

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



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CUBA

COVER: Kingdom publishers preaching in Santiago de Cuba, the second-largest city on the island known for its music and traditional dances

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STUDY ARTICLES

■ The Resurrection of Jesus—Its Meaning for Us

Learn why we can be sure that Jesus was resurrected and is alive today. This article also shows how the raising of Christ to immortal heavenly life should affect us and our activity as Kingdom proclaimers.

■ Why We Must Be Holy

■ We Must Be Holy in All Our Conduct

These articles, based largely on the book of Leviticus, show why Jehovah requires holiness of his people and how we can display this quality. Also considered are ways to prove ourselves holy in all our conduct.

■ “The People Whose God Is Jehovah”

■ “Now You Are God’s People”

Some individuals with whom we study the Bible find it difficult to understand that Jehovah has only one organization on earth. They think that sincerity is enough to please God regardless of one’s religion. These articles will show the importance of identifying God’s people and of serving Jehovah along with them.

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The Resurrection of Jesus Its Meaning for Us

“He was raised up.”—MATT. 28:6.

NOT many days after Jesus died, the apostle Peter faced a formidable and hostile group of men. They were powerful Jewish religious leaders—the very ones who had orchestrated Jesus’ death. The men demanded an explanation. Peter had healed a man who had been lame from birth, and they wanted to know by what power or in whose name Peter had done this. The apostle courageously answered: “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you executed on a stake but whom God raised up from the dead, by means of him this man stands here healthy in front of you.”—Acts 4:5-10.

² Earlier, Peter had fearfully denied Jesus three times. (Mark 14:66-72) What accounted for his courage now that he was before the religious leaders? Holy spirit played a vital role, but so did Peter’s certainty that Jesus had been resurrected. What made the apostle so sure that Jesus was alive? And why can we share that conviction?

³ That the dead could live again was not a new concept to

1, 2. (a) What did some religious leaders want to know, and how did Peter respond? (See opening image.) (b) What accounted for Peter’s courage on that occasion?

3, 4. (a) What resurrections occurred before Jesus’ apostles were born? (b) What resurrections did Jesus perform?

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

How did the resurrection of Jesus differ from the resurrections that preceded it?

What proof is there that Jesus was resurrected and is alive today?

What does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you?

Jesus' apostles; resurrections had occurred before they were born. They knew that God had empowered the prophets Elijah and Elisha to perform such miracles. (1 Ki. 17:17-24; 2 Ki. 4:32-37) A dead man had even come to life when his body was thrown into a grave and it touched the bones of Elisha. (2 Ki. 13:20, 21) The early Christians believed these Scriptural accounts, even as we believe that God's Word is true.

⁴ Very likely, all of us have been greatly moved by reading accounts of the resurrections that Jesus performed. When he restored a widow's only son to life, she must have been astonished. (Luke 7: 11-15) On another occasion, Jesus resurrected a 12-year-old girl. Imagine the joy and wonder of her previously grief-stricken parents when their daughter was brought back to life! (Luke 8:49-56) And how onlookers must have been thrilled when they saw Lazarus step from the tomb alive and well!—John 11:38-44.

WHY JESUS' RESURRECTION WAS UNIQUE

⁵ The apostles knew that Jesus' resurrection was different from the resurrections that preceded it. People who were brought back to life earlier came back with physical bodies and eventually died again. Jesus was resurrected with a spirit body that was imperishable. **(Read Acts 13:34.)** Peter wrote that Jesus "was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit." Moreover, "he is at God's right hand, for he went to heaven, and angels and authorities and powers were made subject to him." (1 Pet. 3:18-22) The previous resurrec-

tions were both marvelous and miraculous, but none compared to this supreme miracle.

⁶ Jesus' resurrection had a profound impact on his disciples. He was no longer dead, as his enemies believed. Jesus was alive as a mighty spirit person whom no human could harm. His resurrection proved that he was the Son of God, and knowing that fact, the disciples found their spirits lifted from that of profound sorrow to great joy. Furthermore, their fear was replaced by courage. Jesus' resurrection was central to Jehovah's purpose and to the good news they boldly proclaimed far and wide.

⁷ As Jehovah's servants, we are fully aware that Jesus was not merely a great man. He is alive today and is directing a work that involves everyone on earth. As the ruling King of God's heavenly Kingdom, Jesus Christ will soon cleanse the earth of wickedness and transform it into a paradise where people will live forever. (Luke 23:43) None of this could happen if Jesus had not been resurrected. So, then, what reasons do we have for believing that he was raised from the dead? Indeed, what does his resurrection mean for us?

JEHOVAH DEMONSTRATES HIS POWER OVER DEATH

⁸ After Jesus was executed, the chief priests and the Pharisees came to Pilate and said: "Sir, we recall what that impostor said while he was still alive, 'Af-

5. How did Jesus' resurrection differ from the resurrections that preceded it?

6. How did the resurrection of Jesus affect his disciples?

7. What is Jesus doing today, and what questions arise?

8, 9. (a) Why did the Jewish religious leaders ask that Jesus' grave be made secure? (b) What happened when women came to the tomb?

ter three days I am to be raised up.' Therefore, command that the grave be made secure until the third day, so that his disciples may not come and steal him and say to the people, 'He was raised up from the dead!' Then this last deception will be worse than the first." In response, Pilate said to them: "You may have a guard. Go make it as secure as you know how." That is exactly what they did.—Matt. 27:62-66.

⁹ Jesus' body had been placed in a tomb carved into a rock mass that was sealed with a large stone. That was where the Jewish religious leaders wanted Jesus to remain forever—lifeless in that tomb. But Jehovah had a totally different thought. When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the tomb on the third day, they found the stone rolled away and an angel sitting on it. The angel urged the women to look inside and see that the tomb was empty. "He is not here," said the angel, "for he was raised up." (Matt. 28:1-6) Jesus was alive!

¹⁰ Events of the next 40 days left no doubt that Jesus had been resurrected. Summarizing the evidence, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Among the first things I handed on to you was what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, yes, that he was raised up on the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he appeared to Ce'phas, and then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than 500 brothers at one time, most of whom are still with us, though some have fallen asleep in death. After that he appeared

10. What proof of Jesus' resurrection did Paul provide?

to James, then to all the apostles. But last of all he appeared also to me as if to one born prematurely."—1 Cor. 15:3-8.

WHY WE KNOW THAT JESUS WAS RESURRECTED

¹¹ One reason why we know that Jesus was raised from the dead is that his resurrection took place "according to the Scriptures." God's Word foretold the resurrection. For example, David wrote that God's chief "loyal one" would not be left in the Grave. (**Read Psalm 16:10.**) On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., the apostle Peter applied that prophetic verse to Jesus, saying: "[David] foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he forsaken in the Grave nor did his flesh see corruption."—Acts 2:23-27, 31.

¹² A second reason why we know that Jesus was restored to life is that we have the testimony of many witnesses. Over a period of 40 days, the resurrected Jesus appeared to his disciples in the garden where the tomb was located as well as on the road to Emmaus and elsewhere. (Luke 24:13-15) On those occasions, he spoke to individuals, including Peter, and to groups. Why, the resurrected Jesus once appeared to a crowd of more than 500 people! Testimony involving so many eyewitnesses cannot be discounted.

¹³ A third reason why we know that Jesus' resurrection occurred is the zeal that his disciples showed in proclaiming it. Zealously bearing witness to the

11. How was it that Jesus' resurrection took place "according to the Scriptures"?

12. Who saw the resurrected Jesus?

13. How did the zeal of the disciples show that they were certain that Jesus had been resurrected?

resurrection of the Christ exposed them to persecution, suffering, and death. If Jesus had not been raised up—if it was all a hoax—why would Peter risk his life to proclaim Christ’s resurrection to the religious leaders, who hated Jesus and had plotted his death? It was because Peter and the other disciples were certain that Jesus was alive and was directing the work that God wanted done. Moreover, Jesus’ resurrection assured his followers that they too would be resurrected. For instance, Stephen died with the conviction that there would be a resurrection of the dead.—Acts 7: 55-60.

¹⁴ A fourth reason why we know that Jesus was resurrected is that we have evidence that he is now ruling as King and is serving as Head of the Christian congregation. As a result, true Christianity is flourishing. Would this be happening if Jesus had not been raised from the dead? In fact, we would probably never have heard of him had he not been resurrected. But we have solid reasons to believe that Jesus is alive and is now guiding and directing us as we proclaim the good news far and wide.

WHAT JESUS’ RESURRECTION MEANS FOR US

¹⁵ The resurrection of Christ gives us courage to preach. For 2,000 years, God’s enemies have used every sort of weapon to put an end to the good news—apostasy, ridicule, mob violence, bans, torture, and execution. Yet, nothing—‘no weapon formed against us’—has stopped our Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. (Isa. 54:17) We

do not fear Satan’s minions, or slaves. Jesus is with us, backing us up, just as he promised. (Matt. 28:20) We have every reason to be fearless, for try as they may, our enemies will never silence us!

¹⁶ Jesus’ resurrection validates all that he taught. Paul wrote that if Christ had not been raised from the dead, Christian faith and preaching would be in vain. One Bible scholar wrote: “If Christ is not raised, . . . Christians become pathetic dupes, taken in by a colossal fraud.” Without the resurrection of Jesus, the Gospel accounts become only a sad story of a good and wise man who was put to death by his enemies. But Christ did rise, confirming the truthfulness of all that he taught, including what he said about the future.—**Read 1 Corinthians 15:14, 15, 20.**

¹⁷ Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life.” (John 11:25) That stunning statement will come true without fail. Jehovah has granted Jesus the power to restore to life not only those resurrected to spirit life in heaven but also the billions who will awaken to the prospect of everlasting life on earth. Jesus’ atoning sacrifice and his resurrection mean that death will be no more. Does that knowledge not strengthen you to endure any trial and even face death with courage?

¹⁸ The resurrection of Jesus gives us the assurance that earth’s inhabitants will be judged according to Jehovah’s loving standards. Addressing a group of men and women in ancient Athens,

14. Why do you believe that Jesus is alive?

15. Why does Jesus’ resurrection give us courage to preach?

16, 17. (a) How does the resurrection validate what Jesus taught? (b) According to John 11:25, what power has God given Jesus?

18. The resurrection of Jesus guarantees what?

Jesus' resurrection gives
us courage to preach
(See paragraph 15)



Paul said: “[God] purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has provided a guarantee to all men by resurrecting him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31) Yes, Jesus is the divinely appointed Judge, and we can be sure that his judgment will be fair and loving.—**Read Isaiah 11:2-4.**

¹⁹ Belief in Jesus’ resurrection motivates us to do God’s will. Were it not for his sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection, we would remain under the condemnation of sin and death. (Rom. 5:12; 6:23) If Jesus was not resurrected, we might as well say: “Eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die.” (1 Cor. 15:32) But we do not focus on life’s pleasures. Instead, we cherish the resurrection hope and have every reason to heed Jehovah’s direction in all things.

²⁰ Christ’s resurrection bears silent, though eloquent, testimony to the greatness of Jehovah, who “becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.” (Heb. 11:6) What power and wisdom Je-

hovah exercised in order to raise Jesus to immortal heavenly life! Furthermore, God thus showed his ability to fulfill all of His promises. This includes God’s prophetic promise indicating that a special “offspring” would play a vital role in settling the issue of universal sovereignty. The fulfillment of that promise required that Jesus die and be brought back to life.—Gen. 3:15.

²¹ Are you not thankful to Jehovah, who gave us the sure hope of the resurrection? The Scriptures provide this assurance: “Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his people. 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.” That marvelous prospect was conveyed to the faithful apostle John, who was told: “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” From whom did John receive the inspired revelation? It came through the *resurrected* Jesus Christ.—Rev. 1:1; 21:3-5.

19. How does belief in Christ’s resurrection affect us?

20. How does Jesus’ resurrection testify to God’s greatness?

21. What does the resurrection hope mean to you?



Why We Must Be Holy

“You must be holy.”—LEV. 11:45.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why should the cleansing of Aaron and his sons have deep meaning for all of Jehovah’s people?

How is our obedience related to proving ourselves holy?

What should be our position regarding Jehovah’s law on blood?

IN THE book of Leviticus, holiness is referred to more often than in any other book of the Bible. Since this quality is a requirement for all genuine worshippers of Jehovah, understanding and appreciating Leviticus will help us to prove ourselves holy.

² The book of Leviticus, written by the prophet Moses, is part of “all Scripture” that is beneficial for teaching. (2 Tim. 3:16) Jehovah’s name appears an average of ten times in each chapter of the book. Getting the sense of Leviticus will strengthen us to avoid doing anything that would bring reproach on the divine name. (Lev. 22:32) The book’s frequent use of the words “I am Jehovah” should remind us to obey God. In this article and the next, let us enjoy some sparkling gems found in Leviticus, a gift from God that helps us to engage in holy worship.

HOLINESS REQUIRED

³ **Read Leviticus 8:5, 6.** Jehovah selected Aaron to serve as Israel’s high priest, and his sons were to serve as priests in

1. How can the book of Leviticus help us?
2. What are some features of Leviticus?
- 3, 4. What did the washing of Aaron and his sons represent? (See opening image.)

behalf of the nation. Aaron represents Jesus Christ and Aaron's sons represent Jesus' anointed followers. So did the washing of Aaron represent a cleansing of Jesus? No, for Jesus was sinless and "without blemish," thus having no need for cleansing. (Heb. 7:26; 9:14) However, Aaron's washed condition does point to Jesus' clean and righteous state. What, then, does the washing of Aaron's sons represent?

⁴ The washing of Aaron's sons prefigured the cleansing of those selected to be members of the heavenly priesthood. Was the baptism of the anointed connected with this cleansing of Aaron's sons? No, baptism does not wash away sins; rather, it symbolizes that a person has made an unconditional dedication to Jehovah God. The washing of the anointed is accomplished "by means of the word," and this requires that they wholeheartedly apply Christ's teachings in their lives. (Eph. 5:25-27) They are thus sanctified and cleansed. But what about the "other sheep"?—John 10:16.

⁵ Aaron's sons did not represent the "great crowd" of Jesus' other sheep. (Rev. 7:9) So are such baptized individuals also made holy and cleansed by means of God's Word? Yes, they are! When those with the earthly hope read what the Bible says about the importance and effectiveness of Jesus' shed blood, they put faith in these words and render "sacred service day and night." (Rev. 7:13-15) The effect of the continual cleansing of the anointed and the other sheep is evident as they 'maintain fine conduct.' (1 Pet. 2:12) How pleased

Jehovah must be as he observes the cleanness and the unity of the anointed and the other sheep, who listen to and loyally follow their Shepherd, Jesus!

⁶ The requirement that Israel's priesthood be physically clean has real meaning for Jehovah's people today. Those with whom we study the Bible often notice that our places of worship are clean and also how neat and well-dressed we are. Yet, the cleanness of the priesthood helps us to realize that anyone who ascends the elevated mountain of Jehovah's worship must have "a pure heart." (**Read Psalm 24:3, 4;** Isa. 2:2, 3.) Our sacred service to God must be rendered with cleansed minds and hearts as well as with clean bodies. This calls for frequent self-examination, after which some may need to make significant changes so that they can be holy. (2 Cor. 13:5) For instance, a baptized person who deliberately views pornography should ask himself, 'Am I proving myself holy?' Then he ought to get help to end that vile practice.—Jas. 5:14.

PROVE YOURSELVES HOLY BY BEING OBEDIENT

⁷ When Israel's priesthood was installed, a ram's blood was applied to the right ear, thumb, and big toe of High Priest Aaron and his sons. (**Read Leviticus 8:22-24.**) This use of blood signified that the priests would obediently do their best to carry out their duties. Similarly, High Priest Jesus set a perfect example for anointed ones and the other sheep. His ear was attuned to God's guidance. Jesus' hands were used in

5. Why can it be said that the other sheep are cleansed by means of God's Word?

6. What self-examination would be beneficial?

7. In line with Leviticus 8:22-24, what example did Jesus set?

carrying out Jehovah's will, and his feet never strayed from a holy course.—John 4:31-34.

⁸ Anointed Christians and Jesus' other sheep must follow the integrity-keeping course of their High Priest. All worshippers of Jehovah must obediently comply with the directives found in God's Word and thereby avoid grieving his spirit. (Eph. 4:30) They must 'make straight paths for their feet.' —Heb. 12:13.

⁹ Consider the heartfelt expressions of three brothers who have the earthly hope and who for decades have worked closely with members of the Governing Body. One commented: "While this has indeed been a unique privilege of service, the close association has from time to time revealed that, although spirit anointed, these brothers are imperfect. Yet, one of my goals over the years has been to be obedient to those taking the lead." The second brother stated: "Such scriptures as 2 Corinthians 10:5, about 'obedience to Christ,' have helped me to be obedient and cooperate with those taking the lead. This is obedience from the heart." The third brother said: "Loving what Jehovah loves and hating what he hates, as well as constantly seeking his guidance and doing what pleases him, means obedience to his organization and to those he is using to advance his purpose for the earth." This brother had learned that Nathan Knorr, who became a member of the Governing Body, readily accepted points in the

1925 *Watch Tower* article "Birth of the Nation," even though some others questioned them. Such obedience deeply impressed the brother. Pondering over the words of the three men just quoted can help you prove yourself holy by being obedient.

HOLY OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LAW ON BLOOD

¹⁰ **Read Leviticus 17:10.** Jehovah commanded the Israelites not to eat "any sort of blood." Abstaining from blood—animal or human—is a Christian requirement as well. (Acts 15:28, 29) We shudder at the very thought of having God 'set his face against us' and cut us off from his congregation. We love him and want to obey him. Even when confronted with a life-threatening situation, we are determined not to cave in to the pleas and demands of those who do not know Jehovah and who do not care to obey him. Yes, we expect to be ridiculed for abstaining from blood, but we choose to be obedient to God. (Jude 17, 18) What view on this subject will strengthen us to "be firmly resolved" not to eat blood or accept a blood transfusion?—Deut. 12:23.

¹¹ The use of animal blood by ancient Israel's high priest on the annual Atonement Day helps us to understand God's view of blood. Blood was reserved for special use. It was to make atonement for the sins of those seeking Jehovah's forgiveness. The blood of the bull and the goat was to be spattered toward and before the cover of the ark of the covenant. (Lev. 16:14, 15, 19) This action

8. What must all of Jehovah's worshippers do?

9. How did three brothers who have worked closely with members of the Governing Body express themselves, and how can their statements help you to continue to prove yourself holy?

10. How important is it that we obey God's law on blood?

11. Why can we say that the annual Atonement Day was not mere ritual?

Are you determined
to obey Jehovah's
law on blood?
(See paragraphs 14, 15)



opened the way for Jehovah to forgive the sins of the Israelites. In addition, Jehovah decreed that if a man killed an animal for food, he was to pour out its blood and cover it with dust, “for the life of every sort of flesh is its blood.” (Lev. 17:11-14) Was all of this unimportant ritual? No. The use of blood on Atonement Day, as well as the command to pour the blood on the ground, is in harmony with Jehovah’s earlier command to Noah and his descendants concerning blood. (Gen. 9:3-6) Jehovah God had prohibited the consuming of blood to sustain life. What does this mean for Christians?

¹² When the apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians about the cleansing power of blood, he explained: “According to the Law nearly all things are cleansed with blood, and unless blood is poured out no forgiveness takes place.” (Heb. 9:22) Paul also pointed out

12. How does Paul’s letter to the Hebrew Christians connect blood with forgiveness?

that animal sacrifices, though of some value, only reminded the Israelites that they were sinners and that they needed something more in order to take sins away completely. Yes, the Law was “a shadow of the good things to come, but not the very substance of the things.” (Heb. 10:1-4) How would forgiveness of sins become possible?

¹³ **Read Ephesians 1:7.** The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, who willingly ‘handed himself over for us,’ has profound meaning for all who love him and his Father. (Gal. 2:20) Nonetheless, it was what Jesus did *after* his death and resurrection that truly released us, making forgiveness of our sins possible. Jesus fulfilled what was foreshadowed in the Mosaic Law on the Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest took some of the blood of the sacrificial animals into the Most Holy of the tabernacle, and later into Solomon’s temple,

13. How do you feel about the fact that Jesus offered the value of his blood to Jehovah?

and presented it before God, as if in his presence. (Lev. 16:11-15) In like manner, Jesus entered heaven itself with the value of his human blood and presented it to Jehovah. (Heb. 9:6, 7, 11-14, 24-28) How grateful we are that we have our sins forgiven and our consciences cleansed because we exercise faith in the blood of Jesus!

¹⁴ Are you now in a better position to understand why Jehovah commands us not to eat “any sort of blood”? (Lev. 17:10) Do you grasp the reason why God considers blood to be sacred? He essentially views blood as equivalent to life. (Gen. 9:4) Do you agree that we should accept God’s view of blood and obey his command to abstain from it? The only way any of us can have peace with God is to have faith in Jesus’ ransom sacrifice and appreciate that blood has special meaning to our Creator.—Col. 1:19, 20.

¹⁵ Any one of us could suddenly find ourselves facing the blood issue. Or a family member or dear friend could unexpectedly be confronted with the issue of whether to accept a blood transfusion or not. During such a crisis, decisions also need to be made regarding blood fractions and medical procedures. Therefore, it is very important to do research and prepare for a possible emergency. Along with prayer, such measures will help us to take a firm stand and avoid compromising on the matter. Surely we do not want to sadden Jehovah’s heart by accepting something that his Word condemns! Many medical professionals and other advocates of blood transfusion appeal to

people to donate blood in hopes of saving lives. However, Jehovah’s holy people acknowledge that the Creator has the right to say how blood is to be treated. To him, “any sort of blood” is sacred. We must be determined to obey his law on blood. By our holy conduct, we prove to him that we deeply appreciate the lifesaving power of Jesus’ blood—the only blood that makes possible the forgiveness of sin and everlasting life.—John 3:16.

WHY JEHOVAH EXPECTS US TO BE HOLY

¹⁶ When God was delivering the Israelites from Egyptian slavery, they were told: “I am Jehovah, who is leading you up out of the land of Egypt to prove myself God to you, and you must be holy, because I am holy.” (Lev. 11:45) Holiness was expected of the people of Israel because Jehovah is holy. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we too must be holy. The book of Leviticus leaves no doubt about that.

¹⁷ Our consideration of certain parts of Leviticus has surely been beneficial. Very likely, this study has enhanced your appreciation for this inspired book of the Bible. Meditating on some of the priceless information found in Leviticus has undoubtedly increased your understanding of reasons why we must be holy. However, what other spiritual gems await us in this portion of God’s inspired Word? What else can we learn from it concerning the rendering of holy service to Jehovah? We will consider these matters in the next article.

16. Why must Jehovah’s people be holy?

17. How do you feel now about the Bible book of Leviticus?

14, 15. Why is it important to understand and obey Jehovah’s law regarding blood?



We Must Be Holy in All Our Conduct

“Become holy yourselves in all your conduct.”—1 PET. 1:15.

JEHOVAH inspired the apostle Peter to link the holiness emphasized in the book of Leviticus with the need to be holy in our conduct as Christians. **(Read 1 Peter 1:14-16.)** “The Holy One,” Jehovah, expects anointed ones and the “other sheep” to do their utmost to become holy in *all* their conduct—not just *some* of their conduct.—John 10:16.

² Further examination of spiritual gems found in Leviticus will be highly beneficial, and applying what we learn will help us to prove ourselves holy in all our conduct. We will consider such questions as: How should we view compromise? What does Leviticus teach us about upholding Jehovah’s sovereignty? What can we learn from the offering of sacrifices?

BEWARE OF COMPROMISE

³ If we are to please Jehovah, we must hold firmly to his laws and principles, never adopting an unholy, compromising attitude toward them. Although we are not under the Mosaic Law, its requirements give us insight into what is acceptable or unacceptable in God’s sight. For example, the Israelites

1, 2. (a) What is expected of God’s people when it comes to conduct? (b) This article answers what questions?

3, 4. (a) Why must Christians avoid compromising on Bible laws and principles? (b) Why should we not take vengeance or hold a grudge?

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

Why is avoiding compromise a serious issue for true Christians?

What is the connection between Jehovah’s sovereignty and Christian neutrality?

In view of Hebrews 5:7, 11-14, how should we approach our study of God’s Word?

were commanded: “You must not take vengeance nor hold a grudge against the sons of your people, and you must love your fellow man as yourself. I am Jehovah.”—Lev. 19:18.

⁴ Jehovah expects us to refrain from taking vengeance, and he wants us to avoid harboring a grudge. (Rom. 12:19) Were we to ignore divine laws and principles, the Devil would be delighted, and we might bring reproach on Jehovah. Even if someone has deliberately hurt us, let us not allow ourselves to be vessels in which resentment is stored. God has given us the privilege of being “earthen vessels” containing the treasure of the ministry. (2 Cor. 4:1, 7) Acid-like resentment does not belong in such vessels!

⁵ A heartrending experience for Aaron’s family is recorded at Leviticus 10: 1-11. They must have been devastated when fire from heaven consumed Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu at the tabernacle. What a test of faith it was for Aaron and his family not to mourn their dead relatives! Are you personally proving yourself holy with regard to not associating with family members or others who have been disfellowshipped?—**Read 1 Corinthians 5:11.**

⁶ We may not face as severe a test as that experienced by Aaron and his family. But what if we were invited to attend and participate in a church wedding of a non-Witness relative? No explicit Scriptural command forbids us to attend, but

5. What can we learn from the account of Aaron and the death of his sons? (See opening image.)

6, 7. (a) When deciding whether to participate in a church wedding, what serious points merit our consideration? (See footnote.) (b) How might we reason with non-Witness relatives as to our stand regarding a church wedding?

are there Bible principles involved in making such a decision?*

⁷ Our determination to prove ourselves holy to Jehovah under the circumstances just mentioned may puzzle our non-Witness relatives. (1 Pet. 4:3, 4) Of course, we try to avoid offending them, but it is usually best to speak with them in a kind, though straightforward, way. Perhaps this could be done well in advance of the event. We could thank them and say that we are pleased that they invited us to participate in the wedding. Then we might say that because of the religious issues involved, our participation could interfere with the happiness of their special day and might be a source of embarrassment to them and others attending. This is one way that we could avoid compromising our beliefs and faith.

UPHOLD JEHOVAH’S SOVEREIGNTY

⁸ The book of Leviticus highlights Jehovah’s sovereignty. More than 30 times, the laws found in Leviticus are credited to Jehovah. Moses acknowledged this and did what Jehovah commanded him to do. (Lev. 8:4, 5) Likewise, we should always do what our Sovereign, Jehovah, wants us to do. In this regard, we have the support of God’s organization. But a test of faith may come when we are alone, as it did when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. (Luke 4:1-13) If we are focused on God’s sovereignty and we trust in him, nobody can cause us to compromise and be ensnared by cowardly fear.—Prov. 29:25.

* See “Questions From Readers” in *The Watchtower* of May 15, 2002.

8. How does the book of Leviticus highlight Jehovah’s sovereignty?

⁹ As followers of Christ and Witnesses of Jehovah, we are persecuted in nations around the world. This is to be expected, for Jesus told his disciples: “People will hand you over to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be hated by all the nations on account of my name.” (Matt. 24:9) In the face of such hatred, however, we endure in the Kingdom-preaching work and continue to prove ourselves holy before Jehovah. Although we are honest, clean-living, and law-abiding citizens, why are we so hated? (Rom. 13:1-7) Because we have made Jehovah our Sovereign Lord! We render sacred service to “him alone” and will never compromise on his righteous laws and principles.—Matt. 4:10.

¹⁰ We are also “no part of the world.” Therefore, we are neutral with regard to the world’s wars and political affairs. **(Read John 15:18-21; Isaiah 2:4.)** Some who made a dedication to God have compromised their neutrality. Many of these individuals have repented and have regained their relationship with our merciful heavenly Father. (Ps. 51:17) A few did not repent. During World War II, for instance, officials gathered 160 of our unjustly incarcerated brothers under 45 years of age from all the prisons in Hungary and assembled them in one town. There they ordered them to take up military service. The faithful brothers remained firm in their refusal, but nine of the group took the military oath and accepted uniforms. Two years later, one who compromised found himself part of a firing squad assigned to execute the faithful Witnesses. His own fleshly brother was among them! As

matters turned out, the threatened executions never took place.

OFFER JEHOVAH YOUR BEST

¹¹ According to the Mosaic Law, the Israelites were to offer specific sacrifices. (Lev. 9:1-4, 15-21) The sacrifices were to be unblemished because they pointed to Jesus’ perfect sacrifice. Moreover, with each type of offering, or sacrifice, a specific procedure was to be followed. For example, consider what was required of the mother of a newborn child. Leviticus 12:6 states: “When the days of her purification for a son or a daughter are completed, she will bring a young ram in its first year for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a turtledove for a sin offering to the entrance of the tent of meeting, to the priest.” God’s requirements were specific, but his loving reasonableness shines radiantly in the Law. If the mother could not afford a sheep, she was allowed to offer two turtledoves or two young pigeons. (Lev. 12:8) Though poor, this worshipper was loved and appreciated just as much as the one bringing a more costly offering. What can we learn from this?

¹² The apostle Paul urged fellow believers to offer to God “a sacrifice of praise.” (Heb. 13:15) Our lips should make public declaration to Jehovah’s holy name. Deaf brothers and sisters use sign language to render such praise to God. Housebound Christians praise him by letter writing, telephone witnessing, and preaching to attendants and visitors. Our sacrifice of praise—our giving praise to Jehovah by making known his name and proclaiming the good news—should be commensurate

9. Why are God’s people hated in all nations?

10. What happened on one occasion when a brother compromised his neutrality?

11, 12. How does the way that Jehovah had sacrifices handled in ancient Israel have meaning for Christians today?



Are you giving Bible study and Family Worship sessions priority in your life?
(See paragraph 14)

with our health and ability. It ought to be our best.—Rom. 12:1; 2 Tim. 2:15.

¹³ Our sacrifices of praise are personal offerings voluntarily made to God because we love him. (Matt. 22:37, 38) But we have been asked to report our activity in the ministry. So, what attitude should we have toward this arrangement? The report we submit each month is connected with our godly devotion. (2 Pet. 1:7) Of course, none of us should feel pressured to devote many hours to the ministry just to be able to turn in a larger report of our share in the field service. That is precisely why a Kingdom publisher who is in a nursing home or who is somehow incapacitated may report field service in 15-minute increments rather than full hours. Jehovah appreciates those minutes as the Kingdom publisher's best offering and as an expression of love for Him and appreciation for the inestimable privilege of serving as one of His Witnesses. Just like those Israelites whose circumstances did not allow them to offer some of the more expensive sacrifices, Jehovah's precious servants who have certain lim-

13. Why should we report our field service activity?

itations can still submit a report. And our individual reports become part of the total world report, which helps the organization to plan ahead for future Kingdom-preaching activity. So, then, is it really asking too much of us that we report our share in the preaching work?

OUR STUDY HABITS AND SACRIFICES OF PRAISE

¹⁴ After considering a few spiritual treasures from Leviticus, you may be thinking, 'I now have a better understanding of reasons why this book has been included in God's inspired Word.' (2 Tim. 3:16) You may now be more determined to prove yourself holy, not only because Jehovah requires it but because he deserves your earnest effort to please him. Perhaps what you have learned about Leviticus in these two articles has increased your desire to dig more deeply into the Scriptures in general. **(Read Proverbs 2:1-5.)** Examine your study habits prayerfully. You surely want your sacrifices of praise to be acceptable to Jehovah. Do you find that you are allowing television programs, video games, sports activities, or hobbies to distract you and interfere with your spiritual progress? If so, you may find it very beneficial to meditate on certain statements of the apostle Paul that have been recorded in the book of Hebrews.

¹⁵ Paul was very frank when he wrote to his fellow Hebrew Christians. **(Read Hebrews 5:7, 11-14.)** The apostle did not mince words! He told them that they had "become dull" in their hearing. Why

14. Explain why we should examine our study habits.

15, 16. Why was Paul so direct when he wrote to the Hebrew Christians?

was Paul so forceful, so direct? He was reflecting Jehovah's love and concern for those Christians who were trying to survive on spiritual milk. Knowing the fundamental doctrines of Christianity is vital. However, "solid food" is needed to promote spiritual growth toward Christian maturity.

¹⁶ Instead of progressing to the point of teaching others, the Hebrews needed to have someone teach them. Why? Because they avoided "solid food." Ask yourself: 'Do I have the right attitude toward solid spiritual food? Am I taking it in? Or do I shy away from praying and engaging in deep Bible study? If so, might my study habits be part of the problem?' Not only are we to preach to people but we are to teach them and make disciples.—Matt. 28:19, 20.

¹⁷ Bible study may not be easy for many of us. Of course, Jehovah does not try to motivate his people to study by causing them to have feelings of guilt. Yet, whether we have been dedicated servants of God for years or for a comparatively short time, we should continually take in solid spiritual food. Doing so is essential if we are to pursue a course of holiness.

¹⁸ To be holy, we must weigh the Scriptures carefully and do what God asks of us. Consider Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, who were executed for offering "unauthorized fire," perhaps while inebriated. (Lev. 10:1, 2) Note what God then told Aaron. (**Read Leviticus 10:8-11.**) Does that passage mean that we must not drink anything alcoholic before going to a Christian meet-

ing? Think about these points: We are not under the Law. (Rom. 10:4) In some lands, our fellow believers use alcoholic beverages *in moderation* at meals before attending meetings. Four cups of wine were used at the Passover. When instituting the Memorial, Jesus had his apostles drink wine that represented his blood. (Matt. 26:27) The Bible condemns heavy drinking and drunkenness. (1 Cor. 6:10; 1 Tim. 3:8) And many Christians would feel impelled by their conscience to abstain completely from alcoholic beverages before engaging in any form of sacred service. However, circumstances vary from one country to another, and the important thing is for Christians to "distinguish between the holy thing and the profane" so as to conduct themselves with holiness that pleases God.

¹⁹ Many spiritual gems await discovery if you dig for them in God's Word. Use available research tools to enhance your family worship and your personal study. Increase your knowledge of Jehovah and his purposes. Draw ever closer to him. (Jas. 4:8) Pray to God as did the psalmist who sang: "Open my eyes so that I may see clearly the wonderful things from your law." (Ps. 119:18) Never compromise on Bible laws and principles. Willingly comply with the supreme law of "the Holy One," Jehovah, and zealously participate in "the holy work of the good news of God." (1 Pet. 1:15; Rom. 15:16) Prove yourself holy during these turbulent last days. May all of us be holy in our conduct and thus uphold the sovereignty of our holy God, Jehovah.

17, 18. (a) Why should we regularly take in solid spiritual food? (b) With regard to Christian meetings, how may we view the use of alcoholic beverages?

19. (a) What should we keep in mind when it comes to family worship and personal study? (b) What are you determined to do when it comes to proving yourself holy?



“The People Whose God Is Jehovah”

“Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!”

—PS. 144:15.

SEE IF YOU CAN ANSWER

At what point did Jehovah begin to have a distinct people on earth?

How were the Israelites to be a nation of witnesses?

How did Israel prove to be an unfaithful people, and what did Jehovah foretell?

MANY thinking people today readily admit that mainstream religions, inside and outside Christendom, do little to benefit mankind. Some agree that such religious systems misrepresent God by their teachings and by their conduct and therefore cannot have God’s approval. They believe, however, that there are sincere people in all religions and that God sees them and accepts them as his worshippers on earth. They see no need for such ones to quit engaging in false religion in order to worship as a separate people. But does this thinking represent God’s? Let us find the answer by reviewing some of the Scriptural history of Jehovah’s true worshippers.

A COVENANT PEOPLE

² As early as the 20th century B.C.E., Jehovah had a distinct people on earth. Abraham, called “the father of all

1. What do some think with regard to God’s having a people on earth?
2. Who in time became Jehovah’s distinct people, and what distinguished them from other peoples? (See opening image.)

those having faith,” was the head of a household numbering into the hundreds. (Rom. 4:11; Gen. 14:14) Rulers in Canaan considered him to be “a great chieftain” and treated him with respect. (Gen. 21:22; 23:6, ftn.) Jehovah made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. (Gen. 17:1, 2, 19) God told Abraham: “This is my covenant between me and you, that you and your offspring after you will keep: Every male among you must get circumcised. . . . And it will serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you.” (Gen. 17:10, 11) Accordingly, Abraham and all the male members of his household were circumcised. (Gen. 17:24-27) Circumcision was a physical sign that distinguished Abraham’s descendants as the only people who were in a covenant relationship with Jehovah.

³ Abraham’s grandson Jacob, or Israel, had 12 sons. (Gen. 35:10, 22b-26) In time, these were to become the patriarchal heads of the 12 tribes of Israel. (Acts 7:8) Because of a famine, Jacob and his household took refuge in Egypt, where one of Jacob’s sons, Joseph, had become Pharaoh’s food administrator and right-hand man. (Gen. 41:39-41; 42:6) Jacob’s descendants became very numerous, “a congregation of peoples.” —Gen. 48:4; **read Acts 7:17.**

A REDEEMED PEOPLE

⁴ The descendants of Jacob remained in Egypt for a little over two centuries, in a region of the Nile delta named Goshen. (Gen. 45:9, 10) It would seem that during approximately half of that time,

they lived in peaceful coexistence with the Egyptians, dwelling in small towns and pasturing their flocks and herds. They had been warmly welcomed by Pharaoh, who knew and appreciated Joseph. (Gen. 47:1-6) As for the Egyptian people, they had a particular disdain for those who herded sheep. (Gen. 46:31-34) Nevertheless, they had to tolerate the Israelites’ presence.

⁵ But the situation of God’s people was to change dramatically. “In time there arose over Egypt a new king, one who did not know Joseph. So he said to his people: ‘Look! The people of Israel are more numerous and mightier than we are.’ Consequently, the Egyptians forced the Israelites into harsh slavery. They made their life bitter with hard labor, as they worked with clay mortar and bricks and in every form of slavery in the field. Yes, they made them toil in harsh conditions in every form of slavery.”—Ex. 1:8, 9, 13, 14.

⁶ Pharaoh even decreed that all Hebrew male babies should be put to death at their birth. (Ex. 1:15, 16) It was at that time that Moses was born. When he was three months old, he was hidden by his mother in the reeds of the Nile, where Pharaoh’s daughter found him. She later adopted him. Providentially, during his early years, Moses was brought up by his faithful mother, Jochebed, and he became a loyal servant of Jehovah. (Ex. 2:1-10; Heb. 11:23-25) Jehovah “took notice” of the sufferings of his people and decided to deliver them from their oppressors, under the leadership of Moses. (Ex. 2:24, 25; 3:9, 10)

3. How did Abraham’s descendants develop as a people?

4. At first, what relationship existed between the Egyptians and the descendants of Jacob?

5, 6. (a) How did the situation of God’s people change in Egypt? (b) How was Moses’ life spared, and what did Jehovah do for all of His people?

They would thus become a people “re-deemed” by Jehovah.—Ex. 15:13; **read Deuteronomy 15:15.**

A PEOPLE BECOME A NATION

⁷ Although Jehovah had not yet organized the Israelites as a nation, he recognized them as his people. Thus, Moses and Aaron were instructed to say to Pharaoh: “This is what Jehovah the God of Israel says, ‘Send my people away so that they may celebrate a festival to me in the wilderness.’”—Ex. 5:1.

⁸ It took ten plagues and the destruction of Pharaoh and his armed forces in the waters of the Red Sea to deliver the sons of Israel from Egyptian oppression. (Ex. 15:1-4) Less than three months later, Jehovah made a covenant with the Israelites at Mount Sinai and gave them this historic promise: “If you will strictly obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will certainly become my special property out of all peoples, . . . a holy nation.”—Ex. 19:5, 6.

⁹ While in Egypt, before they were reduced to slavery, the Hebrews were organized as a tribal society, administrated by family heads, or patriarchs. These family heads, like the servants of Jehovah who lived before them, acted as rulers, judges, and priests to their households. (Gen. 8:20; 18:19; Job 1:4, 5) Through Moses, however, Jehovah gave the Israelites a law code that would distinguish them from all other nations. (**Read Deuteronomy 4:5-8;** Ps. 147:19, 20.) The Law established a separate

priesthood, and justice was administered by “the elders,” who were respected for their knowledge and wisdom. (Deut. 25:7, 8) The Law codified the religious and social activities of the new-born nation.

¹⁰ Just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Jehovah repeated his laws to them, and Moses told them: “Today Jehovah has obtained your declaration that you will become his people, his special property, just as he has promised you, and that you will observe all his commandments and that he will put you high above all the other nations that he has made, giving you praise and fame and glory as you prove yourself a people holy to Jehovah your God.”—Deut. 26:18, 19.

FOREIGN RESIDENTS WELCOME

¹¹ Although Jehovah now had a chosen nation on earth, he did not forbid the presence of non-Israelites among his people. He allowed “a vast mixed company” of non-Israelites, including Egyptians, to accompany his people when he delivered them from Egypt. (Ex. 12:38; ftn.) At the time of the seventh plague, some “among Pharaoh’s servants” feared Jehovah’s word and doubtless became a part of the mixed company that left Egypt with the Israelites.—Ex. 9:20.

¹² Just before the Israelites crossed the Jordan to take possession of Canaan, Moses told them that they “must love the foreign resident” in their midst. (Deut. 10:17-19) God’s chosen people were to accept in their community any foreigners who were willing to observe

7, 8. How did Jehovah’s people become a holy nation?

9, 10. (a) According to Deuteronomy 4:5-8, how did the Law set the Israelites apart from other peoples? (b) How were the Israelites to prove themselves “a people holy to Jehovah”?

11-13. (a) Who became associated with God’s chosen people? (b) What would a non-Israelite want to do if he wished to worship Jehovah?

the basic laws given by Moses. (Lev. 24: 22) Some foreign residents became worshippers of Jehovah, sharing the feelings of the Moabite Ruth, who declared to the Israelite Naomi: “Your people will be my people, and your God my God.” (Ruth 1:16) These foreign residents became proselytes, and the males submitted to circumcision. (Ex. 12:48, 49) Jehovah welcomed them as members of the community of his chosen people. —Num. 15:14, 15.

¹³ When Solomon’s temple was dedicated to Jehovah, provision was made for non-Israelite worshippers, as reflected in Solomon’s prayer: “Concerning the foreigner who is not part of your people Israel and who comes from a distant land because of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm, and he comes and prays toward this house, may you then listen from the heavens, your dwelling place, and do all that the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as your people Israel do, and may know

that your name has been called on this house that I have built.” (2 Chron. 6:32, 33) As was still true in Jesus’ day, any non-Israelite who wished to worship Jehovah would want to associate with His covenant people.—John 12:20; Acts 8:27.

A NATION OF WITNESSES

¹⁴ The Israelites worshipped their God, Jehovah, whereas the other nations worshipped their own deities. At the time of the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah compared the world situation to that of a court trial. He challenged the gods of the nations to produce witnesses to confirm their divinity, declaring: “Let all the nations assemble in one place, and let the peoples be gathered together. Who [of their gods] among them can tell this? Or can they cause us to hear the first things? Let them present their witnesses to prove themselves right, or let

14-16. (a) In what way were the Israelites to be a nation of witnesses for Jehovah? (b) What are Jehovah’s present-day people morally obligated to do?

The Israelites loved the foreign residents
(See paragraphs 11-13)



them hear and say, 'It is the truth!'" —Isa. 43:9.

¹⁵ The gods of the nations were unable to produce any evidence of their godship. They were mere idols that were speechless and that needed to be carried around. (Isa. 46:5-7) On the other hand, Jehovah told his people Israel: "You are my witnesses, . . . yes, my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and have faith in me and understand that I am the same One. Before me no God was formed, and after me there has been none. I—I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no savior. . . . So you are my witnesses, . . . and I am God."—Isa. 43:10-12.

¹⁶ In what would amount to a universal court case over the issue "Who is the Supreme God?," Jehovah's chosen people were to attest loud and clear that Jehovah is the one true God. He called them "the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise." (Isa. 43:21) They were the people who bore his name. Redeemed from Egypt by Jehovah, they were under a moral obligation to support his sovereignty before the other peoples of the earth. In effect, their stance was to be like that later set forth for God's present-day people by the prophet Micah: "All the peoples will walk, each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of Jehovah our God forever and ever."—Mic. 4:5.

A RENEGADE PEOPLE

¹⁷ Sadly, Israel did not prove faithful to their God, Jehovah. They allowed themselves to be influenced by nations that worshipped gods of wood

and stone. In the eighth century B.C.E., the prophet Hosea wrote: "Israel is a degenerate vine . . . He multiplies his altars . . . Their heart is hypocritical; now they will be found guilty." (Hos. 10:1, 2) About a century and a half later, Jeremiah recorded these words of Jehovah to His unfaithful people: "I planted you as a choice red vine, all of it pure seed; so how have you turned into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine before me? . . . Where are your gods that you made for yourself? Let them rise up if they can save you in your time of calamity . . . My own people have forgotten me."—Jer. 2:21, 28, 32.

¹⁸ Instead of producing fine fruitage by practicing pure worship and acting as Jehovah's faithful witnesses, Israel produced the rotten fruitage of idolatry. Thus, Jesus told the hypocritical Jewish leaders of his day: "The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits." (Matt. 21:43) Only those in the "new covenant," foretold by Jehovah through his prophet Jeremiah, could be part of that new nation, spiritual Israel. Of the spiritual Israelites who would be brought into that new covenant, Jehovah had prophesied: "I will become their God, and they will become my people."—Jer. 31:31-33.

¹⁹ After fleshly Israel proved unfaithful, Jehovah made spiritual Israel his people in the first century, as already noted. But who are his people on earth today? How can honesthearted ones identify God's true worshippers? This is the subject of the following article.

17. In Jehovah's eyes, how did Israel become 'a degenerate foreign vine'?

18, 19. (a) How did Jehovah foretell that he would produce a new people for his name? (b) What will be examined in the following article?



“Now You Are God’s People”

“You were once not a people, but now you are God’s people.”—1 PET. 2:10.

PENTECOST 33 C.E. was a milestone in the history of Jehovah’s people on earth. A radical change took place. On that day, by means of his spirit, Jehovah brought forth a new nation—spiritual Israel, “the Israel of God.” (Gal. 6:16) For the first time since the days of Abraham, God’s people would no longer be identified by the fleshly circumcision of their males. Instead, regarding each member of that new nation, Paul wrote: “His circumcision is that of the heart by spirit.” —Rom. 2:29.

² The first members of God’s new nation were the apostles and over a hundred other disciples of Christ who had met together in an upper room in Jerusalem. (Acts 1:12-15) These received the outpouring of the holy spirit, which made them spirit-begotten sons of God. (Rom. 8:15, 16; 2 Cor. 1:21) This gave proof that the new covenant had gone into operation, mediated by Christ and validated by his blood. (Luke 22:20; **read Hebrews 9:15.**) These disciples thus became members of Jehovah’s new nation, his new people. Holy spirit enabled them to preach in the different languages spoken by the Jews and proselytes who had come to

1, 2. What change took place at Pentecost 33 C.E., and who became members of Jehovah’s new people? (See opening image.)

CAN YOU ANSWER?

Who became Jehovah’s new people in the first century?

How were true Christians to prove themselves “a people for [Jehovah’s] name”?

Who are Jehovah’s people today, and what must the “other sheep” do to find protection during the “great tribulation”?



Peter preached to Cornelius and his household
(See paragraph 5)

Jerusalem from throughout the Roman Empire to celebrate the Jewish Festival of Weeks, or Pentecost. These people heard and understood in their own tongue “the magnificent things of God” preached by the spirit-begotten Christians.—Acts 2:1-11.

THE NEW PEOPLE OF GOD

³ Jehovah used the apostle Peter to take the lead in opening up the way for Jews and proselytes to become members of this newborn nation, the Christian congregation. On the day of Pentecost, Peter boldly told the Jews that they must accept Jesus, the man they had “fastened to a stake,” because “God made him both Lord and Christ.” When the crowd asked what they should do, Peter replied: “Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the free gift of the holy spirit.” (Acts 2:22, 23, 36-38) That day, some 3,000 people were added to the

3-5. (a) What did Peter tell the Jews on the day of Pentecost? (b) What successive steps contributed to the growth of Jehovah’s new nation during the early years of its existence?

new nation of spiritual Israel. (Acts 2: 41) Afterward, the zealous preaching of the apostles continued to bear more fruit. (Acts 6:7) The new nation was growing.

⁴ Later, the preaching work was extended to the Samaritans, with good success. Many were baptized by the evangelizer Philip, but they did not immediately receive the holy spirit. The governing body in Jerusalem sent the apostles Peter and John to these Samaritan converts, and “they laid their hands on them, and they began to receive holy spirit.” (Acts 8:5, 6, 14-17) Hence, these Samaritans also became spirit-anointed members of spiritual Israel.

⁵ In 36 C.E., Peter was again used to extend to others entrance into the new nation of spiritual Israel. This occurred when he preached to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his relatives and friends. (Acts 10:22, 24, 34, 35) The Bible record states: “While Peter was still speaking . . . , the holy spirit came upon all those [non-Jews] hearing the word. And the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed, because the free gift of the holy spirit was being poured out also on people of the nations.” (Acts 10:44, 45) Thus, membership in the new nation of spiritual Israel was now extended to believers who were uncircumcised Gentiles.

“A PEOPLE FOR HIS NAME”

⁶ At a meeting of the governing body of first-century Christians held in 49 C.E., the disciple James stated: “Symeon [Peter] has related thoroughly how God for the first time turned his at-

6, 7. In what ways were members of the new nation to act as “a people for [Jehovah’s] name,” and to what extent did they do so?

tention to the nations to take out of them a people for his name.” (Acts 15: 14) This new people bearing Jehovah’s name would include both Jewish and non-Jewish believers. (Rom. 11:25, 26a) Later, Peter wrote: “You were once not a people, but now you are God’s people.” Peter outlined their mission by stating: “You are ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies’ of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Pet. 2:9, 10) They were to sound forth the praises of the One they represented and publicly glorify his name. They were to be courageous witnesses for Jehovah, the Universal Sovereign.

⁷ As had been true of fleshly Israel, members of spiritual Israel were the ones Jehovah called “the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.” (Isa. 43:21) Exposing all the false gods that were being worshipped at that time, those early Christians boldly proclaimed that Jehovah is the one true God. (1 Thess. 1:9) They bore witness to Jehovah and to Jesus “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the most distant part of the earth.”—Acts 1:8; Col. 1:23.

⁸ An intrepid member of the first-century “people for [Jehovah’s] name” was the apostle Paul. Standing before pagan philosophers, he boldly defended the sovereignty of Jehovah, “the God who made the world and all the things in it, being, as he is, Lord of heaven and earth.” (Acts 17:18, 23-25) Toward the end of his third missionary journey, Paul warned members of God’s

8. What warning did the apostle Paul give to God’s people in the first century?

name people: “I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:29, 30) This foretold apostasy had clearly manifested itself by the end of the first century.—1 John 2:18, 19.

⁹ After the death of the apostles, that apostasy blossomed and produced the churches of Christendom. Far from proving to be “a people for [Jehovah’s] name,” apostate Christians have even removed the divine name from many of their translations of the Bible. They have adopted pagan rituals and have dishonored God by their unscriptural dogmas, their “holy wars,” and their immoral conduct. Thus, for centuries, Jehovah had just a sprinkling of faithful worshippers on the earth but no organized “people for his name.”

REBIRTH OF GOD’S PEOPLE

¹⁰ In his parable of the wheat and the weeds, Jesus foretold the spiritual nighttime that would result from the apostasy. He said that “while men were sleeping,” the Devil would oversow with weeds the field where the Son of man had sown wheat seeds. Both would grow together until “the conclusion of the system of things.” Jesus explained that “the fine seed” represents “the sons of the Kingdom” and that “the weeds” are “the sons of the

9. With regard to the “people for [Jehovah’s] name,” what happened after the death of the apostles?

10, 11. (a) What did Jesus foretell in his parable of the wheat and the weeds? (b) How was Jesus’ parable fulfilled after 1914, and with what result?



During the “great tribulation,” we will need to remain closely associated with our local congregation

(See paragraphs 16-18)

wicked one.” During the time of the end, the Son of man would send forth his “reapers,” the angels, to separate the symbolic wheat from the weeds. The sons of the Kingdom would be gathered. (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) How did this come about, and what bearing does it have on Jehovah’s having a people on earth?

¹¹ “The conclusion of the system of things” began in 1914. During the war that broke out that year, the few thousand anointed Christians, “the sons of the Kingdom,” were in spiritual captivity to Babylon the Great. In 1919, Jehovah delivered them, making a clear distinction between them and “the weeds,” or imitation Christians. He gathered “the sons of the Kingdom” into an organized people, in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy: “Will a land be brought to birth in one day? Or will a nation be born all at once? Yet, as soon as Zion went into labor, she gave birth to her sons.” (Isa. 66:8) Zion, Jehovah’s organi-

zation of spirit beings, brought forth her spirit-anointed sons and organized them into a nation.

¹² Just like the early Christians, the anointed “sons of the Kingdom” were to be witnesses of Jehovah. (**Read Isaiah 43:1, 10, 11.**) As such, they would stand out as different by their Christian conduct and by their preaching “this good news of the Kingdom . . . for a witness to all the nations.” (Matt. 24:14; Phil. 2:15) In this way, they have brought many, in fact millions, into a righteous standing before Jehovah.—**Read Daniel 12:3.**

“WE WANT TO GO WITH YOU”

¹³ We have seen in the preceding article that in ancient Israel, foreigners could worship Jehovah acceptably, but

12. How have the anointed shown themselves to be “a people for [Jehovah’s] name” today?

13, 14. To worship and serve Jehovah acceptably, what must those who are not spiritual Israelites do, and how was this foretold in Bible prophecy?

such foreigners had to associate with Jehovah's covenant people. (1 Ki. 8:41-43) Similarly today, those who are not spiritual Israelites must associate with Jehovah's people, "the sons of the Kingdom"—Jehovah's anointed Witnesses.

¹⁴ The flocking of many humans to worship Jehovah with his people in this time of the end was foretold by two ancient prophets. Isaiah prophesied: "Many peoples will go and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.' For law will go out of Zion, and the word of Jehovah out of Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:2, 3) Likewise, the prophet Zechariah foretold that "many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah." He depicted them as "ten men out of all the languages of the nations" who, symbolically speaking, would take hold of the robe of spiritual Israel, saying: "We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people."—Zech. 8:20-23.

¹⁵ The "other sheep" "go with" the spiritual Israelites in the work of preaching the good news of the Kingdom. (Mark 13:10) They become a part of God's people, "one flock" with the anointed, under "the fine shepherd," Christ Jesus.—**Read John 10:14-16.**

FIND PROTECTION WITH JEHOVAH'S PEOPLE

¹⁶ After the destruction of Babylon the Great, there will be an all-out assault

15. In what work do the "other sheep" "go with" the spiritual Israelites?

16. How will Jehovah bring about the final phase of the "great tribulation"?

on Jehovah's people, and at that time we will need to be under the protection that Jehovah will provide for his servants. Since this attack will trigger the final part of the "great tribulation," it is Jehovah himself who will set the stage and choose the moment for this showdown. (Matt. 24:21; Ezek. 38:2-4) At that time, Gog will attack "a people regathered from the nations," Jehovah's people. (Ezek. 38:10-12) That attack will be the signal for the execution of Jehovah's judgments against Gog and his hordes. Jehovah will magnify his sovereignty and sanctify his name, for he says: "I will certainly . . . make myself known before the eyes of many nations; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah."—Ezek. 38:18-23.

¹⁷ When Gog begins the assault, Jehovah will tell his servants: "Go, my people, enter your inner rooms, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself for a brief moment until the wrath has passed by." (Isa. 26:20) At that crucial time, Jehovah will give us lifesaving instructions, and the "inner rooms" might well be connected with our local congregations.

¹⁸ If, therefore, we wish to benefit from Jehovah's protection during the great tribulation, we must recognize that Jehovah has a people on earth, organized into congregations. We must continue to take our stand with them and remain closely associated with our local congregation. With all our hearts, may we join the psalmist in proclaiming: "Salvation belongs to Jehovah. Your blessing is upon your people."—Ps. 3:8.

17, 18. (a) When Gog attacks Jehovah's people, what instructions will they receive? (b) If we want Jehovah's protection, what must we do?

How are elders and ministerial servants appointed in each congregation?

■ In the first century C.E., the apostle Paul told the elders who served in the congregation in Ephesus: “Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which *the holy spirit has appointed you* overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son.” (Acts 20:28) What role does holy spirit play in the appointment of elders and ministerial servants today?

First, holy spirit moved the Bible writers to record the qualifications for elders and ministerial servants. Sixteen different requirements of elders are listed at 1 Timothy 3:1-7. Further qualifications are found in such scriptures as Titus 1: 5-9 and James 3:17, 18. Qualifications for ministerial servants are outlined at 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12, 13. Second, those recommending and making such appointments specifically pray for Jehovah’s spirit to direct them as they review whether a brother meets the Scriptural requirements to a reasonable degree. Third, the individual being recommended needs to display the fruitage of God’s holy spirit in his own life. (Gal. 5:22, 23) So God’s spirit is involved in all aspects of the appointment process.

But who actually appoints such brothers? In the past, all recommendations involving the appointment of elders and ministerial servants were sent to the local branch office. There, brothers appointed by the Governing Body were assigned to review these recommendations and to make appropriate appointments. Next, the branch office would notify the body of elders. The elders, in turn, would inform the newly appointed men of their appointment, asking them if they were willing and actually qualified to accept the assignment. Finally, an announcement was made to the congregation.

But how were such appointments made in the first century? At times, the apostles made specific appointments, such as at the time they appointed seven men to care for the daily food distribution to widows. (Acts 6:1-6) However, those men may already have been serving as elders, that is, before being given this additional assignment.

Although the Scriptures do not explain in detail how every appointment was made back then, we do see some indication of how this was done. We are told that when Paul and Barnabas



Elders discuss a brother’s Scriptural qualifications with the circuit overseer (Malawi)

were on their way back home from their first missionary trip, “*they appointed elders* for them in each congregation, offering prayer with fasting, and they entrusted them to Jehovah, in whom they had become believers.” (Acts 14:23) Years later, Paul wrote to his traveling companion Titus, saying: “I left you in Crete so that you would correct the things that were defective and *make appointments of elders* in city after city, as I instructed you.” (Titus 1:5) Likewise, Timothy, who traveled extensively with the apostle Paul, appears to have been given similar authority. (1 Tim. 5:22) Clearly, then, these appointments were made by traveling overseers, not by the apostles and older men in Jerusalem.

With this Biblical precedent in mind, the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses has adjusted how the appointments of elders and ministerial servants are made. As of September 1, 2014, appointments are being made as follows: Each circuit overseer carefully reviews the recommendations being made in his circuit. During his visits to the congregations, he will try to get to know those who are recommended, working along with them in the ministry if at all possible. After discussing the recommendations with the local body of elders, the circuit overseer has the responsibility of appointing the elders and ministerial servants in the congregations in his circuit. In this way, the arrangement is closer to the first-century pattern.

Who handle the various roles in this process? As always, “the faithful and discreet slave” has the primary responsibility of feeding the domestics. (Matt. 24:45-47) This includes searching the Scriptures, with the help of the holy spirit, in order to provide direction on the practical application of Bible principles that have a bearing on the way the worldwide congregation is organized. The faithful slave also appoints all circuit overseers and Branch Committee members. In turn, each branch office provides practical assistance in implementing the direction given. Each body of elders has the solemn duty to review thor-

ROLES OF THOSE INVOLVED WITH APPOINTMENTS

GOVERNING BODY:

Gives direction on the practical application of Bible principles that have a bearing on the way the congregation is organized. Appoints circuit overseers and Branch Committee members.

BRANCH OFFICE:

Provides practical assistance in implementing the direction of the Governing Body.

BODY OF ELDERS:

Reviews thoroughly the Scriptural qualifications of the men it recommends for appointment.

CIRCUIT OVERSEER:

Carefully and prayerfully considers the recommendations made by the elders and then appoints the men who qualify.

BROTHERS RECOMMENDED:

Need to display the fruitage of the spirit and meet the Scriptural qualifications.

oroughly the Scriptural qualifications of the brothers they recommend for appointment in God’s congregation. Each circuit overseer has the serious responsibility to consider carefully and prayerfully the recommendations made by the elders and then to appoint the men who qualify.

When we understand how appointments are made, we appreciate more fully the role of holy spirit in this process. We then have greater confidence in and respect for those who have been appointed in the Christian congregation.—Heb. 13:7, 17.

Who are the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation chapter 11?

■ Revelation 11:3 speaks of two witnesses who would prophesy for 1,260 days. The account then says that the wild beast would “conquer them and kill them.” But after “three and a half days,” these two witnesses would be brought back to life, much to the amazement of all onlookers.—Rev. 11:7, 11.

Who are these two witnesses? The details of the account help us to identify them. First, we are told that they “are symbolized by the two olive trees and the two lampstands.” (Rev. 11:4) This reminds us of the lampstand and two olive trees described in the prophecy of Zechariah. Those olive trees were said to picture “the two anointed ones,” that is, Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua, “standing alongside the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zech. 4:1-3, 14) Second, the two witnesses are described as performing signs similar to those performed by Moses and Elijah.—Compare Revelation 11:5, 6 with Numbers 16:1-7, 28-35 and 1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-45.

What is the common denominator that links these references? In each case, the account refers to God’s anointed ones *who took the lead* during a difficult time of testing. So in the fulfillment of Revelation chapter 11, *the anointed brothers who took the lead* at the time of the establishment of God’s Kingdom in heaven in 1914 preached “in sackcloth” for three and a half years.

At the end of their preaching in sackcloth, these anointed ones were symbolically killed when they were thrown into prison for a comparatively shorter period of time, a symbolic three and a half *days*. In the eyes of the enemies of God’s people, their work had been killed, causing those opponents much joy.—Rev. 11:8-10.

However, true to the words of the prophecy, at the end of the three and a half days, the two witnesses were brought back to life. Not only were

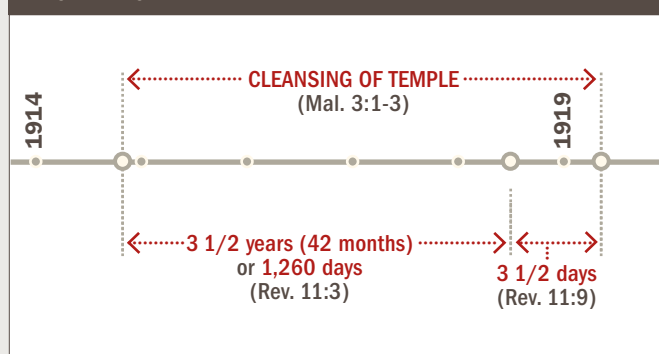
these anointed ones released from prison but those who remained faithful received a special appointment from God through their Lord, Jesus Christ. In 1919 they were among those who were appointed to serve as a “faithful and discreet slave” to care for the spiritual needs of God’s people during the last days.—Matt. 24:45-47; Rev. 11:11, 12.

Interestingly, Revelation 11:1, 2 links these events to a time when the spiritual temple would be measured, or evaluated. Malachi chapter 3 mentions a similar inspection of the spiritual temple, followed by a time of cleansing. (Mal. 3:1-4) How long did this inspection and cleansing work take? It extended from 1914 to the early part of 1919. This period of time includes both the 1,260 days (42 months) and the symbolic three and a half days referred to in Revelation chapter 11.

How happy we are that Jehovah arranged for this spiritual refining work to cleanse a special people for fine works! (Titus 2:14) Additionally, we appreciate the example set by the faithful anointed ones who took the lead during that time of testing and thereby served as the symbolic two witnesses.*

* For more information, see *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2013, page 22, paragraph 12.

PROPHETIC TIME LINE



Dawn Breaks in the Land of the Rising Sun

ON September 6, 1926, a Japanese-born pilgrim (traveling overseer) in the United States returned to Japan as a missionary. Waiting to welcome him was the lone subscriber to *The Watch Tower*, who had started a Bible study group in Kobe. The Bible Students had their first assembly on January 2, 1927, in that city. A total of 36 attended, and 8 were baptized. It was a fine start, but how could this small group reach Japan's 60 million people who needed to see the light of Bible truth?

In May 1927, enterprising Bible Students launched a public witnessing campaign to advertise a series of Bible lectures. For the first talk, to be held in Osaka, the brothers set up sidewalk signs and large billboards throughout the city and sent 3,000 invitations to prominent people. They distributed 150,000 handbills and advertised the talk in Osaka's major newspapers and on 400,000 train tickets. On the day of the talk, two airplanes flew over the city, scattering 100,000 handbills. Some 2,300 people filled Osaka Asahi Hall to capacity to hear the talk "The Kingdom of God Is at Hand." About a thousand others had to be turned away. After the talk, over 600 attendees remained for a question-and-answer session. During the following months, public Bible talks were given in Kyoto and other cities in western Japan.

In October 1927, the Bible Students arranged talks in Tokyo. Invitations again went out to key individuals—including the prime minister, members of parliament, and religious and military leaders. Posters, newspaper ads, as well as 710,000 handbills were used, and a total of 4,800 attended the three lectures in Japan's capital.



Katsuo and Hagino Miura



Public talk invitations were used in Tokyo and scattered from planes over Osaka

ZEALOUS COLPORTEURS

Colporteurs (pioneers) played a vital role in taking the Kingdom message to individual homes. Matsue Ishii, one of the first colporteurs in Japan, and her husband, Jizo, covered three fourths of the country, from Sapporo in the far north to Sendai, Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka, Kyoto, Okayama, and Tokushima. Sister Ishii and an older sister, Sakiko Tanaka, donned formal kimonos to visit high government officials. One of these requested 300 sets of the books *The Harp of God* and *Deliverance* to put in prison libraries.

Katsuo and Hagino Miura accepted books from Sister Ishii and readily recognized the truth. They were baptized in 1931 and became



A Great Jehu held six pioneers



A Baby Jehu accommodated two

colporteurs. Haruichi and Tane Yamada, and many of their relatives, embraced the Kingdom message some time prior to 1930. The Yamadas entered the colporteur work, and their daughter, Yukiko, went to serve at Bethel in Tokyo.

“JEHUS”—LARGE AND SMALL

Back then, automobiles were very expensive and the roads were bad. So Kazumi Minoura and other young colporteurs used house cars without engines. They nicknamed these Jehus after the hard-driving charioteer who became one of Israel’s kings. (2 Ki. 10:15, 16) Three Great Jehus each measured 7.2 feet (2.2 m) long, 6.2 feet (1.9 m) wide, and 6.2 feet (1.9 m) high and each could accommodate up to six pioneers. In addition, 11 bicycle-driven two-man Baby Jehus were built at the Japan branch. Kiichi Iwasaki, who helped to make the Jehus, recalled, “Each Jehu had a tent as well as a car battery to supply electricity for lights.” Colporteurs were shining the light of truth throughout Japan, pushing and pulling Jehus up and down mountains and across valleys from northerly Hokkaido to Kyushu in the south.

Colporteur Ikumatsu Ota stated: “When we arrived in a town, we set up our Jehu on a riverbank or in an open field. We first visited prominent men of the town, such as the mayor, and after

that we visited homes to introduce our literature. After covering the territory, we moved on to the next town.”

It was a “day of small beginnings” when that group of 36 Bible Students in Kobe held their first assembly. (Zech. 4:10) Just five years later—in 1932—103 colporteurs and publishers in Japan reported activity, placing more than 14,000 books. Today, well-organized public witnessing is being done in Japan’s metropolitan areas, and nearly 220,000 publishers are letting their light shine throughout the Land of the Rising Sun.—From our archives in Japan.



Sketches by Kiichi Iwasaki, who built the Jehus at Japan Bethel

