

The

THE WATCHTOWER

YOUR FUTURE

Can it be Predicted?

JULY 1, 1977

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The **WATCHTOWER**

July 1, 1977
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A watchtower enables a person to see far into the distance and announce to others what is coming. Can a magazine serve similarly in our day? Yes, from its first issue (July 1879) onward, *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, has done just that.

How can it benefit you? Consider: Do you long for a better world, one of true justice and free from sorrow, hatred and war? Do you want to live at a time when genuine peace and love prevail among people of all races? Then this magazine can aid you. Using God's Word, the Bible, as its authority, it points out the clear evidence that the present wicked system of things will soon end, destroyed by God. But it also announces the coming in of a righteous new order. There, under the rule of God's kingdom, his heavenly government, people will enjoy life forever in true peace, health and happiness on a paradise earth.

Faithfulness to the Word of God lifts *The Watchtower* above the contradicting religious teachings and philosophies of men. It stays strictly neutral as regards political affairs. It wholeheartedly upholds the highest moral standard—that of man's Maker, Jehovah God. From this source, it shows solutions to the problems of daily life.

We know that many sincere persons would appreciate a discussion of these things in their own home with a qualified person. One of Jehovah's Witnesses will be glad to call on you free of charge. To arrange for this, simply write the publishers of this magazine or contact Jehovah's Witnesses locally.

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YOUR FUTURE YOUR FUTURE

Can it be Predicted?



HOW far would you have to travel to find someone who would attempt to predict your future? Possibly right in your own community there are many such persons.

However, in spite of the ready availability of tea-leaf readers, palmists, astrologers and other types of fortunetellers, most people do not seek out their predictions. Why?

For one thing, fortune-tellers are so often incorrect. And when they do claim accuracy, often their predictions are so vague and ambiguous as to permit application to just about any event.

Similar were the predictions from ancient pagan oracles. Greek writer Lucian says of a certain foreteller of events: "He delivered oracles, and gave divine responses, but with great prudence, and giving perplexed, doubtful, or obscure answers, according to the custom of oracles."

At times such oracles gave answers that could be understood in exactly opposite ways. For example, Pyrrhus, king of Epirus in northwestern Greece, received an answer that could be understood in either of the following two ways:

1. "I say that thou son of Æacus canst conquer the Romans. Thou shalt go, thou

shalt return, never shalt thou perish in war."

2. "I say that the Romans can conquer thee, son of Æacus. Thou shalt go, thou shalt never return, thou shalt perish in war."

Understanding the oracle in the former way, Pyrrhus waged war with Rome. He went down in defeat.

Even when predictions of fortune-tellers are more specific and actually come true, they usually focus on matters of little importance. For example, a woman who developed ability at prediction through use of Tarot cards declares: "Most of what I read was trivia. The maid's brother would go into the army, a neighbor would have a baby . . . none of it very important."

PREDICTIONS THAT ARE DIFFERENT

Does this suggest that there is no way for you to gain advance knowledge of important coming events? To the contrary, dependable predictions, wholly different from the type mentioned above, are available. They are found in the Holy Bible.

Simply open the Bible to the prophetic books, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, and you will find predictions that are truly different. Rather than treat-

ing of trivialities in the lives of individuals, time and again Bible prophecies predict the future of entire nations. The rise and fall of empires, and their characteristics, along with specific details about their relations with God's own people, are set forth—and much of this centuries in advance.

Also, unlike predictions of fortunetellers that bear no relationship to one another, all the Bible's prophecies are interrelated. For example, the Scriptures state: "The bearing witness to Jesus is what inspires [literally, *the spirit of*] prophesying." (Rev. 19:10) All Bible prophecies center around the role of Jesus

Christ as Abraham's "seed," or offspring, for the blessing of "all nations of the earth."—Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3; 22:18; Gal. 3:16.

Moreover, Bible prophets delivered moral messages of the highest value. They boldly reproved kings and high officials for breaches of God's law, often putting their lives in danger by doing so.

Most impressively, however, Biblical predictions stand out as being truly different because of their fulfillment, even to the smallest of details. And they describe future events that will involve you, personally. We will consider some examples in the next two articles.

How History was Written CENTURIES IN ADVANCE

WHAT do you think of the possibility of someone writing history in advance? Some insist that such a thing is impossible, and they dismiss the question without further investigation.

But think about it for a moment: Does mere denial by skeptical persons disprove the possibility of genuine predictions? Surely it would be unwise to draw such a conclusion hastily. Probably right in your own home you have evidence of history written centuries in advance. How so?

Likely you possess a copy of the Holy Bible, which hundreds of millions of persons throughout the world view as the inspired word of God. (2 Tim. 3:16) The Scriptures are filled with predictions of

events that took place hundreds of years after they were foretold. Let us consider some examples.

'TYRE WILL BECOME A DRYING YARD FOR DRAGNETS'

An example of the astonishing accuracy of Bible prophecy concerns the ancient Phoenician seaport city of Tyre. This city grew to be very great at the expense of other people. She was a manufacturer of metal objects, glassware and purple dyes, a trading center for overland caravans, a great import-export depot. Her merchants and tradesmen boasted of being princely and honorable. (Isa. 23:8) At one time friendly relations existed be-

tween Tyre and Israel. But this did not continue, for Tyre eventually allied herself with Israel's enemies. Because of Tyre's treachery toward Israel, God inspired his prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others to predict that calamity would come upon this Phoenician seaport. We read, for example:

"This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, 'Here I am against you, O Tyre, and I will bring up against you many nations, just as the sea brings up its waves. And they will certainly bring the walls of Tyre to ruin and tear down her towers, and I will scrape her dust away from her and make her a shining, bare surface of a crag. A drying yard for dragnets is what she will become in the midst of the sea. . . . Here I am bringing against Tyre Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon from the north, a king of kings, with horses and war chariots and cavalrymen and a congregation, even a multitudinous people. And I will make you a shining, bare surface of a crag. A drying yard for dragnets is what you will become. Never will you be rebuilt; for I myself, Jehovah, have spoken,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah."—Ezek. 26:3-5, 7, 14.

Secular history reports that Nebuchadnezzar began a siege of Tyre sometime after destroying Jerusalem and the temple of Jehovah's worship in 607 B.C.E. The Jewish historian Josephus, drawing upon Phoenician annals and other previously written history, states that Nebuchadnezzar's siege against Tyre lasted thirteen years. The Bible indicates that Nebuchadnezzar's forces inflicted considerable damage upon Tyre.—Ezek. 26:8-11.

Tyre recovered from this blow struck by Babylon. However, centuries later, Grecian forces under Alexander the Great moved against Tyre, which at that time was located on an island about half a mile (0.8 kilometer) from the mainland. When the inhabitants refused to capitulate to Alexander, he became enraged and had

his men scrape up the ruins of the mainland city and throw them into the sea, thus building a causeway out to the island city. Then a sea battle took place in which Alexander's forces prevailed. After a siege of seven months, Alexander's men took the island city. When its inhabitants put up desperate resistance, the city was set on fire. It proved to be as another prophet, Zechariah, had foretold: "In the fire she herself will be devoured."—Zech. 9:4.

Though Tyre kept trying to make a comeback through the centuries, the city repeatedly fell before hostile forces, just as God's prophet had foretold. (Ezek. 26:3) What is the present condition of Tyre, which was one of the great sea powers of the ancient world? Ruins and a small seaport, called Sour (Sur), mark the site. Nina Jidejian, in her book *Tyre Through the Ages* (1969), declares: "The port has become a haven today for fishing boats and a place for spreading nets," exactly as prophesied through Ezekiel.—Ezek. 26:5, 14.

MEDO-PERSIA AND GREECE TO SUCCEED BABYLON

During the sixth century B.C.E., when Babylon held sway as the dominant world power, the prophet Daniel received an amazing dream vision involving two symbolic animals. The first was a ram (a male sheep) having two horns. "And the two horns were tall, but the one was taller than the other, and the taller was the one that came up afterward." (Dan. 8:3) What did this ram represent? An angel explained to Daniel: "The ram that you saw possessing the two horns stands for the kings of Media and Persia."—Dan. 8:20.

Daniel was here given by name the world power that would succeed Babylon. True to these details, Babylon fell to Medo-Persia. The Medes (the smaller horn) at first were the stronger and the Persians

thereafter gained ascendancy (the taller horn that came up afterward).

What about the second animal of this vision? Daniel tells us that it was "a male of the goats coming from the sunset upon the surface of the whole earth, and it was not touching the earth. And as regards the he-goat, there was a conspicuous horn between its eyes."—Dan. 8:5.

The he-goat does battle with the ram,



overcoming it. (Dan. 8:6, 7) Then something unusual takes place. Daniel continues: "As soon as [the goat] became mighty, the great horn was broken, and there proceeded to come up conspicuously four instead of it, toward the four winds of the heavens."—Dan. 8:8.

Upon inquiring of an angel as to the meaning of this part of his symbolic vision, Daniel received this reply:

"And the hairy he-goat stands for the king of Greece; and as for the great horn that was between its eyes, it stands for the first king. And that one having been broken, so that there were four that finally stood up instead of it, there are four kingdoms from his nation that will stand up, but not with his power."—Dan. 8:21, 22.

Here it is foretold that Medo-Persia would be followed as a world power by Greece.

What about the he-goat's "great horn" that was broken and in place of which four other horns appeared? As noted in the angel's explanation, the great horn repre-

sented the "first king" of Greece as a world power. That was Alexander the Great. Interestingly, after Alexander died, in time his empire was divided up four ways among four of his generals, "toward the four winds of the heavens," as foretold.—Dan. 8:8.

According to Josephus, this prophecy was shown to Alexander when he came near Jerusalem. We read: "When the book

of Daniel was shown to him, in which he [Daniel] had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated; and in his joy he dismissed the multitude for the time being, but on the following day he summoned them again and told them to ask for any gifts which they might desire."—*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XI, chapter VIII, paragraph 5.

In just these few details of a prophetic vision, therefore, the Bible's book of Daniel set forth history more than 200 years in advance. And the same Bible book reaches even farther into the future. How so?

HISTORY SIX CENTURIES IN ADVANCE

A unique prophecy found in Daniel, chapter 9, gives details of history more than six hundred years in advance. This prediction specifies that "Messiah the Leader" would appear sixty-nine "weeks of years . . . from the going forth of the

word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem," and that, shortly thereafter, Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed. (Dan. 9: 24-27; *An American Translation*) How was this fulfilled?

A decree for the restoration and the rebuilding at Jerusalem was given by Persian King Artaxerxes Longimanus during the twentieth year of his reign. The decree went into effect in the fall of that year, which was 455 B.C.E. Counting forward sixty-nine weeks of years (each "week" being seven years long), or 483 years, from 455 B.C.E., brings us to the year 29 C.E. According to the Scriptural record, that was precisely the year in which Jesus of Nazareth presented himself as Messiah, at his baptism in the Jordan River.—Luke 3:21-23; 4:16-21.

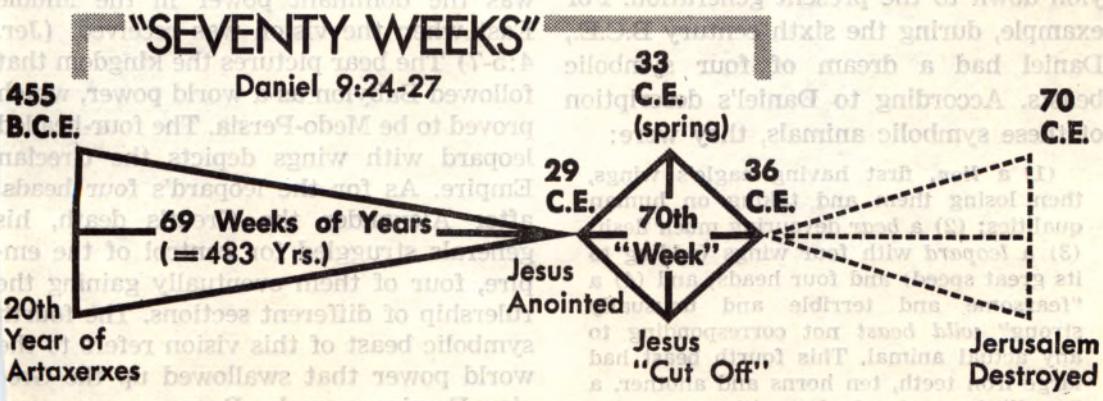
This same prediction states that Messiah would be "cut off . . . at the half of the [seventieth] week." (Dan. 9:26, 27) In precise conformity Jesus died on Passover Day in the spring of 33 C.E., exactly half a 'week of years,' or three and a half years, after his Messianic career began at baptism.—Matt. 26:2; John 13:1, 2.

As for Jerusalem's destruction, this prophecy states concerning the generation in which the Messiah would appear and be cut off in death: "And the city and the holy place the people of a leader that is coming will bring to their ruin. And the

end of it will be by the flood. And until the end there will be war; what is decided upon is desolations." (Dan. 9:26) Five days before his death Jesus provided further details about this, as we read:

"And when he got nearby [Jerusalem], he viewed the city and wept over it, saying: 'If you, even you, had discerned in this day the things having to do with peace—but now they have been hid from your eyes. Because the days will come upon you when your enemies will build around you a fortification with pointed stakes and will encircle you and distress you from every side, and they will dash you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave a stone upon a stone in you, because you did not discern the time of your being inspected.'”—Luke 19:41-44.

Concerning the foretold "fortification with pointed stakes," Josephus reports that, during the Jewish revolt, Roman General Titus urged the building of a wall around Jerusalem. His soldiers denuded the countryside of trees and erected in just three days an encircling fence of stakes nearly five miles (8 kilometers) long. In the holocaust that followed, 1,100,000 of Jerusalem's "children" perished. As for the thoroughness with which these predictions of the city's destruction were fulfilled, only three towers and a portion of the western wall remained standing. Josephus writes: "All the rest



of the fortifications encircling the City were so completely levelled with the ground that no one visiting the spot would believe it had once been inhabited."

This destruction of Jerusalem occurred in 70 C.E., some 605 years after Daniel wrote his Bible book (about 536 B.C.E.). How faith-inspiring it is to consider ful-

fillments of detailed Bible prophecies written centuries in advance! But Scriptural predictions do not deal merely with the distant past. Many are having a remarkable fulfillment today, and they indicate how *you* may enjoy a bright and happy future. The next article will consider some of these.



From Ancient Babylon to the Twentieth Century in BIBLE PROPHECY

BIBLICAL predictions have had remarkable fulfillments in ancient times. Did you know that the Scriptures also foretell matters concerning the twentieth century?

The Bible book of Daniel contains prophetic visions that span the rise and fall of major world powers from ancient Babylon down to the present generation. For example, during the sixth century B.C.E., Daniel had a dream of four symbolic beasts. According to Daniel's description of these symbolic animals, they were:

- (1) a *lion*, first having eagle's wings, then losing them and taking on human qualities;
- (2) a *bear* devouring much flesh;
- (3) a *leopard* with four wings (adding to its great speed) and four heads; and
- (4) a "fearsome and terrible and unusually strong" *wild beast* not corresponding to any actual animal. This fourth beast had large iron teeth, ten horns and another, a "small" horn, developing with eyes and a

FROM BABYLON TO RULERSHIP BY A "SON OF MAN"

What do these four beasts represent? The Scriptural account states that they symbolize "kings," or kingdoms. (Dan. 7:17) The lion represents Babylon, which was the dominant power in the Middle East when the vision was received. (Jer. 4:5-7) The bear pictures the kingdom that followed Babylon as a world power, which proved to be Medo-Persia. The four-headed leopard with wings depicts the Grecian Empire. As for the leopard's four heads, after Alexander the Great's death, his generals struggled for control of the empire, four of them eventually gaining the rulership of different sections. The fourth symbolic beast of this vision refers to the world power that swallowed up the Grecian Empire, namely, Rome.

What about this fourth beast's ten horns and the other horn with eyes and a "mouth speaking grandiose things"? (Dan. 7:8) At times the Scriptures use horns to symbolize rulers and ruling dynasties. (Dan. 8:2-10, 20-22; Zech. 1:18-21; Luke 1:69-71) The number ten denotes fullness, entirety, the sum of all that exists of something. (Matt. 25:1; Luke 15:8; 19:13, 16, 17) History shows that the Roman Empire eventually broke up into various nations. The ten horns of this fourth beast evidently represent all the kingdoms that resulted after Rome's dissolution.

As for the "small" horn that appeared among the ten, during the eighteenth century C.E., Britain, a onetime minor imperial subject of Rome, rose to prominence as the foremost commercial and political power in the world. Because of close ties and general unity of action, Britain and the United States today are often referred to as the Anglo-American World Power. This power well fits the Biblical description of the "small" horn.

Since the Anglo-American World Power is still in existence, Daniel's vision of the four beasts foretells developments of human history from the time of ancient Babylon down to our own day. But what follows as this series of human political kingdoms ends? Daniel adds:

"I kept on beholding in the visions of the night, and, see there! with the clouds of the heavens someone like a son of man happened to be coming; and to the Ancient of Days he gained access, and they brought him up close even before that One. And to him there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him. His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin."—Dan. 7:13, 14.

How thrilling to think that the "son of man," Jesus Christ, takes over rulership of 'all peoples, national groups and

languages,' and that in our day! Persons living in this period of time have marvelous blessings to which they may look forward.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM IMAGE

Similar in meaning is a prophetic dream had by Nebuchadnezzar. This Babylonian king envisioned a colossal metallic image in human form. Daniel explains that the image's "head was of good gold, its breasts and its arms were of silver, its belly and its thighs were of copper, its legs were of iron, its feet were partly of iron and partly of molded clay."—Dan. 2:31-33.

Daniel explained that the head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar, or, by extension, the dynasty of Babylonian rulers that began with Nebuchadnezzar. (Dan. 2:37, 38) The silver breasts and arms pictured the succeeding world power of Medo-Persia. The copper belly and thighs depicted "another kingdom, a third one [counting from Babylon]." (Dan. 2:39) This was the Grecian World Power. The next part of the image, the iron legs, initially represented Rome. Yet Rome cannot fulfill all the requirements of the iron part of the image. Why not?

Because iron extended into the feet of the image, it being mixed there with molded clay. And concerning the feet of this image, the Bible goes on to state: "A stone was cut out not by hands, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and of molded clay and crushed them. At that time the iron, the molded clay, the copper, the silver and the gold were, all together, crushed."—Dan. 2:34, 35.

What did this part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream mean? Daniel explains: "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms [represented by the



entire image], and it itself will stand to times indefinite.”—Dan. 2:44.

That crushing out of existence and replacing of all earthly kingdoms by divine rulership did not occur during the days of the Roman Empire. The ironlike feature of this image, therefore, extends on to the world power succeeding Rome, the Anglo-American. Thus, this vision parallels that of the four beasts in foretelling major developments in human history from ancient Babylon down to the takeover of earthly rulership by God's kingdom in the hands of the “son of man,” Christ Jesus.

Can we expect that to happen soon? To THE “SIGN” OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

Shortly before Jesus was put to death, his disciples asked him for a “sign” of his “presence and of the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matt. 24:3) By “presence” they meant his ruling in Kingdom power. How did Jesus answer their question? You will profit from reading the full reply as recorded in Matthew chapters 24, 25, and the parallel accounts at Mark 13

and Luke 21. Here we will give just a few highlights.

According to Luke's Gospel account, Jesus included the following as part of the sign of his presence: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be great earthquakes, and in one place after another pestilences and food shortages.” (Luke 21:10, 11) The book of Revelation sets forth the same evidences of Jesus' presence as king, but in symbolic language.

In a description of what happens on earth after Jesus Christ, as the rider on a symbolic “white horse,” receives the “crown” of active kingship over the world of mankind, we read:

“And another [horse and rider] came forth, a fiery-colored horse; and to the one seated upon it there was granted to take peace away from the earth so that they should slaughter one another; and a great sword was given him. [Compare Luke 21:10 regarding ‘nation rising against nation.’] . . .

“And I saw, and, look! a black horse; and the one seated upon it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice as if in the midst of the four living creatures say: ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius [a full day's wage at that time], and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the olive oil and the wine.’ [Compare Luke 21:11 concerning famine.] . . .

“And I saw, and, look! a pale horse; and the one seated upon it had the name Death. And Hades [mankind's common grave] was closely following him. And authority was given them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with a long sword and with

food shortage and with deadly plague and by the wild beasts of the earth. [Note that Luke 21:11 includes pestilences.]—Rev. 6:1-8.

Have not you personally experienced these things? Has not the generation of people alive today suffered from unprecedented wars, food shortages and epidemic diseases, starting from World War I in 1914 C.E.? And these things are not all there is to the sign of Jesus' presence in Kingdom power.

Jesus added as another feature of that sign: "And because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off." (Matt. 24:12) Do not you agree that skyrocketing crime rates in many parts of the earth during this generation have led to a general cooling off in the love people have both for God and for their fellowman?—Compare 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

However dismal these world conditions are, they constitute strong reason for Bible believers to rejoice, for Jesus further stated: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." That means that persons who saw the beginning of these distressing times will still be alive when God's heavenly kingdom brings to its end the present system of things.—Matt. 24:8, 34.

What will replace it? A new system of

things under divine rule. Describing conditions on earth at that time, the Bible book of Revelation states: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Rev. 21:3, 4.

Would you enjoy living in that new system of things? If so, fulfillment of the "sign" that Jesus gave can have special significance for you. Jesus pointed this out, saying: "As these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near."—Luke 21:28.

What a grand hope! Yet God has requirements, which are not hard to meet, for all who will survive into that new system of things. (1 John 5:3, 4) Are you willing to study the Bible so as to learn God's requirements? You should find real joy in doing so. Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to conduct a free home Bible study with you. Also, meetings at their Kingdom Halls are free and open to the public. Contact Jehovah's Witnesses soon, and gain further insight into fulfillment of Bible prophecy in this twentieth century.

THE GREAT PANDEMIC

AS NOTED above, part of the "sign" of Christ's presence and "the conclusion of the system of things" is "in one place after another *pestilences*." (Matt. 24:3; Luke 21:11) Among these pestilences was the "Spanish flu" pandemic (global epidemic) of 1918 and 1919. Concerning it, Timothy Larkin writes: "When an American troop transport, the U.S.S. *Otranto* collided with another ship, 431 lives were lost, many of them because the *Otranto*'s crew was so weakened from the flu that it was unable to abandon ship; and while there were 50,000 American soldiers killed in battle in World War I, an additional 24,000 died from influenza or complications from it." (*FDA Consumer*, May 1976) All together, some 20 million people died world wide during the "Spanish flu" of 1918 and 1919.

Israel's wilderness testing of Jehovah

"YOU must not put Jehovah your God to the test." (Deut. 6:16) Those words were spoken by Moses to his people at the end of their forty-year stay in the wilderness. The seriousness of that warning becomes very clear when we consider how often Israel did put Jehovah to the test during their trek from Mount Sinai to the plains of Moab, as recorded for us in the book of Numbers. Christians today can benefit from reviewing this record, for which reason, in fact, these things were written down.—Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11.

The book of Numbers receives its name from the Greek *Septuagint* translation of the Hebrew Scriptures by way of the Latin *Vulgate*. It is based on the fact that in Numbers, chapters one to four and twenty-six, are found censuses of the people of Israel. More fitting, however, is one of the names that the Jews gave it, namely, "in the wilderness," based on the fourth word of the opening chapter, in Hebrew.

Who wrote the book of Numbers? There is abundant evidence within the book and from the rest of the Scriptures testifying to Moses as being the writer. From ancient times it has been attributed to him both by Jews and, later, by the early Christians.

WHILE AT MOUNT SINAI

Israel had been at the base of Mount Sinai about a year when Moses took a census of the fighting strength of Israel. The count was 603,550, indicating that the nation's total population was about three

million. Moses assigned the various tribes certain locations in the camp, with the tribe of Levi and the tabernacle in the center. He also gave instructions as to the line of march, and it is indeed of interest, in view of Israel's later history, that the tribe of Judah was the most populous and took the lead.

At God's command Moses gave explicit instructions as to the duties of the various divisions of the tribe of Levi. This tribe Jehovah God took in exchange for the firstborn who were his property by reason of his having spared them when he executed the firstborn of Egypt.*

Moses also received instructions regarding the pitching and the breaking of camp and other organizational matters. Interspersed are laws governing cases of jealousy as to wifely faithfulness and those relating to the Nazirite vows, which involved letting one's hair grow and not eating and/or drinking products of the vine. Included also is the record of the gifts made by the chieftains of the various tribes at the completion of the tabernacle, which listing gives us some idea of the affluence of these chieftains.

In this first part of the book is found the well-known blessing that Jehovah God commanded Moses to pronounce upon his people: "May Jehovah bless you and keep you. May Jehovah make his face shine toward you, and may he favor you. May

* So that there would still be twelve tribes the tribe of Joseph was divided into the tribes of his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Jehovah lift up his face toward you and assign peace to you."—Num. 6:24-26.

ISRAEL'S WILDERNESS JOURNEYINGS

It was on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year after leaving Egypt that the cloud resting above the tabernacle began to move, indicating that Israel was to go on the march. At night it was a pillar of fire that rested over the tabernacle and guided them. When Israel broke camp, Moses would say: "Do arise, O Jehovah, and let your enemies be scattered; and let those who intensely hate you flee from before you." And when the cloud came to rest, Moses would say: "Do return, O Jehovah, to the myriads of thousands of Israel."—Num. 10:35, 36.

Right at the beginning of the wilderness trek the Israelites had brought home to them the seriousness of putting Jehovah to the test. How so? For no sooner had they broken camp than the people became as "men having something evil to complain about in the ears of Jehovah." (Num. 11:1) This so displeased him that he sent a fire, which began consuming some of the Israelites in the outskirts of the camp. Moses made supplication, and Jehovah heard and caused the fire to die down.—Num. 11:2.

Seemingly, right after this the mixed crowd that came out of Egypt with the Israelites put Jehovah to the test. In what way? By grumbling and complaining because of not having meat, fish, and vegetables such as cucumbers, leeks, onions and garlic to eat, but having to subsist on manna, a sweet cereal-like food miraculously provided every day except on the Sabbath. This so greatly distressed Moses that he complained to Jehovah: "Have I myself conceived all this people . . . so that you should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom?'" In reply, Jehovah assured Moses that he would supply the Israelites with meat. Moses questioned how that

could be possible, causing Jehovah to respond: "The hand of Jehovah is cut short, is it?" Well, it was not cut short, for Jehovah provided a tremendous flock of quail. However, due to their grumbling and greediness, Jehovah sent a plague upon them resulting in "a very great slaughter." Again they had impressed upon them the seriousness of putting Jehovah to the test.—Num. 11:4-33.

Next, it was none other than Moses' brother Aaron and his sister Miriam that put Jehovah to the test by complaining about Moses' authority. This so greatly displeased Jehovah that he pointed to the unique, favored position that Moses occupied with him, but struck Miriam with leprosy. Moses interceded on behalf of his sister and so God limited the period of her quarantine to seven days.—Num. 12:1-15.

Evidently curious as to what the Promised Land was like, his people persuaded Moses to send twelve men, one from each of the twelve tribes, to spy out the land. (Deut. 1:22, 23) They returned after forty days with luscious fruits, bearing witness that the Promised Land was indeed "flowing with milk and honey." (Num. 13:23-27) But ten of the spies made so much of the size of its people and of how fortified the cities were that they discouraged the Israelites to the point of their wanting to go back to Egypt. In vain did the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, remonstrate with them and urge them to have faith in Jehovah. However, when the people talked of stoning Moses, Aaron and the two faithful spies, Jehovah God stepped in and announced his inclination to destroy the entire nation and produce a new one through Moses. But even as he did once before, Moses interceded in behalf of his people, reminding Jehovah that his name and fame were involved in the destiny of the Israelites. Jehovah relented but decreed that the people would wander in the wilderness for forty years, a year for each

day that the spies had searched out the land, until all those twenty years of age and older died. Exceptions were Joshua and Caleb and the tribe of Levi who were not involved in the rebellion. Still failing to learn the lesson not to put Jehovah to the test the Israelites tried to invade the Promised Land in spite of Moses' command not to do so. They suffered a disheartening defeat.—Num. 14:39-45.

After recording certain details in regard to Israel's formal worship, Moses tells of certain Israelites—Korah, Dathan and Abiram—putting Jehovah to the test by rebelling against Moses. Jehovah destroyed Korah by means of fire and the others by having the earth open up, swallowing these rebels together with their families and all their possessions.

Far from learning anything from this awesome display of Jehovah's judgment, the Israelites murmured and complained about them. For thus further putting Jehovah to the test he sent a plague that killed 14,700 Israelites. Then, to settle once and for all time that Jehovah had indeed chosen the tribe of Levi as represented by Moses and Aaron, Jehovah had each of the tribal chieftains bring a rod to the tabernacle to be presented before Jehovah. The next day Jehovah indicated which tribe he had chosen by having Aaron's rod bring forth buds, blossoms and even ripe almonds.—Num. 16:1-17:11.

After recording Jehovah's instructions regarding priestly duties and their means of support and about the provisions for cleansing the people from defilement, Moses tells of still another instance where Israel put Jehovah to the test. This time they murmured and complained because of a lack of water. Miraculously Jehovah provided water. But because Moses lost his temper and failed to give the credit for supplying the water to Jehovah, God decreed that Moses and Aaron would not live

to enter the Promised Land. What a tragedy!—Num. 20:1-13.

Pulling away from Kadesh, Israel arrived at Mount Hor, where Aaron died and his son Eleazar was installed as high priest. As the Israelites continued their wandering they again complained about the weariness of their journeyings and about the manna on which they had to subsist. This time Jehovah punished them by sending a plague of deadly serpents. The people repented. Moses interceded, and Jehovah instructed Moses to make a copper serpent and set it upon a pole. All those bitten by a serpent who looked upon the pole were cured instead of dying.—Num. 21:4-9.

ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB

After further journeyings as well as the defeating of two kings that came up against them in war, Sihon and Og, Israel arrived at the plains of Moab. Being in great fear of Israel, the king of Moab, Balak, tried repeatedly, but in vain, to cause the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites. (Num. 22:1-24:25) However, from Numbers 31:15, 16 we learn that Balaam was instrumental in causing the Israelites to be seduced by Baal-worshiping women to engage in fornication and idolatry. For Israel's testing him in this way, the Most High God destroyed twenty-four thousand of them before Phinehas, the son of high priest Eleazar, stopped the plague by his executing an Israelite man together with the Midianite woman with whom he was having relations.—Num. 25:1-18.

After taking another census of the men of Israel and establishing a precedent as to inheritance rights of daughters, Moses was privileged to view the Promised Land from Mount Abarim. Then, at God's command, Moses commissioned Joshua as his successor. (Num. 27:1-23) After giving many details regarding the kind of offerings Jehovah required, daily, weekly monthly and yearly, and instructing with

regard to the making of vows, Moses records Israel's taking vengeance on Midian for their part in causing Israel to sin against Jehovah.—Num. 28:1-31:54.

The time was getting close for Israel to cross the Jordan and take possession of the Promised Land. However, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh asked to be permitted to settle on the east side of the Jordan. Why? Because they had large herds, and this land was ideal grazing ground. This was granted on the condition that they help the other nine and a half tribes to conquer the land on the west side of the Jordan.

How many times did Israel move from one place to another during those forty years? Some forty times. (Num. 33:1-49) As the book draws to a close, it tells of Jehovah's commands to wipe out all false worship from the land of Canaan; also, his delineating the boundaries of the Promised Land and his appointing of a chieftain from each tribe to assist Joshua and Eleazar the high priest in apportioning the land among the various tribes. Furthermore, instructions are given regarding the forty cities to be given to the Levites, since they had no inheritance in the land,

and the six Levite cities that are to be cities of refuge for unintentional manslayers. Jehovah's laws governing willful murder and unintentional manslaying are spelled out. The book ends with rules governing the marriage of heiresses.

Truly the book of Numbers underscores the seriousness of putting Jehovah to the test. Though the nation of Israel entered the Promised Land, in fulfillment of Jehovah's promise, none of those who left Israel and rebelled did. Well does the apostle Paul warn Christians against following the example of those Israelites. (1 Cor. 10:8-11) Even as a "mixed crowd" joined the Israelites in leaving Egypt and eventually entering the Promised Land, so it is today. A "great crowd" with earthly hopes have come out of modern Egypt, this present world, and have joined the spiritual Israelites, the anointed footstep followers of Jesus Christ in their trek to the new system of things. (Rev. 7:9-14; 11:8; John 15:19) If we would fondly hope to survive the destruction of this present wicked system of things in the coming great tribulation, we will need to exercise care that we never, no never, faithlessly put Jehovah God to the test.—Zeph. 2:3.

A Joyful Perseverer in Good Work

ON April 24, 1977, a 'joyful perseverer in good work,' Charles J. Fekel, completed his earthly course at the age of eighty years. He was born on March 7, 1897, in Bohemia, a part of Austria-Hungary. With other members of his family he immigrated to the United States in 1905. His religious training included both Roman Catholic and Lutheran teachings. However, when he heard Charles Taze Russell speak on the subject of "To Hell and Back" he knew that he had found the truth of the Bible. In 1916 he was baptized and the following year he entered the olporteur (pioneer) work, which was cut short due to his being arrested as a result of the war hysteria. After the war he had just begun full-time witnessing again when he was invited to serve at the Brooklyn Bethel, the Watch Tower

Society's headquarters printing plant, February 14, 1921.

For more than fifty years he joyfully persevered in the good work of overseer of the factory composition department and was known for his kind, even-tempered disposition. He became a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses in November 1974. He also served on the Personnel Committee and kept active until just a few days before his death. A memorial service for him was held May 2, 1977. We have every confidence that to him, as a faithful member of the anointed "remnant," also apply the words, 'sown in dishonor and weakness but raised in glory and power,' and that 'the things he did go right with him.' —1 Cor. 15:43; Rev. 14:13.

NONE of the man-made gods and goddesses could ever provide even a single witness to establish their godship. These deities uttered no prophecies that were fulfilled with unerring accuracy. But over 2,700 years ago the Most High God Jehovah could point to a whole nation of people, Israel, as his witnesses, saying: "You are my witnesses, . . . even my servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and have faith in me, and that you may understand that I am the same One. . . . I myself have told forth and have saved and have caused it to be heard."—Isa. 43:10-12.

² In their inspired Scriptures, the Israelites had a trustworthy record of God's dealings with them as a people. They knew that the Almighty had saved their forefathers from slavery in Egypt and had delivered them from their enemies at other times. They knew about the promises that he had fulfilled in giving them the land of Canaan as an inheritance. (Psalm 78) The Bible book of Joshua reports: "Not a promise failed out of all the good promise that Jehovah had made to the house of Israel; it all came true."—Josh. 21:45.

³ The prophecy of Isaiah, in which Jehovah God addressed the Israelites as his witnesses, pointed to the time when the nation would come

1. (a) When it comes to man-made deities, what have none of them been able to do with a view to confirming their godship? (Isa. 43:8, 9)
(b) How does the true God differ in this respect?
2. (a) As is evident from Psalm 78, what did the Israelites know about Jehovah's saving acts?
(b) What shows that the Israelites knew Jehovah to be a fulfiller of his prophetic "word"?
3. (a) What did Isaiah's prophecy indicate as to what was going to happen to the Israelites?
(b) How would the fulfillment of these prophetic words enable the Israelites to bear witness?

BE A LIVING FOR THE GOOD NEWS



*"You are my witnesses,"
utterance of Jehovah, "even
servant whom I have chosen,
order that you may know and
have faith in me, and that you may
understand that I am the same
One. . . . I myself have told forth
and have saved and have caused
it to be heard."*—Isa. 43:10.

into Babylonian exile for unfaithfulness and when later the Most High would effect their release through Cyrus. (Isa. 43:14, 15; 44:24-45:2) Then they would become living witnesses of a new deliverance. But how could the returned Israelites serve as Jehovah's witnesses? They would not do so by preaching to people of other nations, that was not their commission. But they could bear witness by the way that they lived their lives. They could show that they fully relied upon Jehovah God as Protector and Savior and that their present and future welfare and happiness rested solely in him.

A NEW COMMISSION TO BE WITNESSES

⁴ With the coming of the Messiah or Christ Jesus, to the earth, a new feature of witness

- 4, 5. (a) What does witnessing include in the case of those who become disciples of Jesus Christ? (Matt. 28:19, 20)
(b) Why were the disciples of Jesus Christ, and how is this evident from Acts 1:8; 2:32, 33; 4:19, 20; 5:29-32?

WITNESS



opened up. Those who became disciples of Jesus Christ accepted the responsibility of telling others about what Jehovah God had done in connection with his Son. For example, on the day Pentecost of the year 33 C.E., a crowd of Jews and proselytes were astonished at seeing the operation of God's spirit on about 120 disciples of Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter told them: "This Jesus God resurrected, of which fact we are all witnesses. Therefore because he was exalted to the right hand of God and received the promised spirit from the Father, he has poured out on you which you see and hear." (Acts 2:32, 33) Note that Peter was testifying to what Jehovah had done. At the same time he was also a witness for Jesus, presenting testimony that this was indeed the Messiah or Christ. Peter was acting in harmony with what the Son of God told the disciples prior to his ascension to heaven: "You will receive power when the holy

spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me." (Acts 1:8) As witnesses of Jesus, believers in time came to be called "Christians." According to Acts 11:26, this was "by divine providence."

⁵ The witness concerning the "good news about the Christ" was now being given by the Christian body made up of both natural Jews and Gentiles. These were now the people whom Jehovah God was using as his witnesses. (Phil. 1:27) And the disciples publicly identified themselves as such. When ordered by the Jewish supreme court, the Sanhedrin, not to speak on the basis of Jesus' name, the apostles stated: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men. The God of our forefathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew, hanging him upon a stake. God exalted this one as Chief Agent and Savior to his right hand, to give repentance to

Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these matters, and so is the holy spirit, which God has given to those obeying him as ruler." (Acts 5:29-32) Earlier, the apostles Peter and John had told that same judicial body: "Whether it is righteous in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves. But as for us, we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard."—Acts 4:19, 20.

⁶ The apostles and other disciples of Jesus Christ fully appreciated that they were under obligation to be wit-

6. (a) What marvelous opportunity did the "good news" open up to individuals? (b) As is evident from Acts 4:12 and 17:29-31, what did Jesus' disciples recognize that both Jews and non-Jews needed to know?

nesses of God and of his Son. All persons were entitled to hear the "good news" that, by accepting Jesus as the Christ and his sacrifice as having sin-atoning value, they could gain eternal life. (John 3:16; 17:3)

The apostle Peter told the Sanhedrin: "There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved." (Acts 4:12) Some years later, the apostle Paul said to the Athenians: "We ought not to imagine that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, like something sculptured by the art and contrivance of man. True, God has overlooked the times of such ignorance, yet now he is telling mankind that they should all everywhere repent. Because he has set a day in which he purposed to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from the dead." (Acts 17:29-31) Yes, all men, both Jews and non-Jews, needed to hear the "good news" before death prevented them from seizing the opportunity to become witnesses of God and of Christ with everlasting life in view.

So the "good news" involved the eternal welfare of fellow humans. It was also God's will that it be proclaimed to all. (1 Tim. 2:3, 4) Hence, devoted Christians, because of deep love for God and their fellowmen, kept on witnessing, though it could result in loss of freedom and even their lives. About 96 C.E. the last of the living apostles wrote to Christians in Asia Minor: "I John, your brother and a sharer with you in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in company with Jesus, came to be in the isle that is called Patmos for speaking about God and bearing witness to Jesus." (Rev. 1:9) Are you, like

John, "speaking about God and bearing witness to Jesus"? Are you willing to suffer for doing so, convinced that people need to hear the "good news" because it can mean salvation for them?

BEARING WITNESS THROUGH FINE CONDUCT

⁸ In order to reach the hearts of sincere persons, the Christian witness of Jehovah must live in harmony with what he teaches. Mere words, without the backing of a good example in Christian living, are meaningless. Consider: Would you want as a character witness a man who is well known for his lying and fraudulent practices? Would not his record of dishonesty call into question the truthfulness of his statements and, even if he did state the facts, could not his testimony actually damage your case? Might you not be judged as being like the man who is testifying in your behalf?

⁹ The reputation of the one bearing witness can definitely affect whether his testimony is believed or not. So, then, all who identify themselves as witnesses of Jehovah must lead upright lives. Emphasizing the importance of this, the apostle Paul wrote with reference to Jews who knew God's law: "Do you . . . 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?" (Rom. 2:21, 22) When a person's life does not agree with what he proclaims, this brings great reproach upon God. The apostle Paul continued: "The name of God is being blasphemed on account of you people among the nations."—Rom. 2:24.

7. (a) What were first-century Christians willing to endure for declaring the "good news"? Why? (b) What questions might we ask ourselves in view of the apostle John's example?

8. Is bearing witness merely a matter of preaching, and how might this be illustrated?
9. What kind of conduct is required of one who bears witness for Jehovah? Why?

¹⁰ ¹⁰ Therefore, to be a living witness for Jehovah, Christians must stand out as exemplary husbands and fathers, wives and mothers, sons and daughters. (Eph. 5:24-6:4) Married couples should be striving to cope with problems that arise in their marriage by applying the Bible's counsel instead of imitating the world by seeking a way out of an unpleasant situation through separation or divorce. (Matt. 19:4-9; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11) Though true Christians may be disliked and misrepresented on account of their faith in Jehovah God and his Son, they should at all times be heeding the inspired advice: "Hold a good conscience, so that in the particular in which you are spoken against they may get ashamed who are speaking slightly of your good conduct in connection with Christ."—1 Pet. 3:16.

¹¹ This means that Christians should guard against wrongdoing so that they do not get a bad conscience, one that will condemn them. Fine conduct may lead opposers to recognize that they have been wrong in their conclusions about God's servants. This may result in their becoming ashamed of the way that they treated his witnesses. These opposers may come to realize that their speaking slightly of true Christians—perhaps accusing them of hypocrisy, insincerity, hatred of the human race and the like—has no foundation.

¹² Earlier, the apostle Peter pointed out that a Christian's good conduct might even help opposers to become glorifiers of God. We read: "Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that, in the thing in which they are speaking against you as evildoers, they may as a result of your

fine works of which they are eyewitnesses glorify God in the day for his inspection." (1 Pet. 2:12) Think of it, fine conduct may convince outright opposers that the ones whom they are misrepresenting practice true worship and it may move them to become glorifiers of God, themselves rendering service to the Most High! So never be discouraged by opposition and indifference toward your efforts to share the "good news" with others. It may well be that your fine conduct in the face of an unpleasant situation will help sincere persons to appreciate that your worship has real substance. As a result, they may be stirred to learn more about it.

¹³ A Christian wife, for example, may find that efforts to speak with her unbelieving husband about the "good news" are unsuccessful. Her fine conduct, though, may provide a more powerful witness than many words. That is why the apostle Peter encouraged Christian wives: "Be in subjection to your own husbands, in order that, if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect." —1 Pet. 3:1, 2.

¹⁴ An unbelieving husband should be able to see that his wife is cooperative in all matters that do not infringe on her worship. From the fine way in which she conducts herself, he should be able to see that her faith is a strong force for good. Her disposition, words and actions should give no basis for valid criticism. Through having before him a living example of praiseworthy conduct, an unbelieving husband may in time become a believer. A wife's thus winning her husband "without a word," of course, does not imply that

10, 11. (a) When it comes to family life, what should be expected of those who represent themselves as witnesses of the Most High? (b) What does it mean to "hold a good conscience" and, as shown at 1 Peter 3:16, how can this have a wholesome effect even on opposers? 12. According to 1 Peter 2:12, what can happen to persons who become eyewitnesses to a Christian's fine works?

13, 14. (a) What may be the best witness a wife can give to an unbelieving husband? (b) If a Christian wife heeds the counsel of 1 Peter 3:1, 2, what should her unbelieving husband be able to see?

she would never speak to him about spiritual matters. However, she should avoid arguments and persistent, nagging discussions about true worship.

¹⁵ Similarly, young persons going to school can, by means of good conduct, make the "good news" more attractive to teachers as well as to other students. Because of his beliefs, a young person may become the object of ridicule. But if he endures this pressure without retaliating in kind, some teachers and even fellow students may begin to wonder just what it is that has given such moral strength to the student. Especially if he is dependable and conscientious about his school assignments and treats others with kindness and respect, eyewitnesses may be favorably impressed and be prompted to investigate his beliefs. Again, fine conduct would result in an excellent witness.—Compare Titus 2:6-8.

¹⁶ A Christian working secularly should apply the principles set forth in the admonition directed to slaves: "Let house servants be in subjection to their owners with all due fear, not only to the good and reasonable, but also to those hard to please." (1 Pet. 2:18) "Let slaves be in subjection to their owners in all things, and please them well, not talking back, not committing theft, but exhibiting good fidelity to the full, so that they may adorn the teaching of our Savior, God, in all things." (Titus 2:9, 10) Accordingly, a Christian should perform his work cheerfully and quietly even if unreasonable demands are made upon him. He should be respectful, not argumentative, in dealing with his employer. Observers should be able to see that the Christian is an honest,

industrious worker who cares about other people. When that is the case, true worship is elevated in the eyes of those who come to appreciate that the individual is a good worker and a fine person on account of his religion.

¹⁷ What about your own life as a witness of Jehovah? How do you feel about the way you conducted your affairs before you had an accurate knowledge of the truth? Possibly you are one of those described by the apostle Peter: "For the time that has passed by is sufficient for you to have worked out the will of the nations when you proceeded in deeds of loose conduct, lusts, excesses with wine, revelries, drinking matches, and illegal idolatries." (1 Pet. 4:3) Surely there is never a proper time for anyone to engage in such corrupt practices. Christians should have had enough of these things when they were in ignorance and, therefore, should never want to return to them.

¹⁸ Now that you are living "for God's will," are you eager to help others to share your happiness? (1 Pet. 4:2) Is your heart so filled with appreciation for the "good news" that you seize and make opportunities to bear witness about Jehovah God and Jesus Christ? (Luke 6:45; 8:15) Is your conduct such that it adds force to what you tell others about God's Word? Only by both declaring and living the truth can we be faithful witnesses. So may we imitate the example of the apostle Paul who wrote: "I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow."—1 Cor. 9:27.

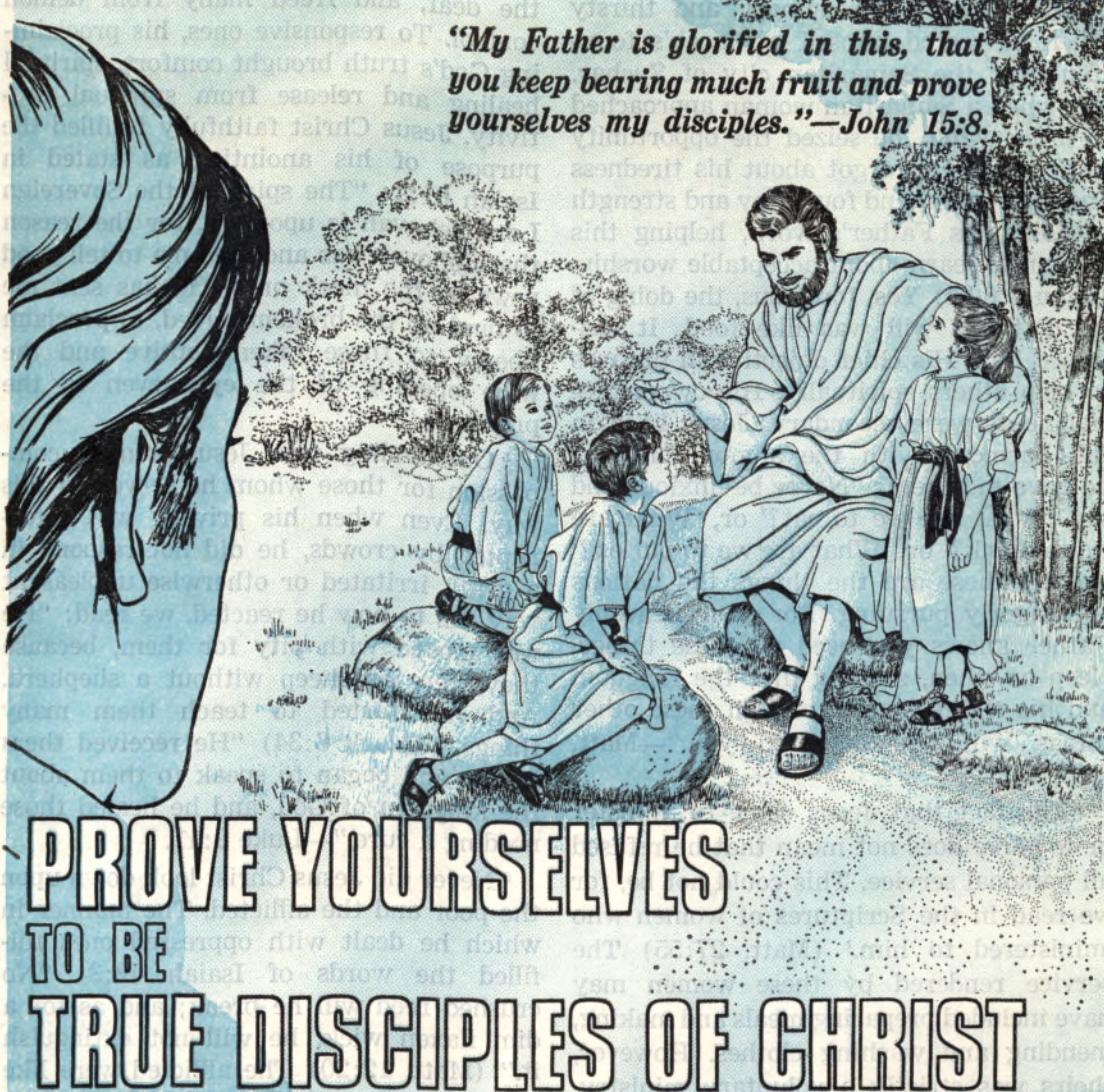
15. How can young persons make the "good news" more attractive to teachers and fellow students?

16. How might applying 1 Peter 2:18 and Titus 2:9, 10 at work result in a fine witness?

17. How should we feel about our way of life before we came to a knowledge of the truth?

18. If we really want to be living witnesses for the "good news," what might we ask ourselves, and what should we strive to do?

"My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit and prove yourselves my disciples." —John 15:8.



PROVE YOURSELVES TO BE TRUE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

A DISCIPLE is a "taught one," a "learner." Hence, disciples of Jesus Christ are persons who have accepted his teaching and are living in harmony with the example that he set while on earth. So if we are going to be true disciples of the Son of God, we do well to consider his activity on earth in order to determine just what is required of us.

What is a disciple, and so what makes one a disciple of Jesus Christ?

The whole life course of Jesus centered around service. He told his disciples: "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." (John 4:34) "The Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matt. 20:28) Just what did he mean by these statements?

As is evident from the Scriptures, what was the main objective of Jesus Christ?

³ Jesus was tired, hungry and thirsty when he seated himself at Jacob's fountain near the Samaritan city of Sychar. Yet when a Samaritan woman approached to draw water, he seized the opportunity to do good. He forgot about his tiredness and his hunger, and found joy and strength in doing his Father's work, helping this woman to learn about acceptable worship. (John 4:6-34) Yes, for Jesus, the doing of his Father's will was like food. It sustained him. His chief objective in life was to help others spiritually. His own material needs were secondary. Jesus lived in full harmony with the admonition that he gave to others: "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you."—Matt. 6:31-33.

⁴ The fact that Jesus came to minister or to serve does not mean that he refused all personal service. This could not be, for we read in the Scriptures of women who 'ministered to him.' (Matt. 27:55) The service rendered by these women may have included preparing meals and making, mending and washing clothes. However, theirs was strictly a voluntary ministry. Jesus Christ did not come to the earth "to be ministered to" in the sense that he did not come seeking to be served or to be waited upon by others. He himself did by far most of the serving. He healed the sick, the crippled and the deformed, restored sight to the blind, opened the mouths of the speechless and the ears of

the deaf, and freed many from demon control. To responsive ones, his proclaiming God's truth brought comfort, spiritual healing and release from spiritual captivity. Jesus Christ faithfully fulfilled the purpose of his anointing as stated in Isaiah 61:1: "The spirit of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah is upon me, for the reason that Jehovah has anointed me to tell good news to the meek ones. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to those taken captive and the wide opening of the eyes even to the prisoners."

⁵ Outstanding was Jesus' tender compassion for those whom he served in this way. Even when his privacy was interrupted by crowds, he did not respond in a gruff, irritated or otherwise unpleasant way. As to how he reacted, we read: "He was moved with pity for them, because they were as sheep without a shepherd. And he started to teach them many things." (Mark 6:34) "He received them kindly and began to speak to them about the kingdom of God, and he healed those needing a cure."—Luke 9:11.

⁶ Never did Jesus Christ look down upon the poor and the afflicted. The manner in which he dealt with oppressed ones fulfilled the words of Isaiah 42:3: "No crushed reed will he break; and as for a dim flaxen wick, he will not extinguish it." (Matt. 12:20) The afflicted were like crushed reeds and like wicks about to go out for lack of oil in the lamps. Recognizing their pitiable state, Jesus did not make it worse for them by treating them harshly. No, he showed them consideration, infusing them with renewed strength and hope.

⁷ Though Lord or Master, Jesus Christ did not assume a superior attitude toward

3. How does Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman reveal that his "food" was the doing of his Father's will?

4. How are we to understand Jesus' words that he "came, not to be ministered to, but to minister"?

5. What was Jesus' reaction when crowds interrupted his privacy?

6. How did Jesus fulfill the words of Isaiah 42:3?

7. What proves that Jesus was indeed "lowly in heart"?

those whom he served. He handled himself in such a way that his perfection did not cause others to feel low and inferior, making them uncomfortable in his presence. Jesus was completely different from persons with outstanding abilities but who are often quick to be upset and impatient with those having limitations. Though his disciples were at times heedless and forgetful, the Son of God was never overly severe with them. Because he was "lowly in heart," he condescended to teach persons who were looked down upon as ignorant.—Matt. 11:28-30; John 7:47-49.

⁸ Not even the unresponsiveness and opposition of so many of his countrymen dampened Jesus' concern for them. He wanted to help them all. Directing himself to Jerusalem, he said: "How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But you people did not want it." (Matt. 23:37) Then, when contemplating the terrible destruction that would befall the city, Jesus wept. It pained him to know that all the suffering that would befall the people at the hands of the Roman armies could have been avoided if they had but repented and accepted him as the anointed servant God sent forth, the Messiah.—Luke 19:41-44.

⁹ Truly, Jesus set a perfect example of what it means to serve in behalf of others. What warmth, what kindness, what love he displayed! Finally, in a superlative expression of his love he surrendered his soul or life as a ransom for sinful mankind. To his disciples he could therefore say beforehand: "No one has love greater than this, 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, 14.

3. How did Jesus continue to feel about his countrymen despite their unresponsiveness and opposition?
4. What was the superlative expression of Jesus' love?

IMPERFECT HUMANS CAN DO IT

¹⁰ But can imperfect humans imitate the perfect example of Jesus Christ? It definitely is possible. The apostle Paul did it and so did many others of Jesus' devoted disciples. Paul encouraged Christians at Corinth: "Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ."—1 Cor. 11:1.

¹¹ Like Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul had genuine concern and love for people. He was especially pained by the unbelief of his countrymen. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle wrote: "I am telling the truth in Christ; I am not lying, since my conscience bears witness with me in holy spirit, that I have great grief and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were separated as the cursed one from the Christ in behalf of my brothers, my relatives according to the flesh."—Rom. 9:1-3.

¹² In view of what Paul was preaching, his countrymen regarded him as an apostate, as one who had no love for them. However, nothing could have been farther from the truth. His conscience, enlightened by holy spirit, bore witness to his great love for them. He was willing to do anything that he possibly could to help his countrymen to gain salvation. This is most remarkable when we consider that they were responsible for much of the suffering he experienced. In a letter to the Corinthians, the apostle stated: "By Jews I five times received forty strokes less one, three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned."—2 Cor. 11:24, 25.

¹³ Yet note to what extent Paul said that he was willing to go to help them: "I could wish that I myself were separated as the cursed one from the Christ in behalf of my brothers." (Rom. 9:3)

10. Why can we be sure that it is possible to imitate Jesus' perfect example?

11. How did the apostle Paul feel toward his unbelieving countrymen?

12. Why was Paul's great concern for the Jews especially remarkable?

13. To what extent was Paul willing to go to help his Jewish brothers?

IN COMING ISSUES

- Why Believe in a God We Cannot See?
- Evolution in Retreat.
- The Wisdom of Self-Discipline.

Thus the apostle expressed his willingness to take upon himself the curse that rested upon his unbelieving countrymen for failing to avail themselves of God's means of salvation with heavenly life in view. (Compare Galatians 3:13.) His words reveal the depth of his unselfish love. Paul was willing to do everything within his power to aid the Jews.

¹⁴ As disciples of Jesus Christ, we today should have the same kind of concern for unbelievers. We should not allow their opposition or indifference to arouse within us feelings of ill will. Such persons are members of the human family for whom Christ died. (Rom. 5:6-8) And it is Jehovah's will that they continue to be given the opportunity to come to repentance as long as they live or until such time as he destroys all unrighteousness. (2 Pet. 3:9) When we appreciate this from the heart, we will be moved to give careful and prayerful thought as to what we might do to help others spiritually. We will then follow Jesus' admonition: "Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you."—Matt. 5:44.

¹⁵ We also would do well to think about

14. How should we be moved to act toward persons who are indifferent or who oppose the "good news"? Why?

15. What shows that our life now as Christ's disciples is the best way of life?

what the "good news" has meant to us individually. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is certainly the best way of life. We are spared from using our energies in vain efforts to perpetuate worldly systems that are doomed to fail. We are safeguarded against becoming involved in the world's immorality and lawlessness. Therefore, we do not experience the heartache and pain that come from violating God's commands. (Col. 3:5-10, 12-14) Besides present benefits, we have the grand hope of life everlasting under righteous conditions. (2 Pet. 3:13) How fine it would be if more people could be aided to have that hope as disciples of Jesus Christ!

¹⁶ People need the "good news" today. Tomorrow could be too late. One reason for this is that, because of not knowing about the "good news," a person may ruin his life. One act of immorality, a violent outburst of anger, misuse of drugs or the like may result in irreparable injury. Besides, the day and hour for Jehovah God to act against the ungodly world is unknown. (Matt. 24:36-44) So we want to use the remaining time wisely in efforts to help others to gain salvation. (Acts 18:6) We should feel as did the apostle Paul: "Woe is me if I did not declare the good news!"—1 Cor. 9:16.

NOT LIMITED TO ORAL PROCLAMATION

¹⁷ Proving ourselves to be Christ's disciples, however, is not limited to proclaiming the "good news." It includes coming to the aid of persons in real need and treating them kindly regardless of how they may have acted toward us. (Rom. 12:17-20) Nevertheless, just as caring for the needs of one's own family takes priority over attending to the needs of strangers,

16. Why is it important for people to have the opportunity to learn the truth as soon as possible?

17. What besides preaching is needed for us to prove ourselves to be disciples of Jesus Christ?

so one's responsibility toward fellow believers takes priority over obligations toward unbelievers. (1 Tim. 5:8) The Bible's counsel is: "Really, then, as long as we have time favorable for it, let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." —Gal. 6:10.

¹⁸ Many opportunities present themselves to do good toward fellow believers. An accident, a natural disaster or some other calamity may reduce some of them to a needy state. In imitation of Jesus Christ, we certainly should want to do everything within our power to help our spiritual brothers. The apostle John wrote: "By this we have come to know love, because that one surrendered his soul for us; and we are under obligation to surrender our souls for our brothers. But whoever has this world's means for supporting life and beholds his brother having need and yet shuts the door of his tender compassions upon him, in what way does the love of God remain in him? Little children, let us love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth."

(1 John 3:16-18) Of course, if a person is irresponsible, lazy and unwilling to accept available work that he is capable of doing, a Christian is under no obligation to assist such a one financially. The Biblical rule is: "If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat." —2 Thess. 3:10.

¹⁹ Far more frequently fellow believers have spiritual needs. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:14, all in the congregation have a responsibility to do what they can to provide spiritual aid. We read: "Admonish the disorderly, speak consolingly

to the depressed souls, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all." Some may be neglectful of their Christian obligations and therefore need to be admonished. Older women, for example, may need to recall "young women to their senses to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sound in mind, chaste, workers at home, good, subjecting themselves to their own husbands." (Titus 2:4, 5) Those who are disheartened or downcast because of problems or trials need encouragement. Might they not be built up by hearing what Scriptural thoughts have sustained you? Would it not be strengthening for them to be assured of your concern? There may be some who have a weak conscience. Hence, those with a strong conscience should bear the weakness of their brothers by restricting themselves in the exercise of their rights. (Rom. 15:1-3) Since all in the congregation are imperfect, we must be willing to put up with one another's faults in love and to forgive one another freely from the heart. (Col. 3:13) Our helping one another in these ways will certainly strengthen the bonds of love.

²⁰ It is through self-sacrificing love for believers and unbelievers that we prove ourselves to be Christ's disciples. (John 13:34, 35) This means expending our strength, time, material resources and, yes, our very being in efforts to promote the spiritual welfare of others. By thus giving of ourselves we do not come to feel impoverished. Rather, our happiness continues to increase, for "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) May we, therefore, continue to deepen our joy by imitating Jesus Christ to a greater degree, always proving ourselves to be his devoted disciples.

18. (a) What responsibility do we have toward spiritual brothers who are in physical need? (b) When does a Christian have no obligation to give material aid to someone who is in need?

19. According to what the apostle Paul wrote, how might we help fellow believers spiritually?

20. (a) What really identifies us as Christ's disciples? (b) What results from giving of ourselves in behalf of others?

Insight on the News

● The "Philippines Daily Express" of April 11, 1977, reported: "Penitents in Negros Occidental have come up with a unique way of gaining absolution for their sins. The Diocesan Lenten Action Committee of Alay Kapwa 77 in the province organized a unique blood donation program that replaced the flogging and the bearing of the cross." It was reported that about a hundred males had "donated blood as sacrifice."

To some it may appear humanitarian for persons to donate blood that will be used for transfusion purposes. Obviously, at least some individuals believe that there is religious merit and spiritual benefit in doing this. However, when viewed from a Biblical standpoint, such a "sacrifice" is of no benefit to the donor and actually violates the law of God.

Wise King Solomon of ancient Israel properly acknowledged in prayer to God that "there is no man that does not sin." (1 Ki. 8:46) And no imperfect and sinful human can provide any "sacrifice" that would absolve him of his own sins or would have this effect on the sins of others. Only the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ has this cleansing power. As the Christian apostle John put matters in writing to fellow believers: "The blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin." —1 John 1:7; Ps. 49:6-8.

Moreover, God's law to his people of ancient times specified that blood, when taken from a body, was not to be used for anything, but was to be disposed of. (Deut. 12:16) Later, Christians were specifically required to 'abstain from blood.' (Acts 15:28, 29) So, 'donating blood as sacrifice' is neither effective nor approved by God.

● "Parade" magazine reports: "For ministers who are ill, lazy or not disposed to produce updated sermons on Sundays, there is a sermon-for-sale service that has been thriving for years." This sermon service is available on a subscription basis from Eric Thomas, the pastor of St. Mary's Anglican Church at Alverstoke, England. He says that he has sold around 1,000 sermons to persons of "all religious denominations throughout the world."

Selling Sermons

The thought of regularly receiving prepared sermons by subscription for use from the pulpit may appeal to some clergymen, and undoubtedly it saves them time and effort. But how could such sermons reflect their knowledge of the Bible or their own heartfelt sentiments? It is not at all likely that such sermons could do so. Nor could it be expected that ministers using them could thereby manifest the same deep regard for others that the Christian apostle Paul displayed. He was able to tell the elders of the Ephesus congregation that, while with them, he was "slaving for the Lord with the greatest lowliness of mind and tears and trials," while he 'had not held back from telling them all the counsel of God.' (Acts 20:17-20, 26, 27) Truly, Paul spoke in a heartfelt way that honored Jehovah God and helped others.

● "Christianity Today" of April 15, 1977, reports: "The 4,500-member Mennonite Conference of Ontario, which condemns lotteries on moral

Double Standard

and religious grounds, recently accepted a \$250,000 grant from Wintario, a Canadian lottery. Conference delegates approved acceptance after they were told that rejecting it could delay the building of a \$3.4 million senior citizens' community center at a Mennonite retirement complex. They agreed to take the money on condition that the conference look into ways of repaying it."

"If we don't accept the money," one conference delegate reportedly reasoned, "someone else will get it and not spend it responsibly. We as Christians have a responsibility to see that the money is spent properly."

While some persons may reason similarly, it is not possible to escape the fact that lotteries are a form of gambling, which is not approved in God's Word. Those adhering to the Scriptures do not trust in luck. (Isa. 65:11, 12) They are not eager to acquire funds and valuable things without working for them. (2 Thess. 3:10) Moreover, recognizing that "greedy persons" will not inherit God's kingdom, godly individuals shun all forms of gambling because of the greed that it can produce in a person's heart. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10) Consistently, the Christian congregation does not sponsor gambling, or seek to benefit from gambling in any way.



Ireland's Spiritual Increase *-reaping what was sown*

"THE pouring rain descends . . . from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth and makes it produce and sprout." (Isa. 55:10) The Irish farmer is well aware of the truth of these words. Due to its copious rainfall, Ireland abounds with trees and plants, and is blessed with delightfully scenic mountains and glens. Rivers, streams and lakes add to the beauty of its lovely countryside. But it is not just the productive earth that is giving increase. Spiritual increase is manifesting itself after many years of faithful endurance and laboring on the part of the tireless, resolute proclaimers of God's kingdom. They are now reaping fruitage from what they have sown.—Gal. 6:9.

During the past year, 1,891 joyful workers had a share in talking to others about the spiritual security that they had found, not only in the more peaceful south, the Republic of Ireland, but also in the troubled province of Ulster, Northern Ireland. Almost twice that number, 3,394, met together to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. When viewed against the backdrop of how the work was carried on in past decades, this evidences a remarkable spiritual growth. For Jehovah's work in Ireland came through some stormy times!

A BASTION OF CATHOLICISM

One writer has referred to the Republic of Ireland as the "strongest bastion of Catholicism in the English-speaking world." Over 95 percent of the population are members of the Roman Catholic Church. The initial reaction to the evangelizing work of Jehovah's Christian witnesses was violent. Early bearers of the Kingdom "good news" got a very hostile reception.

Those who tried to spread the message of truth, especially in rural areas, were often evicted from their accommodations. They had to face mobs who threatened and many times perpetrated

physical violence, or who took their literature from them and destroyed it before their eyes.

Two Witnesses in the south of Ireland were suddenly confronted by a mob of incensed women who angrily accused them of being Communists. Despite all attempts to reason with the mob, they got more and more threatening. One of the Witnesses tried to escape by boarding a bus that was nearby, but instead of finding refuge he found himself under attack by the bus crew, also. Eventually he was pelted with stones but managed to get clear with cries of "throw him in the river" ringing in his ears. The mob then used the bus to overtake the other Witness and launched another vicious attack on him, destroying all his literature. Only the timely arrival of a policeman saved him from serious injury.

There were verbal attacks also. The press reported one of the bishops as saying about Jehovah's Witnesses: "These false prophets . . . are no better than Mohammedans; indeed they are worse, for they do not believe in the immortality of the soul. . . . To listen to them is to deny Christ." Those who did manifest any interest in the message of truth were immediately subjected to intense social and religious pressure, to break off association with these "false prophets." In many instances, especially in the Republic of Ireland, it was made virtually impossible for those who responded to the truth to remain in their home areas, as their means of livelihood was often denied them. Some even left the country so that they would not be hindered in growing spiritually.

But today things are different! Generally, the Irish people are much more tolerant and are willing to discuss spiritual matters. Witnesses make good use of opportunities to talk about their hope as they go about the everyday business of life. Often whole families thus become inter-

ested in what the Bible says. One newly interested person spoke to a workmate about what he was learning and this aroused the workmate's interest. He too got in touch with the Witnesses, and began talking to others about what he was learning. Now over thirty members of his family are themselves Witnesses or are showing interest in the Bible. The breaking down of old prejudices is making things much easier nowadays.

IN THE TROUBLED NORTH

In Northern Ireland, which is predominantly Protestant and ultranationalistic, the situation in earlier days was not much better. Vicious attacks were launched here also, and the deep-seated hatred between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant communities has remained as a threat to Jehovah's Witnesses, especially as some Catholic people still mistakenly identify the Witnesses as "Protestants." But now more and more people are coming to realize that the Witnesses are quite separate from all other religions, Catholic or Protestant.—Rev. 18:4.

On one occasion the Irish Republican Army threatened to explode bombs if a public lecture was not canceled. The assembly hall had to be guarded by policemen and detectives. On another occasion two Witnesses using a "sound car" drove unwittingly into a solidly Catholic area, where they were mistaken for Protestants. A barrage of missiles was hurled at them. Quickly they piled all their equipment back into their vehicle and headed out of the area, but not before the mob had smashed the car windscreen and battered the body-work with iron bars.

However, in time things began to change, attitudes improved, and these courageous patient workers began to see the fruits of their labors. Their work had not been in vain, although as late as 1960 there were on the average, fewer than two hundred

Witnesses reporting Kingdom service in the Republic.

A TURNING POINT

An event that marked a great turning point in the affairs of Jehovah's Witnesses in Ireland was the first relatively large international convention held in Dublin, in 1965. The venue was a local football ground. When the news broke that Jehovah's Witnesses were to use these facilities, the battle was on! Intense, virulent opposition was encountered. For a time it was in the balance whether the assembly would proceed at all. The city council that controlled the property was under incessant pressure to refuse permission for the grounds to be used by these "anti-Christian and particularly anti-Catholic people," as they were called. Despite the Witnesses' being referred to as a "menace" and a "threat," and the old bigoted attitudes rearing their ugly heads again, permission was finally granted and a fine assembly was held.

There were other great problems in arranging for this assembly. For instance, over a thousand accommodations were canceled at the last moment as religious pressure was brought to bear, but despite this, lodging was found for all 3,948 delegates who attended. One landlady commented afterward: "We have not been told the truth about you people, but now that we know you we will always be happy to have you again."

RAPID SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Oftentimes speedy spiritual growth follows the initial planting of the truth. Here is an example: While visiting his parents in a troubled part of Northern Ireland, a young man received a four-page tract published by Jehovah's Witnesses. He appreciated what it said regarding God's kingdom, and could see this as the only answer to the bitter sectarian hatreds that are tearing Northern Ireland apart. His

work as a teacher in Catholic schools took him to England, where he was able to associate with a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. After only four months he determined to return to his hometown to help in spreading the "good news" there. Help certainly was needed as only five others were engaged in making known God's kingdom in that entire area.

On arrival, he arranged for three local newspapers to publish a letter addressed by him to his fellow townspeople, and in which he explained his reason for returning home. This caused great interest and opened the way for many discussions. He has been able to help many others to grow in appreciation of Bible truth. These include one former friend who had been imprisoned for terrorist offenses connected with the I.R.A. This friend now sees the futility of violence, and that lasting peace and justice can come only through God's Kingdom rule over the earth.

FULL-TIME WORKERS PLAY THEIR PART

Much of the spiritual increase in this formerly barren land has been brought forth under very trying circumstances. Devoted men and women have made it their life's work to serve the people of Ireland. A tremendous volume of work has been accomplished by the present three hundred and more full-time workers and all those who courageously preceded them. About 15 percent of all the Witnesses in Ireland are now active full time in planting and watering seeds of truth.

The impact of this full-time service has been great. Illustrating how this works is a report from a newspaper concerning the activity of two young women Witnesses on a motor scooter: "Donegal has been invaded once again by a plague of pests more cunning than foxes or badgers. An army of men and women, some of them touring around on motor scooters, making

a house-to-house call in town and country, leaving their free magazines." A plague to some, but a gospel of peace to honest-hearted persons!

SERVING WHERE THE NEED IS GREATER

A great boost to the work in Ireland was given, too, when families from other countries responded to the invitation to move from areas where there were many Witnesses to parts of Ireland where there were few. Some of these have been part-time announcers of the Kingdom, others full time, but all of them displaying a true pioneer spirit. Since many new Irish Witnesses had found it necessary because of pressure to leave the country, this has been a grand way to redress the balance. Remarkable work has been accomplished by these joyful workers who reflect the same missionary zeal shown by their early Christian counterparts.

Congregations all over Ireland have been strengthened by the addition of these helpers. It is no easy task to move house and home, and to settle in a new country. There were many problems, but these were tackled courageously and realistically. One congregation helped in this way now flourishes in a town in the Republic where, only a few short years ago, some of Jehovah's Witnesses were attacked and beaten by a mob led by the local priest.

These congregations now provide easily identifiable centers where sincere persons can come. One former Catholic man who had given up religion completely lived in the area of one such congregation. His wife, an ardent churchgoer who entertained hopes of getting her husband to return to church, would have nothing to do initially with those who called to talk about the Bible. But the husband's interest had been kindled. Patient cultivation slowly but surely bore fruit. This couple eventually made arrangements to attend one of the semiannual circuit assemblies

of Jehovah's Witnesses, making their own way there and obtaining their own accommodations. The fine association helped them both immensely and, despite family pressure, both made good spiritual progress and were eventually baptized together. On coming up out of the baptism pool the husband recognized another newly baptized Witness. In their younger days, they had served together as altar boys!

The evangelizing zeal of the local Irish Witnesses, combined with the zeal of those who have willingly moved across the sea to Ireland, has resulted in an abundant harvest. There is no part of Ireland now that is not being effectively cultivated for continued spiritual growth.

PRESENT EVIDENCE OF PROSPERITY

Sixty-eight congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses, besides thirty smaller groups in isolated places, are now served by five circuit ministers, who visit each place twice a year to give spiritual encouragement. These congregations and groups also derive many benefits from the fine assemblies held regularly throughout Ireland.

Because of the security situation in Northern Ireland, it has not been possible, for some years now, to hold any of the larger national assemblies there. But the Witnesses from that area have happily joined their associates from the Republic in upbuilding assemblies in fine facilities in Dublin. These assemblies have done much in breaking down barriers of prejudice against the Witnesses.

North and south of the border in Ireland, people with a love for God and for right principles are growing spiritually, becoming rooted and stabilized in their faith. (Eph. 3:17) As it is with the farmer waiting for his crops to grow, great patience has been required of all those who have shared in the planting and cultivating of seeds of truth. But now God is making it grow.—1 Cor. 3:6, 7.

What did the **WISE MAN** mean?

Beware of Becoming Corrupted

No one, not even a wise man, is immune to becoming corrupted. King Solomon wrote: "For mere oppression may make a wise one act crazy, and a gift can destroy the heart."—Eccl. 7:7.

When subjected to prolonged oppression, even a wise person may act rashly. He may lose self-control and give vent to frustrated feelings by lashing out against others, or he may attempt to get relief through unlawful means.

On the other hand, the text might describe oppression that the wise one himself engages in. When a person lets an oppressive spirit dominate him, no matter how wise he may be, he acts in a way that is contrary to human decency and consideration. He ignores the feelings of people and blinds himself to their plight. All he can see is himself and his position. He imagines himself to be a great benefactor and therefore as having the right to crush anyone that dares to make a criticism of his policies.—Compare 2 Chronicles 16:10.

A gift in the form of a bribe can be just as corrupting as oppression, 'destroying the heart' or good motivation. The poor and needy, who suffer because of

discrimination and partiality, may be treated heartlessly by those who accept bribes.

How to Endure Injustice and Oppression

What can a person do when faced with injustice? Solomon's next words are most helpful: "Better is the end afterward of a matter than its beginning. Better is one who is patient than one who is haughty in spirit. Do not hurry yourself in your spirit to become offended, for the taking of offense is what rests in the bosom of the stupid ones."—Eccl. 7:8, 9.

There is wisdom in being patient, confident that the way things finally turn out will be in the best interests of God's servants. Yes, the end of a matter may contrast sharply with the gloomy start. That was certainly true of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt. When Moses first asked for the release of the Israelites, Pharaoh responded with intensified oppressive measures. (Ex. 5:1-9) But, in the end, Jehovah God made a great name for himself by effecting the liberation of his enslaved people.—Ex. 12:31, 32.

The patient person is far less likely to take matters into his own hands and thereby to bring trouble upon himself or others. But one of haughty spirit finds it hard to maintain self-control and is prone to act rashly, to his own hurt. Anger flares up rapidly in the case of the impatient man whose expectations do not materialize. He is quick to take offense or to build up intense resentment. Such offense or resentment he nurtures, keeping it close to him as if in his own bosom. For doing this, he is rightly spoken of by Solomon as "stupid," since his course produces bad results in the form of rash words or actions.

A realistic view of the past is yet another valuable aid in putting up with unpleasant situations of the present. Solomon counseled: "Do not say: 'Why has it happened that the former days proved to be better than these?' for it is not due

to this stupid error."—*Prov. 28:3*. There is wisdom in patient behavior, con-

sidering God's ways a blessed source for judgment.

to wisdom that you have asked about this."

—Eccl. 7:10.

The person who yearns for the 'good old days' forgets about the fact that they, too, were filled with their own problems and troubles. Life in this imperfect system is never ideal. Some things in the past may have been better but others were not. A nostalgic view of the past can be very unrealistic. Besides, no one can turn back the clock. So it is most unwise to think of any time in this world as having been better in every respect and then to become discontented. Such thinking is of no help in putting up with a trying but humanly unchangeable situation.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

August 7: Be a Living Witness for the "Good News." Page 400. Songs to Be Used: 29, 11.

August 14: Prove Yourselves to Be True Disci-

ples of Christ. Page 405. Songs to Be Used:

46, 85.