sons of Naphtali and out of the sons of Zebulun. And I shall certainly draw to you at the torrent valley of Kishon Sisera the chief of Jabin's army



and his war chariots and his crowd, and I shall indeed give him into your hand.'" (Judges 4:6, 7) By saying 'has not Jehovah given the command?' Deborah emphatically denied any personal authority over Barak. She simply acted as the channel by which a divine command was conveyed. How did Barak respond?

"If you will go with me," said Barak, "I also shall certainly go; but if you will not go with me, I shall not go." (Judges 4:8) Why was Barak reluctant to accept God-given responsibility? Was he acting in a cowardly way? Did he lack trust in God's promises? No. Barak did not refuse the assignment, nor did he disobey Jehovah. Rather, his response indicated feelings of inadequacy about carrying out God's command by himself. The presence of God's representative would ensure divine guidance and fill him and his men with confidence. Rather than being a sign of weakness, therefore, the condition Barak set was an indication of strong faith.

Barak's reaction can be compared to that of Moses, Gideon, and Jeremiah. These men also lacked confidence in their ability to fulfill God-given commissions. But because of that, they were not considered less faithful. (Exodus 3:11-4:17; 33:12-17; Judges 6:11-22, 36-40; Jeremiah 1:4-10) And what can be said of Deborah's attitude? She did not attempt to take over. Rather, she remained a modest servant of Jehovah. "Without fail I shall go with you," she told Barak. (Judges 4:9) She was willing to leave home—a place of greater security—to join Barak for the impending battle. Deborah too exemplifies faith and courage.



*Jehovah used Deborah to summon Barak*

## In Faith They Follow Barak

The rendezvous for Israel's forces was a conspicuous mountain named Tabor. The site was well chosen. It represented a natural rallying point for the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, who dwelt nearby. So as God had ordered, ten thousand volunteers—and Deborah—followed Barak up this mountain.

Faith was required on the part of all those who joined Barak. Jehovah had promised Barak victory over the Canaanites, but what weapons did the Israelites have?

Judges 5:8 says: "A shield could not be seen, nor a lance, among forty thousand in Israel." So the Israelites were only lightly equipped. Even so, lances and shields would be a decidedly uneven match against war chariots with iron scythes. Upon hearing that Barak had ascended Mount Tabor, Sisera at once summoned all his chariots and troops to the torrent valley of Kishon. (Judges 4:12, 13) What Sisera failed to realize was that he would be fighting Almighty God.

## Barak Routs Sisera's Army

When the moment of confrontation came, Deborah said to Barak: "Get up, for this is the day that Jehovah will certainly give Sisera into your hand. Is it not Jehovah that has gone out before you?" Barak and his men were to descend from Tabor's heights into the valley plains, but there Sisera's chariots would have a strategic advantage. How would you have felt if you were in Barak's army? Would you have readily complied, remembering that the direction came from Jehovah? Barak and his ten thousand men obeyed. "And Jehovah began to throw Sisera and all his war chariots and all the camp into

confusion by the edge of the sword before Barak.”—Judges 4:14, 15.

With Jehovah's backing, Barak routed Sisera's army. The account of the battle does not explain all that happened. However, the victory song of Barak and Deborah says that ‘heavens and clouds dripped with water.’ In all likelihood, a rainstorm caused Sisera's chariots to get stuck in the mud, giving Barak the upper hand. The Canaanites' main offensive weapon thus became a liability. As for the dead bodies of Sisera's men, the song says: “The torrent of Kishon washed them away.”—Judges 5:4, 21.

Is this scenario credible? The torrent valley of Kishon is a wadi, the bed of a stream that normally flows with little water. After storms or lengthy rains, such streams are likely to swell suddenly into swift and dangerous torrents. During World War I, just 15 minutes of rainfall on the heavy clay soil of the same area is said to have endangered the success of all cavalry maneuvers. Accounts of the battle of Mount Tabor between Napoleon and the Turks on April 16, 1799, report that “many of the latter were drowned when attempting to escape across a part of the plain inundated by the Kishon.”

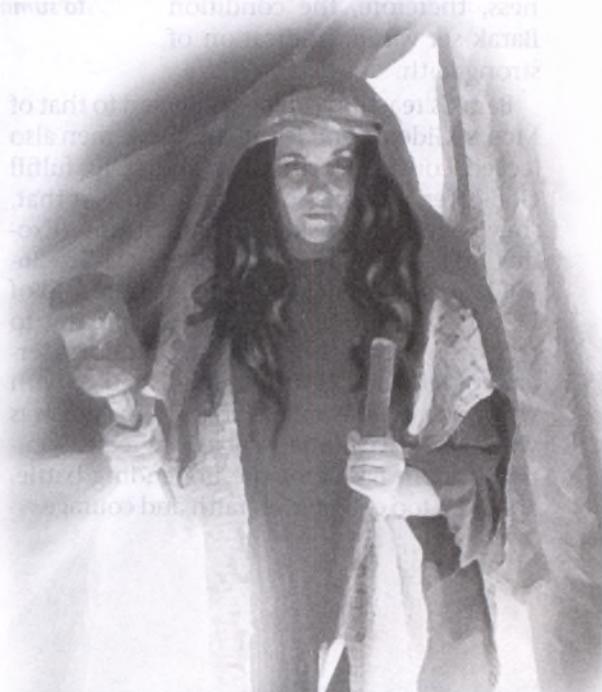
Jewish historian Flavius Josephus claims that as the armies of Sisera and Barak were about to meet, “there came down from heaven a great storm, with a vast quantity of rain and hail, and the wind blew the rain in the face of the Canaanites, and so darkened their eyes, that their arrows and slings were of no advantage to them.”

“From heaven did the stars fight,” states Judges 5:20, “from their orbits they fought against Sisera.” How did the stars fight against Sisera? Some view this statement as a reference to divine assistance. Other suggestions point to angelic help, to meteorite showers, or to Sisera's dependence on astrological predictions that proved false. Since

the Bible gives no explanation of just how the stars fought in this battle, it appears sufficient to regard the statement as indicating some form of divine intervention in behalf of Israel's army. Whatever the case, the Israelites took full advantage of the situation. “Barak chased after the war chariots . . . so that all the camp of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword. Not as much as one remained.” (Judges 4:16) What became of the army chief Sisera?

### The Oppressor Falls “Into the Hand of a Woman”

“As for Sisera,” says the Bible, “he [abandoned the battle and] fled on foot to the tent of Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite, for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor and the household of Heber the Kenite.” Jael invited weary Sisera into her tent, gave him milk to drink, and covered him, so that he fell asleep. Jael then “proceeded to take a pin of the tent and to put the hammer into her hand,” things that a tent dweller would use regularly. “Then she went to him stealthily and drove the pin into his temples and beat it into the earth, while he was fast asleep and weary. So he died.”—Judges 4:17-21.



*The Kishon River overflows its banks*



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

Jael then came on out to meet Barak and said to him: "Come and I shall show you the man you are looking for." The account adds: "So in he went to her, and, look! there was Sisera fallen dead, with the pin in his temples." What a faith-strengthening experience that must have been for Barak! Earlier the prophetess Deborah had told him: "The beautifying thing will not become yours on the way that you are going, for it will be into the hand of a woman that Jehovah will sell Sisera."—Judges 4:9, 22.

Can Jael's action be called treachery? Jehovah did not view it that way. "Among women in the tent she will be most blessed," said the victory song of Barak and Deborah. That song puts Sisera's death in proper perspective. His mother is depicted as anxiously awaiting his return from the battle. "Why has his war chariot delayed in coming?" she asks. "The wise ones of her noble ladies" endeavor to allay her fears by suggesting that he must surely be dividing the spoils of battle—beautifully embroidered garments and girls for the men. The ladies ask: "Ought they not to distribute spoil, a womb—two wombs [soldiers' expression for captured concubines,



*Mount Tabor*

footnote] to every able-bodied man, spoil of dyed stuffs for Sisera . . . An embroidered garment, dyed stuff, two embroidered garments for the necks of men of spoil?"—Judges 5:24, 28-30.

### Lessons for Us

The account of Barak teaches us important lessons. Problems and frustrations will surely afflict any who exclude Jehovah from their lives. Freedom from oppression of various kinds is possible for those who repently turn to God and exercise faith in him. And should we not also cultivate the spirit of obedience? Even when God's requirements seem to go contrary to human reasoning, we can be confident that his instructions are always for our lasting good. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Only by exercising faith in Jehovah and obeying divine instructions did Barak 'rout the armies of foreigners.'—Hebrews 11:32-34.

The poignant conclusion to the song of Deborah and Barak is: "Let all your enemies perish, O Jehovah, and let your lovers be as when the sun goes forth in its mightiness." (Judges 5:31) How true this will prove to be when Jehovah brings an end to Satan's wicked world!

# A Crime-Free World Ahead

MAGINE, if you can, a world without criminals! There would be no need for police, prisons, or expensive and complicated criminal justice systems. It would be a world where each individual would respect the life and property of others. Does that seem too good to be true? You may think so, but this amazing change for the better is exactly what the Bible promises. Why not consider what the Scriptures foretell regarding crime and other evils on this earth?

In the book of Psalms, we read: "Do not show yourself heated up because of the evildoers. Do not be envious of those doing unrighteousness. For like grass they will speedily wither, and like green new grass they will fade away. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."

(Psalm 37:1, 2, 11) Really, no one can prevent God from fulfilling this promise and all his other heartening promises.

God's way to bring about these blessings is his Kingdom. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus Christ taught his followers to pray for this Kingdom to come and for God's will to be done "as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6:9, 10) Soon, under that Kingdom, no one on earth will be motivated to commit crime because of poverty, oppression, or selfishness. Instead, God's Word states: "There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow." (Psalm 72:16) Indeed, Jehovah God will provide everyone on earth with an endless supply of good things. More important, human society will be rooted in love for God and neighbor, and never again will the world be disturbed by crime.

