

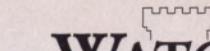
DECEMBER 15, 2004

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



*A Birth
to Be
Remembered*



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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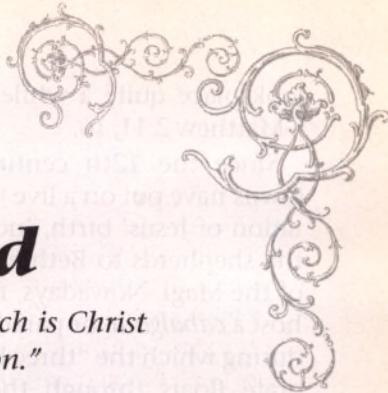
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A Birth to Be Remembered

'Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'—Luke 2:11, "King James Version."



SOME two thousand years ago, a woman in the town of Bethlehem gave birth to a male child. Few local residents realized the significance of this birth. But some shepherds, who were spending the night with their flocks in the field, saw a multitude of angels and heard them sing: "Glory in the heights above to God, and upon earth peace among men of goodwill."—Luke 2:8-14.

The shepherds then located Mary and her husband, Joseph, in a stable, just as the angels had indicated they would. Mary, who named the child Jesus, had laid him in a manger, or feeding trough, in the stable. (Luke 1:31; 2:12) Now, two thousand years later, about a third of all mankind professes to follow Jesus Christ. And the events surrounding his birth form the basis of a story that has likely been told more often than any other in human history.

Spain, a country with a strong Catholic tradition and a flair for traditional fiestas, has developed many ways to commemorate that unique night in Bethlehem.

The Spanish Christmas

Since the 13th century, the Nativity scene has been one of the most familiar aspects of Spanish celebrations. Many families make a small representation of the manger in which Jesus was laid. Clay figures depict the shep-

herds and the Magi (or "three kings"), as well as Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. Larger Nativity scenes with almost life-size figures are often set up near town halls during the Christmas period. Francis of Assisi apparently initiated this custom in Italy to direct people's attention to the Gospel account of Jesus' birth. Franciscan monks later popularized it in Spain and many other countries.

The Magi play a prominent role in Spanish Christmas celebrations, much like Santa Claus in other countries. The Magi supposedly give presents to Spanish children on January 6, *Día de Reyes* (Day of the Kings), as the Magi, according to popular belief, brought presents to the newborn Jesus. Few people are aware, however, that the Gospel account does not mention how many Magi visited Jesus. Rather than being kings, they are more accurately identified as astrologers.* Moreover, after the visit of the Magi, Herod killed all boys in Bethlehem "from two years of age and under" in his attempt to murder Jesus. That implies that their visit

* *La Sagrada Escritura—Texto y comentario por profesores de la Compañía de Jesús* (The Holy Scripture—Text and Commentary by Professors of the Company of Jesus) explains that "among the Persians, Medes, and Chaldeans, the Magi formed a priestly class that promoted occult sciences, astrology, and medicine." Nevertheless, by the Middle Ages, the group of Magi who went to see the young Jesus had been canonized and given the names Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthasar. Their remains are allegedly housed in the cathedral of Cologne, Germany.

took place quite a while after Jesus' birth.
—Matthew 2:11, 16.

Since the 12th century, some Spanish towns have put on a live theatrical representation of Jesus' birth, including the visit of the shepherds to Bethlehem and later that of the Magi. Nowadays, most Spanish cities host a *cabalgata*, or parade, every January 5, during which the "three kings" ride on elaborate floats through the city center, distributing candies to onlookers. Traditional Christmas decorations and *villancicos* (carols) serve to enliven the festive occasion.

Most Spanish families like to have a special supper on Christmas Eve (December 24). The traditional food includes such items as *turrón* (sweets made from almond and honey), marzipan, dried fruits, roast lamb, and seafood. Family members, even those who live far away, may make a special effort to come together for this occasion. During another traditional meal, on January 6, the family eats a *rosón de reyes*, a ring-shaped cake of "the Kings" that has a *sorpresa* (small figure) hidden inside. A similar

custom in Roman times enabled a slave whose portion contained the hidden item to be "king" for a day.

"The Happiest and Busiest Time of the Year"

Whatever local customs have developed, Christmas has now become the world's principal festive occasion. *The World Book Encyclopedia* describes Christmas as "the happiest and busiest time of the year for millions of Christians and some non-Christians throughout the world." Is that a good thing?

Clearly, the birth of Christ was a historic event. The fact that angels heralded it as a harbinger of "peace among men of goodwill" clearly testifies to its significance.

Nevertheless, "in the early days of Christianity, the Nativity was not celebrated as a festival," points out Spanish journalist Juan Arias. If this is the case, where did the Christmas celebration come from? What is the best way to remember the birth and life of Jesus? In the following article, you will find the answers to those questions.

How Should Jesus Christ Be Remembered?

Jesus Christ "was certainly one of the most influential people who ever lived."—*"The World Book Encyclopedia."*



GREAT men are usually remembered for what they did. So why do many remember Jesus for his birth rather than for his deeds? Throughout Christendom, most people can recount the events surrounding his birth. How many recall and strive to apply his su-

perlative teaching as found in the Sermon on the Mount?

Granted, Jesus' birth was remarkable, but his early disciples attached much more importance to what he did and to what he taught. Surely God never intended Christ's birth to eclipse his life as a mature man.



Yet, Christmas has succeeded in obscuring the person of Christ in a mire of Nativity legends and folklore.

Another disturbing question arises with regard to the nature of Christmas celebrations. If Jesus returned to the earth today, what would he think about the rank commercialism of Christmas? Two thousand years ago, Jesus visited the temple in Jerusalem. He was outraged by money changers and vendors who were taking advantage of a Jewish religious festival to make money. "Take these things away from here!" he said. "Stop making the house of my Father a house of merchandise!" (John 2: 13-16) Clearly, Jesus did not approve of mixing commerce and religion.

Many sincere Spanish Catholics express concern about the growing commercial nature of Christmas. Yet, such

a trend toward commercialism is probably inevitable in view of the roots of many Christmas practices. Journalist Juan Arias points out: "Those who, within Christianity, criticize the way Christmas has become 'paganized' and more devoted to jollity and consumerism than to religion, are generally unaware that even in its origin the Nativity... already incorporated many of the features of the Roman pagan festival [of the sun]."—*El País*, December 24, 2001.

In recent years, many Spanish journalists and encyclopedias have commented on the



pagan origins of traditional Christmas festivities, as well as their commercial overtones. Regarding the date for Christmas celebrations, the *Encyclopedía de la Religión Católica* frankly states: "The reason that the Roman Church decided to assign this date to the festival seems to be its tendency to replace pagan festivals with Christian ones. . . .

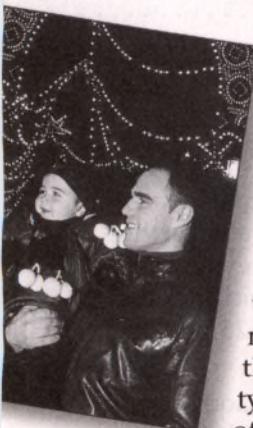
We know that in Rome at that time, the pagans consecrated December 25 as the celebration of *natalis invicti*, the birth of the 'invincible sun.'

The *Encyclopédia Hispánica* likewise notes: "The date of December 25 for the celebration of Christmas is not the result of a strict chronological anniversary but, rather, of the Christianization of the festivals of the winter solstice that were celebrated in Rome." How did the Romans celebrate the rise of the sun in the winter sky? By feasting, revelry, and the exchanging of presents. Since church authorities were loath to abolish such a popular festival, they "Christianized" it by calling it the birth of Jesus instead of the birth of the sun.

At the outset, in the fourth and fifth centuries, attachment to sun worship and its customs died hard. Catholic "Saint" Augustine (354-430 C.E.) felt obliged to exhort fellow believers not to celebrate December 25 as the pagans did in honor of the sun. Even today, the ancient Roman festivities seem to have the upper hand.

The Ideal Festival for Merrymaking and Marketing

Over the centuries, several factors have played a decisive role in molding Christmas



into the most popular, international celebration for merrymaking and marketing. Also, the customs of other winter festivals, especially those celebrated in northern Europe, were gradually incorporated into the Roman model.* And in the 20th century, salesmen and marketing specialists enthusiastically promoted any custom that could generate hefty profits.

What has been the result? The celebration of Christ's birth rather than the significance of it has become of paramount importance. In many cases, even the mention of Christ has practically disappeared from the traditional Christmas. "[Christmas] is a world festival, of a family nature, and everyone celebrates what he or she sees in it," observes the Spanish newspaper *El País*.

This comment reflects a growing tendency in Spain and many other countries

* The Christmas tree and the figure of Santa Claus are two striking examples.

throughout the world. While Christmas celebrations become ever more extravagant, knowledge of Christ diminishes. In essence, Christmas festivities have largely reverted to what they originally were in Roman times—revelry, feasting, and the exchanging of presents.

A Child Has Been Born to Us

If traditional Christmas has little to do with Christ, how should true Christians remember the birth and life of Christ? Seven centuries before Jesus' birth, Isaiah prophesied about him: "There has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder." (Isaiah 9:6) Why did Isaiah indicate that Jesus' birth and subsequent role would be so significant? Because Jesus would become a mighty ruler. He would be called Prince of Peace, and there would be no end to peace or to his princely rule. Fur-

Does the Bible Discourage Feasting and the Giving of Gifts?

The Giving of Gifts

The Bible approves of the giving of presents, Jehovah himself being called the Giver of "every good gift and every perfect present." (James 1:17) Jesus indicated that good parents would give gifts to their children. (Luke 11:11-13) Job's friends and family members gave Job gifts when he recovered his health. (Job 42:11) None of such giving, however, required specific feast days. It stemmed from the heart.—2 Corinthians 9:7.

Family Gatherings

Family gatherings can do much to unite family members, especially if they no longer

live in the same house. Jesus and his disciples attended a wedding feast in Cana, doubtless a large gathering of family and friends. (John 2:1-10) And in Jesus' illustration of the prodigal son, the father celebrated his son's return with a family banquet, which included music and dancing.—Luke 15:21-25.

Enjoying a Good Meal

The Bible frequently speaks of God's servants as enjoying good food with family, friends, or fellow worshipers. When three angels visited Abraham, he prepared a feast for them that included beef, milk, butter, and round cakes. (Genesis 18:6-8) Solomon de-

thermore, Jesus' rulership would be sustained "by means of justice and by means of righteousness."—Isaiah 9:7.

The angel Gabriel echoed Isaiah's proclamation when he announced Jesus' coming birth to Mary. "This one will be great and will be called Son of the Most High," he predicted. "And Jehovah God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule as king over the house of Jacob forever, and there will be no end of his kingdom." (Luke 1:32, 33) Clearly, the main significance of Jesus' birth lay in the work that Christ would accomplish as the appointed King of God's Kingdom. Christ's rule can benefit all, including you and your loved ones. In fact, the angels indicated that his birth would bring "peace on earth to those with whom [God] is pleased."—Luke 2:14, *Today's English Version*.

Who does not long to live in a world of peace and justice? But to enjoy the peace that Christ's rule will bring, we need to please God and have a good relationship

with him. Jesus said that the first step to such a relationship is to learn about God and Christ. "This means everlasting life," Jesus said, "their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

Once we know Jesus well, we need no longer wonder how he would like us to remember him. Would it be by eating, drinking, and exchanging presents on the same date as an ancient pagan festival? That seems unlikely. The night before he died, Jesus told his disciples what he preferred. "He that has my commandments and observes them, that one is he who loves me. In turn he that loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him."—John 14:21.

Jehovah's Witnesses have made an extensive study of the Holy Scriptures, which has helped them to understand what the commands of God and Jesus are. They would be pleased to assist you in gaining insight into those vital commands so that you can remember Jesus as he should be remembered.

scribed 'eating, drinking, and rejoicing' as a gift from God.
—Ecclesiastes 3:13; 8:15.

Clearly, God wants us to enjoy good food in the company of friends and family, and he approves of the giving of gifts. We have ample opportunity to do that at any time throughout the year.





FRIENDS OF GOD IN THE “*Friendly Islands*”

In 1932 a sailing vessel brought some priceless seeds to Tonga. The skipper of the boat gave the booklet “Where Are the Dead?” to Charles Vete. Charles was convinced that he had found the truth. Some time later, the headquarters of Jehovah’s Witnesses approved Charles’ request to translate the booklet into his native tongue. After completing the task, he received 1,000 printed booklets and began distributing them. That is how the seeds of truth about Jehovah’s Kingdom began to be spread in the kingdom of Tonga.

ON A map of the South Pacific, you can find Tonga just west of where the international date line meets the Tropic of Capricorn. Its largest island, Tongatapu, is located about 1,250 miles northeast of Auckland, New Zealand. Tonga is made up of 171 islands, 45 of which are inhabited. The famous 18th-century British explorer James Cook named these secluded isles the Friendly Islands.

With a population of about 106,000, Tonga is composed of three island groups—the main ones being Tongatapu, Ha’apai, and Vava’u. Of the five local congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses, three are in the most populous Tongatapu group, one is in Ha’apai, and the other is in Vava’u. To help people become God’s friends, Jehovah’s Witnesses have a missionary home and a translation office near Nuku’alofa, the capital.—Isaiah 41:8.

From the 1930’s, Charles Vete was widely known as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, although he did not get baptized until 1964. Others joined him in the witnessing work, and in 1966 a Kingdom Hall with a capacity of 30 was built. A congregation of 20 Kingdom publishers was formed in Nuku’alofa in 1970.

Since then, the fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah’s words can be clearly seen in the is-



Charles Vete,
1983

lands of Tonga: "Let them attribute to Jehovah glory, and in the islands let them tell forth even his praise." (Isaiah 42:12) The Kingdom work has continued to prosper, helping many to come into a relationship with Jehovah. At the district convention in Nuku'alofa in 2003, there was a peak attendance of 407, with 5 being baptized. Indicating the prospects for growth, 621 persons attended the Memorial in 2004.

Leading a Simple Life

Away from the capital, however, there is still a noticeable need for Kingdom proclaimers. For example, the 8,500 people who live on the 16 inhabited islands of the Ha'apai group need to hear more about Bible truth. Ha'apai consists mainly of low-lying, palm-covered islands with long, white sandy beaches. The ocean water has remarkable clarity, visibility often extending beyond 100 feet. It is an extraordinary experience to swim among the coral reefs and the more than one hundred species of colorful tropical fish. The villages are generally small. Houses, although modest, are built to withstand tropical cyclones.

Breadfruit and mango trees provide shade and food. Collecting and preparing food takes up a large part of daily life. Besides pork, the islanders enjoy the prolific harvest of the ocean. Family plots produce root crops and vegetables. Citrus trees grow in the wild; coconut trees and banana plants are abundant. Local knowledge of medicinal herbs, leaves, bark, and roots is passed on from one generation to another.

Of course, Ha'apai's most delightful asset is its friendly people, who fit into the tranquil environment. Simplicity is a way of life here. Most women are involved in crafts—making baskets, tapa cloth, and mats. While working, Tongan women sit, talk, sing, and laugh together under a shady tree, often with children and babies playing or sleeping nearby.



Making tapa cloth

Making tapa cloth: © Jack Fields/CORBIS; background of pages 8 and 9, and fishing: © Fred J. Eckert

And it is generally the women who at low tide harvest the reefs for shellfish and other edible sea creatures, as well as the crunchy seaweed that makes a delicious salad.

Most men spend their days gardening, fishing, carving, boatbuilding, and mending fishnets. Men, women, and children travel between islands in small, covered fishing boats to visit relatives, get medical attention, and trade or sell produce.

No Place Too Remote for the Good News

It was in this idyllic setting that two missionaries and two pioneer ministers arrived during the Memorial season of 2002. Some occasional contact had previously been made, and people in Ha'apai had received literature published by Jehovah's Witnesses, even studying the Bible with the Witnesses.

The four visiting Bible teachers had three objectives: to place Bible literature, start home Bible studies, and invite interested ones to the observance of the Lord's Evening Meal. All three objectives were attained. Ninety-seven people responded to the invitation to attend the Memorial of Jesus' death. Some of them traveled in open boats despite heavy rain and strong winds. Because of the

bad weather, many stayed over at the Memorial venue for the night, returning to their homes the next day.

The Memorial speaker's situation was no less challenging. "I don't have to tell you how daunting it is to give two Memorial discourses in a foreign language on the same evening," recalls the missionary who was the speaker. "You can guess how anxious I was. What a help prayer proved to be! I recalled words and sentence structures that I was hardly aware that I knew."

As a result of the evangelizers' cultivating existing interest in the Ha'apai islands, two married couples from that area were baptized. In one case, the husband took an interest in the Witnesses' literature while he was training to become a minister in the local church.

Although poor materially, this man and his wife used to make a sizable financial contribution when their names were called out at church during an annual fund-raising service. A Witness who had previously visited had invited the husband to open his Bible and read 1 Timothy 5:8. The apostle Paul wrote: "If anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith." This Bible principle touched the husband's heart. He realized that by acceding to the church's excessive demands, he was failing to provide the basic needs of his family. At the next annual collection service, although he had the money in his pocket, he could not forget 1 Timothy 5:8. When his name was called out, he courageously informed the priest that his family's needs took precedence. As a result, the couple was publicly belittled and berated by the church elders.

After studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, the man and his wife became publishers of the good news. Says the husband: "Bible truth has changed me. I am no longer cruel and harsh toward my family. I no longer drink excessively. People in my village can see the difference the truth has made in my life. I hope that they will come to love the truth as I do."

The Quest Used in the Search

A few months after the Memorial of 2002, another sailing vessel brought some priceless cargo to remote Ha'apai. The 60-foot yacht *Quest* from New Zealand plied its way through the islands of Tonga. On board were Gary and Hetty, along with their daughter Katie. Nine Tongan brothers and sisters and two missionaries accompanied them on two voyages. The local Witnesses helped in deftly navigating the boat, sometimes through uncharted reefs. These were not pleasure cruises. Those on board were there to teach Bible truth. They covered a wide expanse of ocean in visiting 14 islands. The Kingdom good news had never been preached in some of those islands.

How did the people respond? Generally, the seaborne preachers were met with a combination of curiosity, warmth, and traditional island hospitality. Once the islanders understood the purpose of the visit, they expressed deep appreciation. It was clear to the visiting Witness-



The "Quest" was used to spread the good news in Tonga

es that the island people respected God's Word and were conscious of their spiritual need.—Matthew 5:3.

Many times, the visitors would sit under tropical trees surrounded by people who had numerous questions on the Scriptures. After nightfall, Bible discussions continued in the homes. The people on one island called out to the departing Witnesses: "Don't go! Who will answer our questions when you leave?" One Witness noted: "It was always hard to leave behind so many sheeplike people who were hungering for the truth. Many seeds of truth have been planted." When the *Quest* arrived at one island, the Witnesses found everyone dressed in mourning garb. The town officer's wife had just died. He personally thanked the brothers for bringing a message of comfort from the Bible.

Some of the islands were not easily accessible. Hetty explains: "One island had no convenient landfall, only cliffs rising several feet straight out of the ocean. Approach was possible only with our tiny rubber dinghy. First, we had to throw our bags to the many willing hands on shore. Then, as the dinghy rose up to the ledge of the cliff, we had to jump before it dropped down again in the ocean swell."

Not all on board were intrepid seamen, however. After a two-week sail, the skipper wrote with regard to the return trip to

Translation team, Nuku'alofa



the main island of Tongatapu: "We have 18 hours of sailing ahead of us. We cannot do it in one stretch because of the seasick ones. We are pleased to head home but also very sad to leave behind so many who have now heard the Kingdom message. We leave them in Jehovah's care, with his holy spirit and angels helping them to grow spiritually."

Islands Full of Promise

Approximately six months after the departure of the *Quest*, two special pioneer evangelizers, Stephen and Malaki, were assigned to preach in the Ha'apai island group. There they joined the two recently baptized married couples in teaching the Bible. Lively discussions on doctrinal matters are taking place, and the publishers are making good use of the Bible.

On December 1, 2003, a congregation was formed in Ha'apai, the fifth in Tonga. Among those attending are many children. They have learned to be attentive. They sit quietly and are eager to share in audience-participation parts. The circuit overseer noted that "their knowledge of *My Book of Bible Stories* shows that parents are taking seriously their responsibility to inculcate Bible truth in their children." Clearly, those islands are full of promise for increased harvest of yet more friends of Jehovah.

More than 70 years ago, when Charles Vete translated the booklet *Where Are the Dead?* into his native tongue, Tongan, little did he realize the extent to which the Kingdom seed would take root in the hearts of his countrymen. From those small beginnings, Jehovah has continued to bless the ever-expanding proclamation of the good news in that corner of our globe. Today, it can truly be said that Tonga is among the remote islands of the sea that are turning to Jehovah, so to speak. (Psalm 97:1; Isaiah 51:5) The "Friendly Islands" are now home to many of Jehovah's friends.

JEHOVAH IS OUR HELPER

"My help is from Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth."—PSALM 121:2.

WHOM among us never needs a helping hand? The truth is that we all need help at times—to cope with a weighty problem, to endure a painful loss, to bear up under a difficult trial. When needing help, people often turn to a caring friend. Sharing a burden with such a friend may make it easier to bear. But there is only so much that a fellow human can do to help. Besides, others may not always be in a position to respond when help is needed.

² There is, however, a Helper who has unlimited power and resources. Furthermore, he assures us that he will never forsake us. He is the One identified by the psalmist who with full confidence declared: "My help is from Jehovah." (Psalm 121:2) Why was this psalmist convinced that Jehovah would help him? To answer that question, let us examine Psalm 121. Doing so will enable us to see why we too can confidently look to Jehovah as our Helper.

An Unfailing Source of Help

³ The psalmist began by pointing to Jeho-

- 1, 2. (a) Why can it be said that we all need help at times? (b) What kind of Helper is Jehovah?
3. To which mountains may the psalmist have raised his eyes, and why?

vah's creatorship as a basis for confidence: "I shall raise my eyes to the mountains. From where will my help come? My help is from Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1, 2) The psalmist did not raise his eyes to just any mountain. When these words were recorded, Jehovah's temple was situated in Jerusalem. That city, located high in the mountains of Judah, was Jehovah's figurative place of dwelling. (Psalm 135:21) The psalmist may have raised his eyes to the mountains of Jerusalem on which Jehovah's temple was built, confidently looking to Jehovah for help. Why was the psalmist so sure that Jehovah could help him? Because He is "the Maker of heaven and earth." In effect, the psalmist was saying, 'Surely there is nothing that can prevent the all-powerful Creator from helping me!'—Isaiah 40:26.

⁴ The psalmist next explained that Jehovah is ever alert to the needs of his servants: "He cannot possibly allow your foot to totter. The One guarding you cannot possibly be drowsy. Look! He will not be drowsy nor go to sleep, he that is guarding Israel."

4. How did the psalmist show that Jehovah is ever alert to the needs of his people, and why is that a comforting thought?



(Psalm 121:3, 4) It is not possible for God to allow those trusting in him “to totter” or to experience a fall from which they cannot recover. (Proverbs 24:16) Why not? Because Jehovah is like a wide-awake shepherd guarding his sheep. Is that not a comforting thought? Not for a moment will he close his eyes to the needs of his people. Day and night they are the objects of his vigilance.

⁵ Confident that Jehovah is the loyal Protector of his people, the psalmist wrote: “Jehovah is guarding you. Jehovah is your shade on your right hand. By day the sun itself will not strike you, nor the moon by night.” (Psalm 121:5, 6) For a traveler on foot in the Middle East, a place of shade would provide welcome protection from the blazing sun. Jehovah is like a shade to his people, protecting them from the scorching heat of calamity. Note that Jehovah is said to be at the “right hand.” In ancient warfare, the soldier’s right hand was to some extent unprotected by the shield, which was held in the left hand. A loyal friend might provide protection by standing and fighting at the soldier’s right. Like such a friend, Jehovah loyally stands beside his worshipers, ever ready to help them.

⁶ Will Jehovah ever stop helping his people? The very notion is inconceivable. The psalmist concluded: “Jehovah himself will guard you against all calamity. He will guard your soul. Jehovah himself will guard your going out and your coming in from now on and to time indefinite.” (Psalm 121:7, 8) Note that the writer shifted the emphasis from the present to the future. Earlier, in verse 5, the psalmist said: “Jehovah is guarding you.” But in these verses, the psalmist

5. Why is Jehovah said to be at the “right hand”?
- 6, 7. (a) How does the psalmist assure us that Jehovah will never stop helping his people? (b) Why can we share the psalmist’s confidence?

wrote: “Jehovah himself *will* guard you.” True worshipers are thus assured that Jehovah’s help will extend into the future. No matter where they go, no matter what calamity they face, they will never be outside the reach of his helping hand.—Proverbs 12:21.

⁷ Indeed, the writer of Psalm 121 was confident that the almighty Creator watches over his servants with the gentleness of a caring shepherd and the vigilance of an alert guard. We have every reason to share the psalmist’s confidence, for Jehovah does not change. (Malachi 3:6) Does this mean that we will always receive physical protection? No, but as long as we look to him as our Helper, he will safeguard us against all things that could bring us spiritual harm. It is only natural to ask, ‘How does Jehovah help us?’ Let us examine four ways in which he does so. In this article, we will discuss how he aided his servants in Bible times. In the next article, we will consider how he helps his people today.

Help From Angels

⁸ Jehovah has at his command millions upon millions of angels. (Daniel 7:9, 10) These spirit sons faithfully carry out his will. (Psalm 103:20) They are well aware that Jehovah has great love for his human worshipers and that he wants to help them. Not surprisingly, the angels have a keen interest in the welfare of God’s earthly servants. (Luke 15:10) Surely, then, the angels must delight in being used by Jehovah to assist humans. In what ways did Jehovah use the angels to help his human servants in ancient times?

⁹ Angels were empowered by God to

8. Why is it not surprising that the angels have a keen interest in the welfare of God’s earthly servants?
9. Give an example of how angels were empowered by God to protect faithful humans.

protect and deliver faithful humans. Two angels helped Lot and his daughters to escape the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 19:1, 15-17) A single angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers who were threatening Jerusalem. (2 Kings 19:35) When Daniel was thrown into a lions' pit, Jehovah "sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lions." (Daniel 6:21, 22) An angel released the apostle Peter from prison. (Acts 12:6-11) The Bible mentions many other examples of angelic protection, confirming what Psalm 34:7 says: "The angel of Jehovah is camping all around those fearing him, and he rescues them."

¹⁰ On occasion, Jehovah used the angels *to encourage and strengthen* faithful humans. A touching example is found in Daniel chapter 10. At the time, Daniel was perhaps close to 100 years of age. The prophet was very discouraged, evidently because of the desolated state of Jerusalem and the delay in rebuilding the temple. He also became disturbed after seeing a frightening vision. (Daniel 10:2, 3, 8) God lovingly dispatched an angel to encourage him. More than once, the angel reminded Daniel that he was "very desirable" in God's eyes. The result? The elderly prophet told the angel: "You have strengthened me."—Daniel 10:11, 19.

¹¹ Jehovah also used angels *to direct* the work of preaching the good news. An angel directed Philip to preach about Christ to an Ethiopian eunuch, who then got baptized. (Acts 8:26, 27, 36, 38) A short time later, it was God's will that the good news be preached to uncircumcised Gentiles. In a vision, an angel appeared to Cornelius, a God-fearing Gentile, and directed him to send for

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10. How did Jehovah use an angel to encourage the prophet Daniel?
 11. What is one example of how angels were used to direct the work of preaching the good news?

the apostle Peter. When messengers from Cornelius found Peter, they said: "Cornelius . . . was given divine instructions by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear the things you have to say." Peter responded, and the first uncircumcised Gentiles thus became part of the Christian congregation. (Acts 10:22, 44-48) Imagine how you would feel knowing that an angel helped you to come in contact with a rightly disposed person!

Help Through Holy Spirit

¹² Shortly before he died, Jesus assured his apostles that they would not be left without help. The Father would give them a "helper, the holy spirit." (John 14:26) The apostles had good reason to believe that the holy spirit could help them. After all, the inspired Scriptures are filled with examples of how Jehovah used holy spirit, the strongest force available, to aid his people.

¹³ On many occasions, holy spirit was used *to empower* humans to do Jehovah's will. Holy spirit empowered the Judges to deliver Israel. (Judges 3:9, 10; 6:34) That same spirit empowered first-century Christians to continue preaching with boldness despite all manner of opposition. (Acts 1:8; 4:31) Their success in carrying out their ministry gave powerful evidence of the operation of holy spirit. What else could explain how "unlettered and ordinary" individuals could spread the Kingdom message throughout the then known world?—Acts 4:13; Colossians 1:23.

¹⁴ Jehovah also used his holy spirit *to enlighten* his people. With the help of God's

12, 13. (a) Why did Jesus' apostles have good reason to believe that the holy spirit could help them? (b) In what way did holy spirit empower the first-century Christians?

14. How has Jehovah used his holy spirit to enlighten his people?

The yeartext for 2005 will be: “My help is from Jehovah.”—Psalm 121:2.



spirit, Joseph was able to interpret Pharaoh's prophetic dreams. (Genesis 41:16, 38, 39) By means of his spirit, Jehovah caused his purposes to be revealed to humble ones but hidden from proud ones. (Matthew 11:25) Thus, concerning the things Jehovah provides “for those who love him,” the apostle Paul said: “It is to us God has revealed them through his spirit.” (1 Corinthians 2:7-10) Only with the help of holy spirit could a person truly understand God's will.

Help From God's Word

¹⁵ Jehovah's inspired Word is “beneficial for teaching,” and it enables God's servants to be “fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) The Bible contains many examples of how God's people in ancient times were helped by portions of his Word that had already been recorded.

¹⁶ The Scriptures helped *to provide sound guidance* for God's worshipers. When Joshua was entrusted with the responsibility of leading Israel, he was told: “This book of the law [which had been recorded by Moses] should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an undertone read in it day and night, in order that you may take care to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way successful and then you will act wisely.” Note that God did not promise Joshua some miraculous infusion of wisdom. Rather, if Joshua read and meditated on the “book of the law,” then he would act wisely.—Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3.

15, 16. What was Joshua told to do in order to act wisely?

¹⁷ God's written Word also helped *to reveal* his will and purpose. Daniel, for example, discerned from Jeremiah's writings how long Jerusalem would remain desolate. (Jeremiah 25:11; Daniel 9:2) Consider, too, what happened during the reign of King Josiah of Judah. By that time, the nation had strayed from Jehovah, and the kings had evidently failed to make a personal copy of the Law and follow it. (Deuteronomy 17:18-20) But while the temple was being repaired, “the very book of the law,” possibly by the hand of Moses, was found. This was perhaps the original text, which had been completed some 800 years earlier. After hearing its contents read, Josiah realized how far the nation had departed from Jehovah's will, and the king took firm measures to do what was written in the book. (2 Kings 22:8; 23:1-7) Is it not clear that God's people in ancient times were helped by the portions of the Sacred Scriptures that were available to them?

Help Through Fellow Believers

¹⁸ The help that Jehovah provides often comes through fellow believers. Really, God is responsible whenever one true worshiper helps another. Why can we say that? For two reasons. First, God's holy spirit is involved. That spirit produces fruitage, including love and goodness, in those who seek its influence. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Hence, when one of God's servants is moved to help

17. How were both Daniel and King Josiah helped by the portions of the Scriptures that were available to them?

18. Why can we say that Jehovah is responsible whenever one true worshiper helps another?

another, this is evidence of Jehovah's spirit at work. Second, we are made in God's image. (Genesis 1:26) This means that we have the ability to reflect his attributes, including his kindness and compassion. So whenever one servant of Jehovah extends help to another, the real Source of such help is the one whose likeness is being reflected.

¹⁹ In Bible times, how did Jehovah provide help through fellow believers? Jehovah often caused one of his servants *to give counsel* to another, as when Jeremiah gave lifesaving counsel to Baruch. (Jeremiah 45:1-5) On occasion, true worshipers were moved *to provide material help* to fellow believers, as when Christians in Macedonia and Achaia showed eagerness to help their needy brothers in Jerusalem. The apostle Paul noted that such generosity rightly produced "an expression of thanks to God."—2 Corinthians 9:11.

19. According to the Bible record, how did Jehovah provide help through fellow believers?

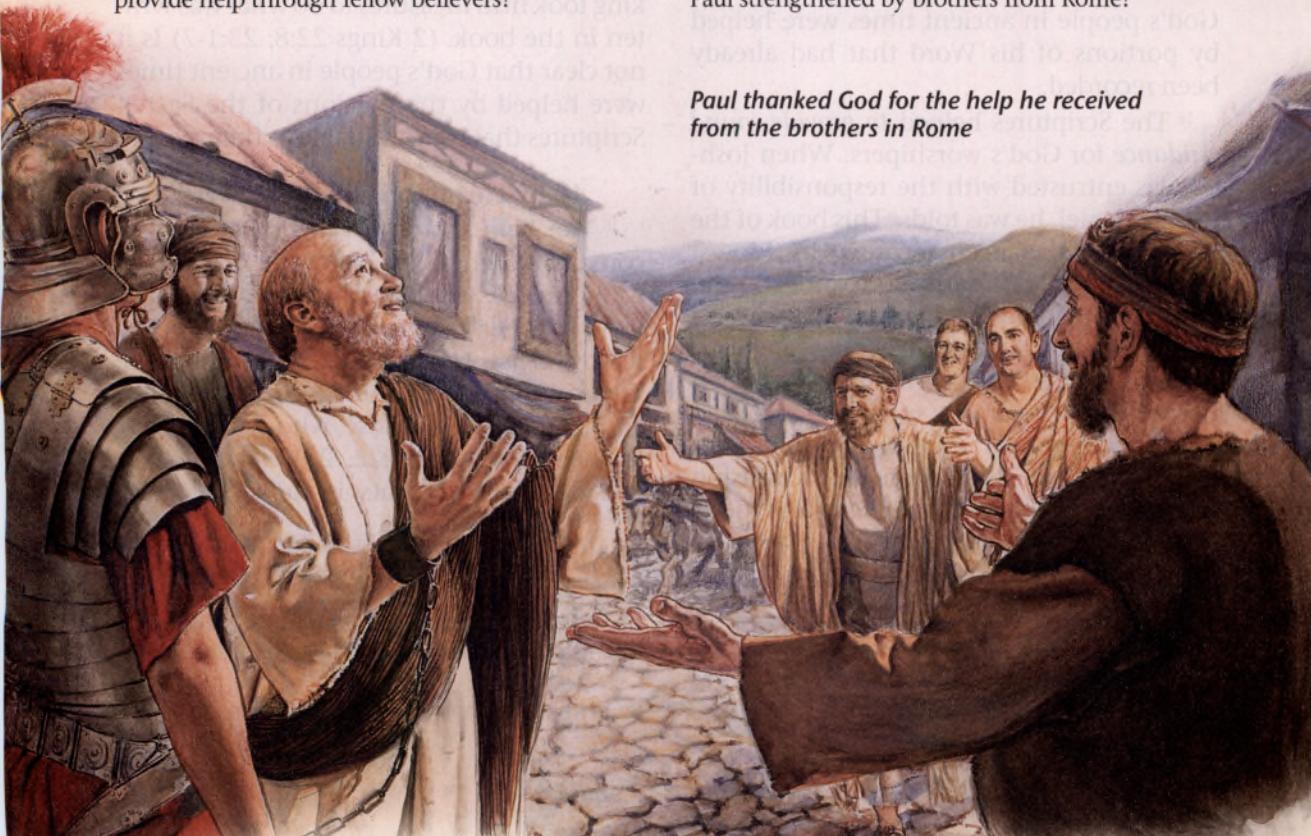
²⁰ Especially touching are accounts of how Jehovah's servants reached out *to strengthen and encourage* one another. Consider an example involving the apostle Paul. While en route to Rome as a prisoner, Paul traveled along the Roman highway known as the Appian Way. The final leg of the journey was particularly unpleasant, for it brought travelers to a swampy, lowland area.* The brothers in the congregation in Rome knew that Paul was coming. What would they do? Would they wait in the comfort of their homes in the city until Paul arrived and then come to greet him?

²¹ Bible writer Luke, who accompanied Paul on the trip, tells us what happened:

* The Roman poet Horace (65–8 B.C.E.), who made the same journey, commented on the discomforts of this stretch of the trip. Horace described the Marketplace of Appius as "crammed with boatmen and stingy tavern-keepers." He complained about the "cursed gnats and frogs" and the "villainous" water.

20, 21. Under what circumstances was the apostle Paul strengthened by brothers from Rome?

Paul thanked God for the help he received from the brothers in Rome



"From there [Rome] the brothers, when they heard the news about us, came to meet us as far as the Marketplace of Appius and Three Taverns." Can you picture the scene? Knowing that Paul was coming, a delegation of brothers journeyed from Rome to meet him. Part of the delegation was waiting at the Marketplace of Appius, the well-known post station about 46 miles outside of Rome. The rest of the brothers were waiting at Three Taverns, a rest stop about 36 miles outside the city. How did Paul react? Luke reports: "Upon catching sight of them, Paul thanked God and took courage." (Acts 28:15) Just imagine—the mere sight of those brothers who had exerted themselves to travel all that way was a source of strength and comfort to Paul! And whom did Paul thank for this helpful support? He thanked the one responsible, Jehovah God.

²² Clearly, the inspired record of God's dealings speaks for itself. He is a Helper without equal. Appropriately, Jehovah's Witnesses will have as their yeartext for 2005 the words of Psalm 121:2: "My help is from Jehovah." But how does Jehovah help us today? This will be considered in the next article.

22. What is our yeartext for 2005, and what will be considered in the next article?

Do You Recall?

In what ways did Jehovah provide help—

- by means of the angels?
- through his holy spirit?
- with his inspired Word?
- through fellow believers?

DO YOU ACCEPT JEHOVAH'S HELP?

"Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid."—HEBREWS 13:6.

IMAGINE that you are hiking along a mountain trail. You are not alone, though, for a guide has offered to accompany you, and he is the best guide there is. He has far more experience and stamina than you do, but he patiently walks near you. He notices that you stumble occasionally. Out of concern for your safety, he extends his hand to help you over a particularly dangerous spot. Would you refuse his help? Of course not! Your safety is at stake.

1, 2. Why is it important that we accept Jehovah's help and guidance in life?

² As Christians, we have a challenging path to follow. Must we walk that cramped road alone? (Matthew 7:14) No, the Bible shows that the best Guide we could ever find, Jehovah God, allows humans to walk with him. (Genesis 5:24; 6:9) Does Jehovah help his servants as they walk? He says: "I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, the One saying to you, 'Do not be afraid. I myself will help you.'" (Isaiah 41:13) Like the guide in our illustration, Jehovah kindly extends his helping hand and his friendship to those who seek to walk with

him. Surely none of us would want to refuse his aid!

³ In the preceding article, we discussed four ways in which Jehovah helped his people in ancient times. Does he help his people in the same ways today? And how can we

servants? Yes, they do. Granted, today they do not appear visibly in order to deliver true worshipers from danger. Even in Bible times, angels only rarely intervened in such a way. Most of what they did was invisible to human eyes, as is the case today. Nonetheless, servants of God who realized that the angels were there to support them found such knowledge very encouraging. (2 Kings 6:14-17) We have good reason to feel similarly.

⁵ Jehovah's angels are particularly interested in a special work that involves us. What work is that? We can find the answer at Revelation 14:6: "I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." This "everlasting good news" is clearly linked with the "good news of the kingdom," which, as Jesus foretold, "will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations" before the end of this system of things. (Matthew 24:14) Of course, the angels are not preaching directly. Jesus gave humans this weighty commission. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Is it not good to know that as we fulfill that commission, we have help from holy angels, wise and powerful spirit creatures?

⁶ There is considerable evidence of angelic support for our work. For example, we often hear that in the course of their ministry, Jehovah's Witnesses come across a person who had only recently prayed to God for help in finding the truth. Such experiences occur far too often to be dismissed as mere coincidences. As a result of such angelic help, more and more people are learning to

It is good to know that the angels are supporting the preaching work

make sure that we accept any of such help? Let us consider those questions. Doing so, we can become more confident that Jehovah truly is our Helper.—Hebrews 13:6.

Angelic Help

⁴ Do angels help Jehovah's present-day

3. We will consider what questions in the course of this discussion?
4. Why may God's servants today be confident of angelic support?

5. How does the Bible show that the angels are involved in the preaching work today?

6, 7. (a) What indicates that the angels are supporting our preaching work? (b) How may we be sure of receiving the support of Jehovah's angels?



do as the “angel flying in midheaven” proclaimed: “Fear God and give him glory.”—Revelation 14:7.

⁷ Do you long to have the support of Jehovah’s mighty angels? Then do all you can to be absorbed in your ministry. (1 Corinthians 15:58) As we freely give of ourselves in this special assignment from Jehovah, we can count on the help of his angels.

Help From the Chief of the Angels

⁸ Jehovah also provides us with another type of angelic help. Revelation 10:1 describes an awesome “strong angel” whose “face was as the sun.” This visionary angel evidently pictures the glorified Jesus Christ in heavenly power. (Revelation 1:13, 16) Is Jesus really an angel? In a sense, yes, for he is an archangel. (1 Thessalonians 4:16) What is an archangel? That word means “principal angel,” or “chief angel.” Jesus is the mightiest of all of Jehovah’s spirit sons. Jehovah has put him in command of all His angelic armies. This archangel is a powerful source of help indeed. In what ways?

⁹ The aged apostle John wrote: “If anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one.” (1 John 2:1) Why did John suggest that Jesus is our “helper” particularly when we “commit a sin”? Well, we sin daily, and sin leads to death. (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 6:23) However, Jesus laid down his life as a sacrifice for our sins. And he is at the side of our merciful Father to plead in our behalf. Each of us needs such help. How may we accept it? We need to repent of our sins and seek forgiveness on the basis of Jesus’ sacri-

8. Jesus occupies what lofty position in heaven, and why is that reassuring to us?

9, 10. (a) How does Jesus serve as our “helper” when we sin? (b) What help may we find in Jesus’ example?

fice. We also need to avoid repeating our sins.

¹⁰ In addition to dying in our behalf, Jesus set the perfect example for us. (1 Peter 2:21) His example guides us, helps us to chart our course so that we can avoid serious sin and can please Jehovah God. Are we not glad to have such help? Jesus promised his followers that another helper would be provided.

The Help of the Holy Spirit

¹¹ Jesus promised: “I will request the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, the spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive.” (John 14:16, 17) This “spirit of the truth,” or holy spirit, is not a person but a force—Jehovah’s own active force. It is powerful beyond measure. It is the force that Jehovah used in creating the universe, in performing spectacular miracles, and in providing visionary revelations of his will. Since Jehovah is not using his spirit in those specific ways today, does that mean that we do not need it?

¹² On the contrary! In these “critical times hard to deal with,” we need Jehovah’s spirit more than ever. (2 Timothy 3:1) It

11, 12. What is Jehovah’s spirit, how powerful is it, and why do we need it today?

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Why Many Doubt That Religion Can Unite Mankind

How to Protect Your Children by Means of Godly Wisdom

Beware of Customs That Displease God

strengthens us to bear up under trials. It helps us to cultivate beautiful qualities that draw us closer to Jehovah and to our spiritual brothers and sisters. (Galatians 5:22, 23) How, then, can we benefit from this marvelous help from Jehovah?

¹³ First, we need to pray for holy spirit. Jesus said: "If you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!" (Luke 11:13) Yes, Jehovah is the best Father imaginable. If in faith we sincerely ask him for holy spirit, it is inconceivable that he would deny us this gift. The question, then, is, Do we ask for it? We have good reason to make that request in our prayers every day.

¹⁴ Second, we accept that gift by working in harmony with it. To illustrate: Suppose a Christian is struggling with a tendency to view pornography. He has prayed for holy spirit to help him resist this filthy habit. He has sought counsel from Christian elders, and they have advised him to take decisive action, refraining from even going near such debasing material. (Matthew 5:29) What if he ignores their counsel and exposes himself to further temptation? Is he working in harmony with his prayer for the holy spirit to help him? Or is he, rather, running the risk of grieving God's spirit and losing out on this gift? (Ephesians 4:30) Really, all of us need to do everything we can to make sure that we continue to receive this wonderful help from Jehovah.

13, 14. (a) Why may we be sure that Jehovah willingly supplies his holy spirit to his people? (b) By what sort of action might we show that we do not really accept the gift of the holy spirit?

Help From God's Word

¹⁵ The Bible has been a source of help to Jehovah's faithful servants for many centuries. Rather than taking the Holy Scriptures for granted, though, we need to keep in mind what a powerful source of help they are. Accepting that help involves effort. We need to make Bible reading a part of our regular routine.

¹⁶ Psalm 1:2, 3 says of the godly man: "His delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and

night. And he will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed." Do you see the point of that passage? It is easy to read those words and conclude that they merely paint a pretty picture of a peaceful setting—a shade tree growing by a river. How pleasant it would be to take an afternoon nap in such a spot!

But this psalm is not inviting us to think about rest. It is painting quite a different picture, one that suggests hard work. How so?

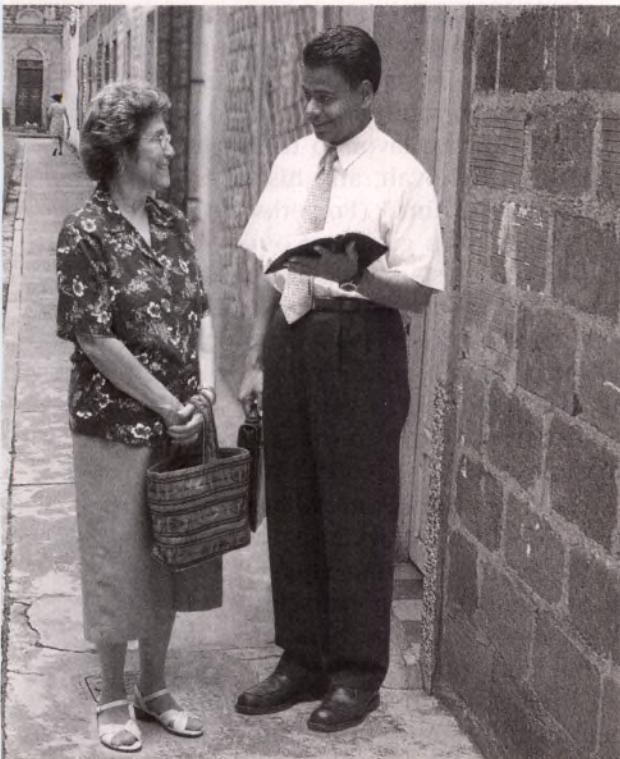
¹⁷ Notice that the tree here is not merely a shade tree growing by chance next to a river. It is a fruit-bearing tree, deliberately "planted" in a chosen spot—"by streams of water." How could one tree grow near more than one stream? Well, in an orchard of fruit trees, the owner might well dig irrigation ditches to bring water to the roots of his valuable trees. Ah, now the point comes into

15. How can we show that we do not take the Bible for granted?

16, 17. (a) How does Psalm 1:2, 3 describe the rewards of reading God's law? (b) How does Psalm 1:3 paint a picture of hard work?



focus! If in a spiritual sense we flourish like that tree, it is because much work has been done in our behalf. We are associated with an organization that brings the pure waters of truth right to us, but we must do our part. We need to put ourselves in a position to soak up this precious water, engaging in the meditation and research needed in order to bring the truths of God's Word into our



Jehovah may use one of our fellow believers to bring us the comfort we need

mind and heart. In that way, we too will produce good fruitage.

¹⁸ The Bible does us no good if it lies unopened on a shelf. Neither is it a charm, or a talisman—as if we could shut our eyes, let

18. What is needed in order to find the Bible's answers to our questions?

our Bible fall open at random, and then expect the answer to our question to appear on the page before us. When we face decisions, we need to dig for the "knowledge of God" as if for a buried treasure. (Proverbs 2:1-5) Diligent and careful research is often needed in order to find Scriptural counsel that addresses our specific needs. We have many Bible-based publications to help us in our search. As we use these to dig eagerly for the gems of wisdom in God's Word, we are truly making use of Jehovah's help.

Help Through Fellow Believers

¹⁹ Jehovah's human servants have always been a source of help to one another. Has Jehovah changed? Not at all. No doubt each of us can think of instances in which we received just the help we needed at the right time from our fellow believers. For instance, can you recall some article in *The Watchtower* or *Awake!* that comforted you when you needed it or helped you to solve a problem or face a challenge to your faith? Jehovah brought you that help by means of "the faithful and discreet slave" assigned to provide "food at the proper time."—Matthew 24:45-47.

²⁰ Often, though, the help we receive from fellow believers is more direct. A Christian elder gives a talk that touches our heart, or he makes a shepherding call that helps us through a difficult time, or he offers us kindly counsel that helps us to see and overcome a weakness. One thankful Christian writes regarding the help an elder gave her: "In field service, he took the time to draw me out. Just the night before, I had prayed to

19. (a) Why may articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* be viewed as help provided by means of fellow believers? (b) How have you been helped by a particular article in one of our journals?

20. In what ways do Christian elders prove to be "gifts in men"?

Jehovah, asking for someone I could talk to. That next day, this brother spoke to me in a compassionate manner. He helped me to see how Jehovah had been helping me for years. I am thankful to Jehovah for sending this elder to me." In all such ways, Christian elders show that they are "gifts in men," provided by Jehovah through Jesus Christ to help us endure on the road to life.—Ephesians 4:8.

²¹ Besides the elders, each faithful Christian wants to apply the inspired command to keep "an eye, not in personal interest upon just [his] own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others." (Philippians 2:4) When those in the Christian congregation apply that counsel, beautiful acts of kindness result. For example, one family suffered a sudden, compound tragedy. The father had taken his young daughter to the store with him. On the way home, they were in an automobile accident. The daughter was killed; the father, severely injured. Upon his release from the hospital, he was at first so disabled that he could do nothing for himself. His wife was too distraught emotionally to care for him alone. So a couple in the congregation took this grieving couple into their home and cared for them for several weeks.

21, 22. (a) What results when those in the congregation apply the counsel found at Philippians 2:4? (b) Why do even small acts of kindness matter?

What Do You Think?

How does Jehovah provide the help we need today—

- by means of the angels?
- through his holy spirit?
- with his inspired Word?
- through fellow believers?

²² Of course, not all acts of kindness involve such tragedy and personal sacrifice. Some help that we receive is on a much smaller scale. But no matter how small the kindness, we appreciate it, do we not? Can you think of times when a kind word or a thoughtful act from a brother or sister gave you just the help you needed? Jehovah often cares for us in such ways.—Proverbs 17:17; 18:24.

²³ Would you like Jehovah to use you as a means of helping others? That privilege is open to you. In fact, Jehovah appreciates such effort on your part. His Word says: "He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He will repay to him." (Proverbs 19:17) Great joy comes from giving of ourselves to our brothers and sisters. (Acts 20:35) Neither the joy of giving such help nor the uplift of receiving it comes to those who deliberately isolate themselves. (Proverbs 18:1) Hence, let us be faithful in gathering together at Christian meetings so that we can encourage one another.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

²⁴ Is it not a pleasure to contemplate the ways in which Jehovah helps us? Although we do not live at a time when Jehovah is performing spectacular miracles to carry out his purposes, we need not feel deprived. What truly matters is that Jehovah gives us all the help we need in order for us to remain faithful. And if we endure together in faith, we will live to see Jehovah's most spectacular and glorious acts in all history! Let us be resolved to accept and make full use of Jehovah's loving help so that we may echo the words of our text for the year 2005: "My help is from Jehovah."—Psalm 121:2.

23. How does Jehovah view it when we endeavor to help one another?

24. Why should we not feel deprived because of not witnessing Jehovah's spectacular miracles of the past?

Graduation Day —A Beautiful Day



WE have been blessed with a beautiful day. The sun is bright. The sky is blue. The grass is green. Birds are singing. We have the setting for a beautiful day, and we are not going to be disappointed. Jehovah is not a God of disappointment. He is a God of blessings."

With those remarks, Brother Samuel Herd, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, began the graduation program of the 117th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. That was on September 11, 2004. The fine program included upbuilding Bible-based counsel as well as local experiences and experiences from the missionary field. Yes, it was a beautiful day for all 6,974 attending at the Watchtower Educational Center in Patterson, New York, and at complexes in Brooklyn and Wallkill, linked by audio and video.

Encouraging Words for the Students

John Kikot, who is a member of the United States Branch Committee, offered encouraging words on the theme "Maintain Joy as a Missionary." He pointed out that Gilead students are known for their joy, as was evident at this graduation. The instruction from the Scriptures during the school term brought the students joy, and they were now in a position to help others experience similar joy. How? By giving of themselves in their ministry as missionaries. Jesus said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20: 35) As they imitate Jehovah God, the generous "happy God," who provides the truth to others, the new missionaries will be able to maintain their own joy.—1 Timothy 1:11.

Next on the program was another member of the Governing Body, David Splane, whose theme was "How Are You Going to Get Along?" There is no doubt that it is good and pleasant to dwell in unity, though this may require becoming "all things to people of all sorts." (1 Corinthians 9: 22; Psalm 133:1) Brother Splane mentioned that the grad-

uating students would be dealing with many others in the missionary work—people in the territory, fellow missionaries, brothers and sisters in their new congregation, and those at the branch office directing the preaching and teaching work. He provided practical suggestions on how to make interpersonal relationships as pleasant as possible: Get to know the local language, be sensitive to local customs, respect the privacy of fellow missionaries, and be obedient to those taking the lead.
—Hebrews 13:17.

CLASS STATISTICS

Number of countries represented: 11

Number of countries assigned to: 22

Number of students: 48

Average age: 34.8

Average years in truth:
18.3

Average years in full-time ministry: 13.4



117th Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Thompson, E.; Norvell, G.; Powell, T.; Kozza, M.; McIntyre, T. (2) Reilly, A.; Clayton, C.; Allan, J.; Blanco, A.; Muñoz, L.; Rustad, N. (3) Guerrero, Z.; Garcia, K.; McKerlie, D.; Ishikawa, T.; Blanco, G. (4) McIntyre, S.; Cruz, E.; Guerrero, J.; Ritchie, O.; Avellaneda, L.; Garcia, R. (5) Powell, G.; Fiskå, H.; Muñoz, V.; Baumann, D.; Shaw, S.; Brown, K.; Brown, L. (6) Shaw, C.; Reilly, A.; Peloquin, C.; Münch, N.; McKerlie, D.; Ishikawa, K. (7) Münch, M.; Peloquin, J.; Kozza, T.; Avellaneda, M.; Allan, K.; Ritchie, E.; Norvell, T. (8) Cruz, J.; Baumann, H.; Clayton, Z.; Fiskå, E.; Thompson, M.; Rustad, J.

Next, Gilead instructor Lawrence Bowen asked, "What Do You Think?" He reminded the students that those who 'judged from the outward appearance' did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. (John 7:24) As imperfect humans, all need to be on guard against 'thinking the thoughts of men' rather than "God's thoughts." (Matthew 16:22, 23) Even spiritual people must continue to adjust their thinking. As with a ship at sea, adjustments now can mean the difference between reaching the goal and suffering spiritual shipwreck. Continual study of the Bible in its context helps us think "God's thoughts."

Wallace Liverance, another instructor in Gilead School, concluded this part of the program. Based on Isaiah 55:1, his theme was "What Will You Buy?" He encouraged the students to "buy" the refreshment, joy, and sustenance that come from God's prophetic message for our day. Isaiah's prophecy likened this word of God to water, wine, and milk. How can it be bought "without money and without price"? Brother Liverance explained that it is by paying attention to Bible prophecy and exchanging unspiritual thoughts and ways for God's thoughts and ways. (Isaiah 55:2, 3, 6, 7) By doing this, the

new missionaries can be sustained in their foreign assignments. Imperfect men often think that happiness depends on striving for material comfort. "Don't buy that," the speaker urged. "Don't buy into that thinking. Make sure to set aside time for meaningful study of God's prophetic Word. It can refresh you, strengthen you, and bring you joy in your missionary assignment."

Delightful Student Experiences and Interviews

The students had a regular share in the preaching activity. Under the direction of Mark Noumair, another Gilead instructor, several from the class reenacted experiences that highlighted the theme "Not Ashamed of the Good News." (Romans 1:16) The audience enjoyed listening to how these seasoned ministers witnessed from house to house, on the street, and in shopping centers. Students who knew other languages took the initiative in their congregation's territory to reach people speaking those languages. Others put to good use the Bible-based publications provided by Jehovah's Witnesses, using such on return visits and when starting home Bible studies. They were "not ashamed" to preach the good news.

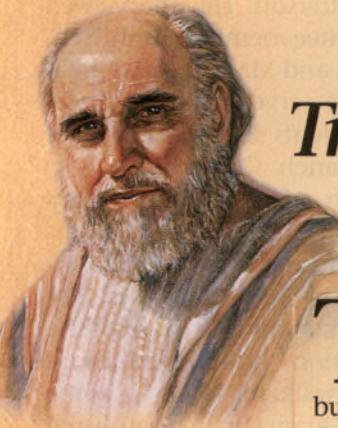
Brother William Nonkes, who is assigned to the Service Department, conducted interviews with experienced missionaries from Burkina Faso, Latvia, and Russia. They shared practical advice centered on the theme "Jehovah Lovingly Rewards Faithful Ones." One of the brothers interviewed encouraged the students to remember Gideon's army of 300 soldiers. Each soldier had an assignment that contributed to the success of Gideon's campaign. (Judges 7:19-21) Similarly, missionaries who remain in their assignments are rewarded.

"Become All Things to People of All Sorts" was the theme highlighted in the interviews conducted next by Samuel Roberson, who is

an instructor at Patterson. He interviewed four Branch Committee members, from Senegal, Guam, Liberia, and Madagascar. A total of 170 missionaries serve in these lands. The graduating students learned from the comments how Branch Committees help new missionaries to adapt to their assignments. That often means learning customs that might seem unusual by Western standards. For example, in some lands it is very common to see men, including those in the Christian congregation, holding hands as friends while they walk together. In some places under the Guam branch, unusual foods are served. But others have adapted, and the new missionaries can too.

Guy Pierce, a member of the Governing Body, developed the subject "Remain Loyal to 'the Kingdom of Our Lord.'" He reminded the audience: "Jehovah created with a purpose. He had something in mind for his creation. His purpose for this globe has not changed. It moves irresistibly toward its completion. Nothing can alter that." (Genesis 1:28) Brother Pierce encouraged all to submit loyally to God's sovereignty despite the difficulties that have arisen because of the sin of the first man, Adam. "We are living in the hour of judgment. We have little time left to reach honesthearted ones to help them know the truth. Use the time well to reach others with the good news of the Kingdom," urged Brother Pierce. Those loyally supporting God's Kingdom can count on his backing.—Psalm 18:25.

In the closing part, the chairman read greetings and expressions of good wishes from branches around the globe. Then he presented diplomas to the graduating students, one of whom read a letter from the class, expressing heartfelt appreciation for the training received. It was a fitting conclusion to a most beautiful day that will long be remembered by all in attendance.



Where True Worship and Paganism CLASHED



THE ruins of ancient Ephesus, on the west coast of Turkey, have been the site of intense archaeological research for more than a century. Several buildings have been reconstructed, and numerous finds have been studied and interpreted by scientists. As a result, Ephesus is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Turkey.

What has been discovered about Ephesus? What picture can today be painted of that fascinating ancient metropolis? A visit to both the ruins of Ephesus and the Ephesus Museum in Vienna, Austria, will help us understand how true worship and pagan religion clashed in Ephesus. First, some background.

A Coveted Site

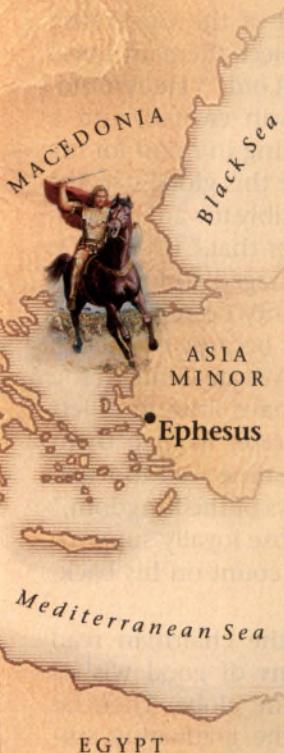
Unrest and migration marked Eurasia during the 11th century B.C.E. It was then that Ionian Greeks set out to colonize the west coast of Asia Minor. Those early settlers came in contact with people known for their worship of a mother-goddess, a deity that would later be known as the Ephesian Artemis.

In the mid-seventh century B.C.E., nomadic Cimmerians came from the Black Sea in the north to plunder Asia Minor. Later, about 550 B.C.E., there arose King Croesus of Lydia, a powerful ruler famed for his enormous wealth. With the expansion of the Persian Empire, King Cyrus subjugated the Ionian cities, including Ephesus.

In 334 B.C.E., Alexander of Macedonia commenced his campaign against Persia, thus becoming the new ruler of Ephesus. After Alexander's untimely death in 323 B.C.E., Ephesus became involved in a power struggle among his generals. In 133 B.C.E., Attalus III, the childless king of Pergamum, bequeathed Ephesus to the Romans, making it part of the Roman province of Asia.

True Worship Clashes With Paganism

When the apostle Paul came to Ephesus toward the end of his second missionary tour in the first century C.E., he found a city of some 300,000 residents. (Acts 18:19-21) During his third missionary tour, Paul re-



turned to Ephesus and with renewed boldness spoke in the synagogue concerning the Kingdom of God. After three months, however, opposition from the Jews intensified, and Paul chose to give his daily talks in the school auditorium of Tyrannus. (Acts 19:1, 8, 9) His preaching activity went on for two years, accompanied by extraordinary works of power, such as miraculous healings and the casting out of demons. (Acts 19:10-17) No wonder many became believers! Yes, Jehovah's word prevailed, so that a great number of former practitioners of magical arts willingly burned their valuable books.—Acts 19:19, 20.

Paul's successful preaching not only moved many to give up the worship of the goddess Artemis but also aroused the ire of those promoting such pagan worship. The making of silver shrines of Artemis was a profitable business. With their trade threatened, a certain Demetrius incited the silversmiths to riot.—Acts 19:23-32.

The confrontation climaxed with the crowd shouting hysterically for two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:34) After the uproar subsided, Paul encouraged his fellow Christians once more and then moved on. (Acts 20:1) His departure to Macedonia, however, did not check the decline of the doomed cult of Artemis.

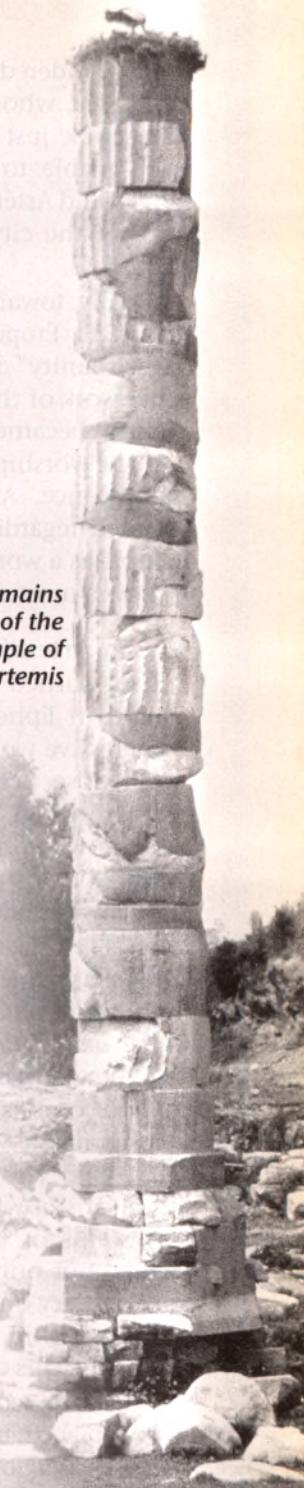
The Temple of Artemis Totters

The cult of Artemis was deeply entrenched in Ephesus. Before the time of King Croesus, the mother-goddess Cybele was the central character of religious life in that area. By setting up a mythical genealogical link from Cybele to the Hellenic pantheon, Croesus hoped to establish a religious figure acceptable to both Greeks and non-Greeks. With his support, in the mid-sixth century B.C.E., work began on the temple of Cybele's successor, Artemis.

The temple was a milestone in Greek architecture. Never before had such large blocks of marble been used to create a building of this kind and size. That temple was destroyed by fire in 356 B.C.E. The equally magnificent rebuilt temple was an important source of employment and a major attraction for pilgrims. Erected on a platform about 239 feet wide by 418 feet long, the rebuilt temple was approximately 164 feet wide and 343 feet long. It was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. However, not everyone was happy with it. The philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus likened the dark approach to the altar to the darkness of vileness, and he considered temple morals worse than those of beasts. To most, however, the sanctuary of Artemis in Ephesus appeared as if it would never fall into decline. History proved otherwise. The book *Ephesos—Der neue Führer* (Ephesus—The New Guide) states: "By the second century, the worship of Artemis and of other established deities of the pantheon plummeted."

In the third century C.E., Ephesus was rocked by a severe earthquake. Furthermore, the impressive riches of the temple of Artemis

Remains
of the
temple of
Artemis



were plundered by seafaring Goths from the Black Sea, who then set the temple on fire. The book just mentioned says: "Defeated and unable to protect her own dwelling, how could Artemis be considered the protectress of the city for much longer?"—Psalm 135:15-18.

Finally, toward the end of the fourth century C.E., Emperor Theodosius I confirmed "Christianity" as the State religion. Soon the stonework of the once prestigious temple of Artemis became a quarry for building materials. The worship of Artemis sank into total insignificance. An unnamed observer commented regarding an epigram praising the temple as a wonder of the ancient world: "It is now a most desolate and wretched place."

From Artemis to the "Mother of God"

Paul warned the older men of the congregation in Ephesus that after his departure "oppressive wolves" would appear and men would rise from among them and "speak twisted things." (Acts 20:17, 29, 30) That is exactly what happened. Events reveal that false worship prevailed in Ephesus in the form of apostate Christianity.

In 431 C.E., Ephesus was the site of the third ecumenical council, where the issue of the nature of Christ was discussed. *Ephesos—Der neue Führer* explains: "The victory of the Alexandrians, who held that Christ was only of one nature, namely the divine, . . . was complete." The consequences were far-reaching. "The decision reached at Ephesus, by means of which Mary was elevated from the status of *Christ-bearer* to that of *God-bearer*, not only provided the basis for the cult of Mary but also produced the first great schism within the church. . . . The debate persists to this day."

Thus, the worship of Cybele and Artemis was replaced by the worship of Mary the "God-bearer" or the "mother of god." As the

book states, "the Cult of Mary in Ephesus . . . remains to this date a living tradition, which could not be explained apart from the Cult of Artemis."

In the Dustbin of History

After the decline of the worship of Artemis came the downfall of Ephesus. Earthquakes, malaria, and the gradual silting up of the harbor made life in the city ever more difficult.

By the seventh century C.E., Islam had begun its sweeping expansion. Islam did not restrict itself to unifying Arab tribes under its banner. Arab fleets plundered Ephesus throughout the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. The fate of Ephesus was sealed once and for all when the harbor silted up completely and the city became a heap of ruins. Of that once magnificent metropolis, only one small settlement named Aya Soluk (now Selçuk) remained.

A Walk Through the Ruins of Ephesus

To get a sense of the old glory of Ephesus, one can visit its ruins. If you start a tour from the upper entrance, you will immediately be rewarded with a magnificent view of the Street of the Curetes down to the Library of Celsus. On the right-hand side of the street, the Odeum—a small theater built in the second century C.E.—will catch your interest. With a seating capacity of about 1,500, it was likely used not only as a council chamber but also for public entertainment. The Street of the Curetes is lined on both sides with buildings, such as the State agora where matters of



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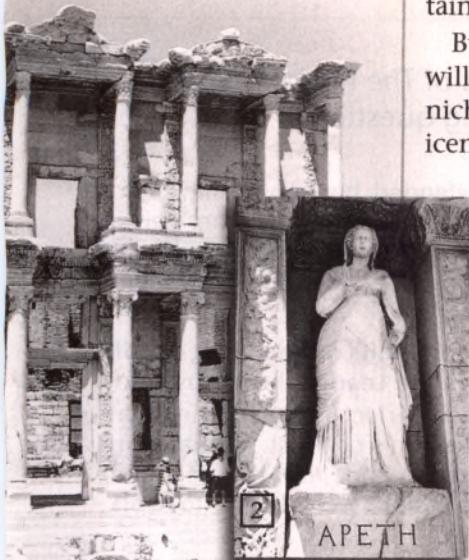
State were discussed, the temple of Hadrian, some public fountains, and terrace houses—abodes of distinguished Ephesians.

Built in the second century C.E., the elegant Library of Celsus will impress you with its beauty. Its numerous scrolls were kept in niches in a large reading room. The four statues in the magnificent facade portrayed typical qualities expected from a top Roman civil servant such as Celsus, namely: Sophia (wisdom), Arete (virtue), Ennoia (devotion), and Episteme (knowledge or understanding). The original statues can be seen in the Ephesus Museum in Vienna. Adjacent to the forecourt of the library, a monumental door leads you to the Tetragonos agora, the marketplace. On this enormous square, which was surrounded by covered promenades, the people went about their regular business activities.

Next, you come to Marble Road, which leads to the great theater. With the final extensions made at the time of imperial Rome, the theater seated about 25,000 spectators. Its facade was extravagantly decorated with columns, reliefs, and statues. You can vividly picture the great commotion Demetrius the silversmith stirred up among the crowds assembled there.

The street that stretches from the great theater to the city harbor is magnificent. It is about 1,700 feet long and 36 feet wide, arrayed with columns on both sides. The theater gymnasium and the harbor gymnasium, both of which were reserved for physical training, were also built along this route. The impressive harbor gate at the bottom of the street was the gateway to the world, and here our short tour through some of the world's most fascinating ruins comes to an end. The Ephesus Museum in Vienna houses a wooden model of this historic metropolis as well as numerous monuments.

Going through the museum and seeing the statue of the Ephesian Artemis, one cannot help thinking of the endurance of the early Christians in Ephesus. They had to live in a city steeped in spiritism and blinded by religious prejudice. The Kingdom message met with bitter opposition from worshipers of Artemis. (Acts 19:19; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 2: 1-3) In that inhospitable environment, true worship took root. This worship of the true God will also prevail when false religion of our day meets its end, just as the ancient worship of Artemis did.—Revelation 18:4-8.



1. Library of Celsus

2. Close view of Arete

3. Marble Road, leading to the great theater



Do You Remember?

Have you appreciated reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*?

Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

- **What might a Christian do in the face of emotional and spiritual tiredness?**

We need to identify the cause of our weariness. It may help to take inventory of our habits and possessions, putting off unnecessary weights. We can set realistic goals according to our circumstances. Caring for our spiritual health is important and should involve regular prayer and meditation.—8/15, pages 23-6.

- **Why do Jehovah's Witnesses take the number 144,000 literally?**

After the apostle John was told about the 144,000, he saw "a great crowd, which no man was able to number." (Revelation 7:4, 9) If the number 144,000 were symbolic, the force of the contrast would be lost. Jesus spoke of those who will rule with him as a "little flock." (Luke 12:32)—9/1, page 30.

- **Why could an Israelite sell an unbled dead animal to a foreigner?**

A foreigner or an alien resident who did not become a proselyte was not under the Law. So an Israelite was permitted to give or sell such animals to him. (Deuteronomy 14:21) But a proselyte was bound by the Law and would not eat the unbled meat of such an animal. (Leviticus 17:10)—9/15, page 26.

- **What is biomimetics, and why might it be of interest to Christians?**

It is the field of science that seeks to mimic designs found in nature. For example, the Wright brothers designed an airplane after studying large birds in flight. Thus, biomimetics can move a Christian to give glory to the Creator.—10/1, page 9.

- **Who was mentioned at 2 Corinthians 12: 2-4 as caught away into paradise?**

That passage comes right after verses in

which Paul defended his apostleship. Since the Bible does not speak of any other person who had such an experience and since it is Paul who tells us of it, likely Paul had this vision.—10/15, page 8.

- **What are some traits of Jesus that qualify him to serve as the Leader chosen by God?**

Jesus maintained perfect integrity, being honest and upright in his conduct. He was completely dedicated to God. Jesus had deep concern for people and was willing to work.—11/1, pages 6-7.

- **Where will the demons be during the Millennium?**

We can logically conclude that during Christ's Millennial Reign, they will be abyssed along with Satan. (Revelation 20:1-3) Genesis 3:15 foretold the bruising of the serpent in the head, which involves his being abyssed during the Millennium. His seed includes the wicked angels, or demons. That they have shown fear of the abyss indicates that they are aware of this forthcoming restraint. (Luke 8: 31)—11/15, pages 30-1.

- **Why should a person be cautious about drinking alcoholic beverages, even if he avoids doing so to the point of being visibly drunk?**

Some people show little sign of drunkenness even after consuming a number of drinks. However, one may gradually develop a dependency on alcohol and become "enslaved to a lot of wine." (Titus 2:3) Jesus warned about getting "weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking." (Luke 21:34, 35) Drinking does not have to reach the level of drunkenness before it makes a person drowsy and lazy—physically as well as spiritually.—12/1, pages 19-21.

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- "Lend, not hoping for anything back" (Lu 6:35), 10/15
- Literal camel and needle? (Mt 19:24; Mr 10:25; Lu 18:25), 5/15
- Paul shipwrecked on Malta? 8/15
- "Perfect love" (1Jo 4:18), 10/1
- "Satan already fallen from heaven" (Lu 10:18), 8/1
- "Unbelievers" (2Co 6:14), 7/1
- What Jubilee foreshadowed, 7/15
- What occurred, who was endangered? (Ex 4:24-26), 3/15
- Where do we find olive leaf? (Ge 8:11), 2/15
- Why Israelite men could marry captives, 9/15
- Why Jesus let Thomas but not Mary Magdalene touch him, 12/1
- Why Judah have sex with seeming prostitute? (Ge 38:15), 1/15
- Why Michal have teraphim? (1Sa 19:13), 6/1

'Glad for My Training'

YOUNG Kazuna was stunned when her teacher suggested that she enter an English speech contest. The contest was open to all high schools in Japan's large northern island of Hokkaido, but her school had never entered a student before. On the day of the contest, Kazuna was tense because she had to compete with about 50 other students. She became even more nervous when she spotted two judges whose native language was English.



meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. In preparation for the contest, Kazuna paid special attention to the use of the microphone, speaking with warmth and enthusiasm, using gestures, audience contact, and other subjects taught in the Theocratic Ministry School.

Please accept our invitation to come to observe this school, conducted weekly at a local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. See for yourself how both young and old benefit. The meeting is open to the public. For further information on the school nearest to your home, please contact Jehovah's Witnesses in your area.

The winners were announced, beginning with the winner of the lowest prize. When Kazuna's name was finally called, she was dumbfounded. She and her teacher, sitting next to her, stared at each other in amazement. Still shocked, Kazuna went to the stage and received her trophy—for first prize!

"This was possible only because of the training Jehovah's organization provides through the Theocratic Ministry School," explained a happy Kazuna. "I'm so glad that I have received this training." That school, which Kazuna has shared in since she was small, is one of the congregation