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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



How to Find Real Happiness

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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.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Can You Be Truly Happy?
- 4 How to Find Real Happiness
- 8 What Is the Spiritual Paradise?
- 12 Rejoicing for Those Who Walk in the Light
- 17 Salvation for Those Who Choose the Light
- 23 Sustained by Jehovah All My Days
- 28 Cyril and Methodius—Bible Translators Who Invented an Alphabet
- 32 Bloodless Surgery—"A Major Medical Trend"

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

APRIL 9-15:

Rejoicing for Those Who Walk in the Light.
Page 12. Songs to be used: 63, 111.

APRIL 16-22:

Salvation for Those Who Choose the Light.
Page 17. Songs to be used: 190, 143.

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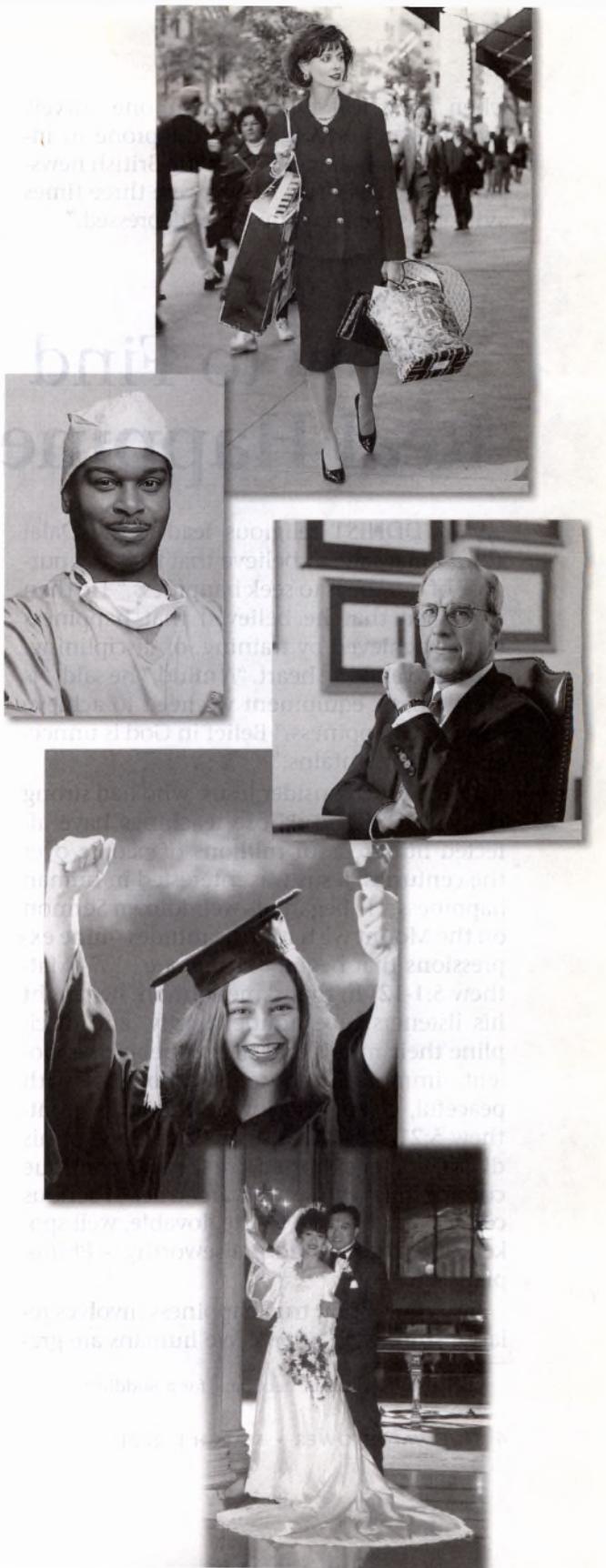
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Can You Be Truly Happy?

GEORGE greeted everybody with a smile. To him, life was a precious gift to be enjoyed. His happiness and optimism were his trademark—even more so as he started to suffer the pangs of old age. Till the day he died, George was known as a happy person. Are you happy like George? Do you view each new day as a gift to be enjoyed? Or does the prospect of a new day make you apathetic or even apprehensive? Is something robbing you of happiness?

Happiness has been defined as a state of well-being that is relatively permanent. It is characterized by emotions ranging from contentment to a deep and intense joy and by a natural desire for the state to continue. Does happiness like that really exist?

Today, society promotes the view that people would be happy if only they were rich enough. Millions keep up a hectic pace in their frantic efforts to get rich. In doing so, many sacrifice personal relationships and other important things in life. Like ants on an anthill, they are constantly rushing about, and they have little time for reflection or for one another. Understandably, "the number of people diagnosed as depressed keeps going up," says a report in the *Los Angeles Times*, "and the age of onset [of depression] keeps going down. . . . Antidepressants are on the drug company best-seller list." Millions take illicit drugs or try to drown their problems with alcohol. Some go on spending sprees



when they feel depressed. In one survey, "women emerged as the most prone to indulge in retail therapy," says the British newspaper *The Guardian*. "They were three times as likely as men to shop when depressed."

How to Find Real Happiness

A BUDDHIST religious leader, the Dalai Lama, said: "I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness." He then explained that he believed that happiness can be achieved by training, or disciplining, the mind and the heart. "A mind," he said, "is all the basic equipment we need to achieve complete happiness." Belief in God is unnecessary, he maintains.*

In contrast, consider Jesus, who had strong faith in God and whose teachings have affected hundreds of millions of people over the centuries. Jesus was interested in human happiness. He began his well-known Sermon on the Mount with nine beatitudes—nine expressions that begin: "Happy are . . ." (Matthew 5:1-12) In that same sermon, he taught his listeners to examine, purify, and discipline their minds and hearts—replacing violent, immoral, and selfish thoughts with peaceful, clean, and loving thoughts. (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28; 6:19-21) As one of his disciples later exhorted, we should "continue considering" things that are 'true, of serious concern, righteous, chaste, lovable, well spoken of, virtuous, and praiseworthy.'—Philippians 4:8.

Jesus knew that true happiness involves relationships with others. We humans are gre-

However, true happiness is not found in a store, a bottle, a pill, a syringe, or a bank account. Happiness is not for sale; it is free. Where can we find such a precious gift? We will discuss that in the following article.

How to Find Real Happiness

garious by nature, so we cannot be truly happy if we isolate ourselves or if we are constantly in conflict with those around us. We can be happy only if we feel loved and if we love others. Fundamental to such love, Jesus taught, is our relationship with God. Here especially, Jesus' teaching departs from that of the Dalai Lama, for Jesus taught that humans cannot be truly happy independent of God. Why is that so?—Matthew 4:4; 22:37-39.

Think of Your Spiritual Needs

One of the beatitudes is: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) Why did Jesus say this? Because, unlike animals, we have spiritual needs. Created in God's image, we can to a degree cultivate divine attributes, such as love, justice, mercy, and wisdom. (Genesis 1:27; Micah 6:8; 1 John 4:8) Our spiritual needs include the need to have meaning in our life.

How can we satisfy such spiritual needs? Not through transcendental meditation or mere introspection. Rather, Jesus said: "Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth." (Matthew 4:4) Notice, Jesus said that God is the source of "every utterance" vital to our life. Some questions only God can help us to answer. That insight is especially timely today, given the proliferation of theo-

* Belief in God is not necessary for a Buddhist.

ries about life's purpose and the way to happiness. Bookstores devote entire sections to works that promise readers health, wealth, and happiness. Internet sites dealing specifically with happiness have been set up.

Nevertheless, human thinking in these areas is often misguided. It tends to play to selfish desires or to the ego. It is based on limited knowledge and experience, and quite often it rests on false premises. For instance, a growing trend among writers of self-help books is to base their ideas on the theory of "evolutionary psychology," which assumes that human emotions are rooted in our supposed animal ancestry. The truth is, any effort to find happiness that is based on a theory that ignores the role of our Creator cannot be valid and will ultimately lead to disappointment. An ancient prophet said: "The wise ones have become ashamed. . . . Look! They have rejected the very word of Jehovah, and what wisdom do they have?"—Jeremiah 8:9.

Jehovah God knows our makeup and what will make us truly happy. He knows why he put man on the earth and what the future holds, and he shares that information with us in the Bible. What he reveals in that inspired book strikes a responsive chord in rightly disposed individuals and inspires happiness. (Luke 10:21; John 8:32) This was the case with two of Jesus' disciples. They were disconsolate following his death. But after learning from the mouth of the resurrected Jesus himself about his role in God's purpose for mankind's salvation, they said: "Were not our hearts burning as he was speaking to us



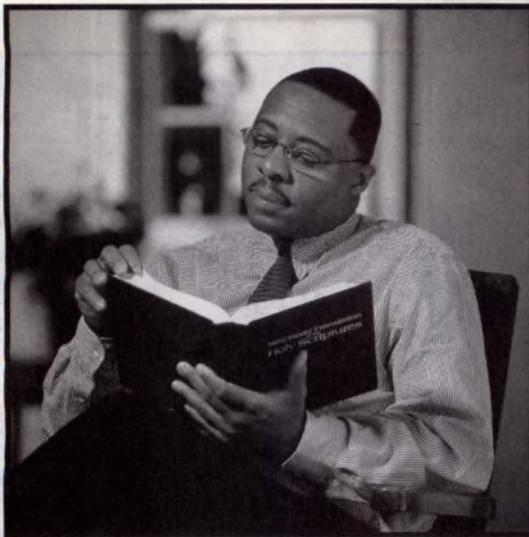
Happiness cannot be found by amassing wealth, isolating oneself, or trusting in man's limited knowledge

on the road, as he was fully opening up the Scriptures to us?"—Luke 24:32.

Such joy intensifies when we allow Bible truth to guide our life. In this regard, happiness can be likened to a rainbow. It appears when conditions are favorable, but it becomes more brilliant—even becoming a double rainbow—when conditions are perfect. Let us now look at a few examples of how the application of Bible teachings can make for greater happiness.

Keep Your Life Simple

First, look at Jesus' counsel on the matter of wealth. After counseling against making the pursuit of wealth the main thing in life, he made a striking expression. He said: "If, then, your eye is simple, your whole body will be bright." (Matthew 6:19-22) Essentially, he said that if we avidly pursue wealth, power, or any of the other goals people set for themselves, we will lose out on more important things. After all, as Jesus said on another occasion, "even when a person has an



*A life based on obeying God's Word
is a happy life*

abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15) If we put first the things that are *really* important, such as our relationship with God, family concerns, and other related matters, then our "eye" will be "simple," uncluttered.

Notice, Jesus was not advocating asceticism or extreme self-denial. After all, Jesus himself was not an ascetic. (Matthew 11:19; John 2:1-11) Rather, he taught that those who view life as little more than an opportunity to amass wealth essentially miss out on life.

Commenting on some who became very wealthy early in life, a psychotherapist in San Francisco, U.S.A., said that for them money is "the root of stress and confusion." These people, he added, "buy two or three houses, a car, spend money on stuff. And when that hasn't done it for them [that is, made them happy], they become depressed, empty and uncertain about what to do with their lives." In contrast, those who heed Jesus' advice to lead a simpler life materially and to leave room for spiritual things are far more likely to find real happiness.

Tom, a builder living in Hawaii, volunteered to help build places of worship on Pacific islands where people have little materially. Tom noticed something about these humble people. He said: "My Christian brothers and sisters in these islands were truly happy. They helped me see more clearly that money and possessions are not the secret to happiness." He also observed the volunteers who worked with him in the islands and noticed how contented they were. "They could have made a lot of money," said Tom. "But they chose to keep spiritual things in first place and maintain a simple life-style." Moved by these examples, Tom simplified his own life so that he could devote more time to his family and to spiritual pursuits—a move he has never regretted.

Happiness and Self-Worth

Vital to happiness is a feeling of personal dignity, or self-worth. Because of human imperfection and the resulting weaknesses, some have a negative view of themselves, and for many, such feelings date from childhood. It may be hard to overcome entrenched feelings, but it can be done. The solution lies in applying God's Word.

The Bible explains how the Creator feels about us. Is not his view more important than that of any human—even our own? The very personification of love, God looks at us without prejudice or malice. He sees us for what we are, as well as for what we can be. (1 Samuel 16:7; 1 John 4:8) In fact, he views those wanting to please him as precious, yes, desirable, whatever their imperfections. —Daniel 9:23; Haggai 2:7.

Of course, God does not ignore our weaknesses and any sins we commit. He expects us to try hard to do what is right, and he supports us when we do so. (Luke 13:24) Still, the Bible says: "As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him." It also says: "If errors were what you

watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand? For there is the true forgiveness with you, in order that you may be feared."—Psalm 103:13; 130:3, 4.

So learn to see yourself through God's eyes. Knowing that he views those who love him as desirable and that he has confidence in them—even though they may view themselves as unworthy—can do much to enhance a person's happiness.—1 John 3:19, 20.

Hope—Vital to Happiness

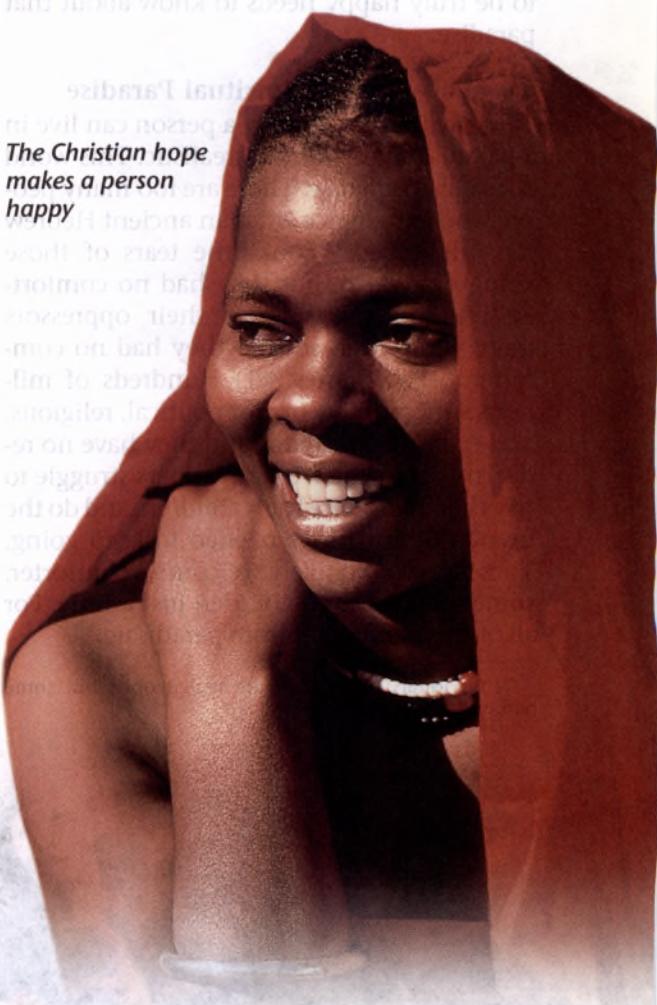
A recently promoted concept dubbed positive psychology holds that optimism, cultivated by positive thinking and by focusing on one's personal strengths, can lead to happiness. Few would deny that an optimistic view of life and of the future adds to our happiness. However, such optimism has to be based on fact, not just on wishful thinking. Besides, no amount of optimism or positive thinking will eliminate war, starvation, disease, pollution, old age, sickness, or death—things that rob so many of their happiness. Nonetheless, optimism does have its place.

Interestingly, the Bible does not use the word optimism; it uses a more powerful word—hope. Vine's *Complete Expository Dictionary* defines "hope" as used in the Bible as "favorable and confident expectation, . . . the happy anticipation of good." In Bible usage, hope is more than an optimistic view of a situation. It also refers to the thing upon which one's hope is fixed. (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Peter 1:3) The Christian hope, for instance, is that all the undesirable things mentioned in the preceding paragraph will soon be done away with. (Psalm 37:9-11, 29) But it embraces more.

Christians look forward to the time when faithful humans will attain to perfect life on a paradise earth. (Luke 23:42, 43) Enlarging on that hope, Revelation 21:3, 4 says: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. . . . 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."

Anyone who expects to have such a future has every reason to be happy, even if his present circumstances leave much to be desired. (James 1:12) So why not investigate the Bible and find out why you can believe it. Strengthen your hope by spending time each day reading the Bible. Doing so will enrich you spiritually, help you avoid the things that rob people of happiness, and build up your sense of contentment. Yes, the ultimate secret to real happiness is doing the will of God. (Ecclesiastes 12:13) A life built on obeying the Bible's precepts is a happy life, for Jesus said: "Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!"—Luke 11:28.



What Is the Spiritual Paradise?

GUSTAVO was raised in a small city in Brazil.* Since childhood he had been taught that good people go to heaven after death. He knew nothing about God's purpose that faithful mankind would some day enjoy perfect life in an earthly paradise. (Revelation 21:3, 4) And there was something else he did not know. He did not realize that even now, he could be in a spiritual paradise.

Have you ever heard of that spiritual paradise? Do you know what it is and what is required to be a part of it? Anyone who wants to be truly happy needs to know about that paradise.

Locating the Spiritual Paradise

To say that even today a person can live in a paradise may sound unrealistic. This world is hardly a paradise. There are too many people who experience what an ancient Hebrew king described: "Look! the tears of those being oppressed, but they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, so that they had no comforter." (Ecclesiastes 4:1) Hundreds of millions suffer under corrupt political, religious, and economic systems, and they have no relief, no "comforter." Many others struggle to pay their bills, raise their children, and do the myriad other things needed to keep going. These too would likely welcome a comforter, someone to ease the burden just a little. For all of them, life is far from paradisaic.

* Individuals mentioned are real people, but some names have been changed.

Where, then, is the spiritual paradise? Well, the English word "paradise" is related to Greek, Persian, and Hebrew words that all carry the thought of a park or garden, a peaceful, refreshing place. The Bible promises that some day the earth will be a physical paradise, a gardenlike home for a sinless human race. (Psalm 37:10, 11) With this in mind, we see that a spiritual paradise is an environment that is pleasing to the eyes and soothing to the nerves, allowing one to enjoy peace with one's fellowman and with God. Today, as Gustavo found, such a paradise exists, and it embraces a growing number of people.

At the age of 12, Gustavo decided that he wanted to be a Roman Catholic priest. With his parents' approval, he entered a religious seminary. There he became involved in music, theater, and politics, which were promoted by the church to attract youths. He knew that a priest was supposed to devote himself to the people and that he could not get married. Yet, some of the priests and seminarians that Gustavo knew were engaged in immoral practices. In such an atmosphere, Gustavo soon began to drink heavily. Clearly, he had not yet found a spiritual paradise.

One day, Gustavo read a Bible tract that spoke about an earthly paradise. It made him think about the purpose of life. He says: "I started to read the Bible frequently, but I did not understand it. I did not even see that God had a name." He left the seminary and ap-



proached Jehovah's Witnesses, seeking help to understand the Bible. Thereafter, he made quick progress and soon dedicated his life to God. Gustavo was learning about the spiritual paradise.

A People for God's Name

Gustavo learned that God's name, Jehovah, is not a mere point of interest for a Bible student. (Exodus 6:3) It is a vital part of true worship. Jesus taught his followers to pray: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified." (Matthew 6:9) Speaking of Gentiles who became Christians, the disciple James said: "God . . . turned his attention to the nations to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) In the first century, the "people for his name" was the Christian congregation. Is there a people for God's name today? Yes, and Gustavo came to realize that Jehovah's Witnesses are that people.

Jehovah's Witnesses are active in 235 lands and territories. They number over six million ministers, and another eight million interested ones have attended their meetings. Widely known for their public ministry, they fulfill Jesus' words: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) Why, though, did Gustavo feel that he had found a spiritual paradise in association with Jehovah's Witnesses? He says: "I compared what I had seen in the world and especially in the seminary with what I found among Jehovah's Witnesses. The great difference is the love among the Witnesses."

Others have made similar comments about Jehovah's Witnesses. Miriam, a young Brazilian woman, said: "I did not know how to be happy, not even in my family. The first

time I saw love in action was among Jehovah's Witnesses." A man named Christian said: "I occasionally dabbled in spiritism, but religion was not important to me. I valued more my social position and my work as an engineer. Still, when my wife began studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, I saw a difference in her. I was also impressed by the joy and the zeal of the Christian women who visited her." Why do people say such things about Jehovah's Witnesses?

What Is the Spiritual Paradise?

One thing that makes Jehovah's Witnesses stand out is their appreciation for Bible knowledge. They believe that the Bible is true and that it is God's Word. Hence, they are not satisfied merely to know the basics of their religion. They have an ongoing program of personal study and Bible reading. The longer a person associates with Jehovah's Witnesses, the more he learns about God and His will as revealed in the Bible.

Such knowledge frees Jehovah's Witnesses from things that rob people of happiness, such as superstitions and harmful ideas. Jesus said: "The truth will set you free," and Jehovah's Witnesses find this to be so. (John 8:32) Fernando, who at one time practiced spiritism, says: "Learning about everlasting life was an enormous relief. I was afraid that either my parents or I might die." Truth freed Fernando from his fear of the spirit world and the so-called afterlife.

In the Bible, knowledge of God is closely associated with paradise. The prophet Isaiah said: "They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isaiah 11:9.





Of course, knowledge by itself is not enough to bring the peace foretold by Isaiah. A person has to act on what he learns. Fernando made this comment: "When a person cultivates the fruits of the spirit, he contributes to the spiritual paradise." Fernando was referring to words of the apostle Paul, who called the good qualities that a Christian should cultivate "the fruitage of the spirit." He listed them as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control."—Galatians 5:22, 23.

Can you see why associating with a community of individuals who strive to cultivate such qualities would indeed be like being in paradise? The spiritual paradise foretold by the prophet Zephaniah would exist among such people. He said: "They will do no unrighteousness, nor speak a lie, nor will there be found in their mouths a tricky tongue; for they themselves will feed and actually lie stretched out, and there will be no one making them tremble."—Zephaniah 3:13.

The Vital Role of Love

You may have noticed that the first of the fruits of the spirit mentioned by Paul is love. This is a quality that the Bible speaks much

While enjoying the spiritual paradise, help to expand it!

about. Jesus said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) True, Jehovah's Witnesses are not perfect. They sometimes have personal problems among themselves just as Jesus' apostles did. But they truly love one another, and they pray for the support of holy spirit as they cultivate this quality.

As a result, their fellowship is unique. There is no tribalism or divisive nationalism among them. In fact, many Witnesses who found themselves in the midst of ethnic cleansing and racial genocide during the closing years of the 20th century protected one another even at the risk of their own lives. Although coming "out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues," they enjoy a unity that is difficult to comprehend until you experience it.—Revelation 7:9.

Paradise Among Those Who Do God's Will

There is no place in the spiritual paradise for greed, immorality, and selfishness. Christians are told: "Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) When we live clean, moral lives and do God's will in other ways, we help build the spiritual paradise and we contribute to our own happiness. Carla found this to be true. She says: "My father taught me to work hard to become financially independent. But although my university studies gave me a sense of security, I missed the family unity and the security that only knowledge from God's Word can give us."

Of course, enjoying the spiritual paradise does not remove the physical problems of

life. Christians still get sick. The nation they live in might get embroiled in civil strife. Many endure poverty. Still, having a close relationship with Jehovah God—which is a crucial part of the spiritual paradise—means that we can look to him for support. Indeed, he invites us to ‘throw our burdens upon him,’ and many can testify to the wonderful way he has supported them in the most difficult situations. (Psalm 55:22; 86:16, 17) God promises to be with his worshipers even in “the valley of deep shadow.” (Psalm 23:4) Confidence in God’s readiness to support us helps to preserve our “peace of God that excels all thought,” which is a key to the spiritual paradise.—Philippians 4:7.

Contributing to the Spiritual Paradise

Most people enjoy visiting a park or garden. They like to walk through it or perhaps sit on a bench and enjoy the surroundings. In a similar way, many enjoy associating with Jehovah’s Witnesses. They find the fellowship refreshing, peaceful, and restorative. However, a beautiful garden needs to be tended if it is to continue to be paradisaic. Similarly, the spiritual paradise exists in this very nonparadisaic world only because Jehovah’s Witnesses cultivate it, and God blesses their efforts. How, then, can one make a meaningful contribution to that paradise?

First, you need to associate with a congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses, study the Bible with them, and acquire the Bible knowledge that is the basis of the spiritual paradise. Carla noted: “There is no spiritual paradise without spiritual food.” This includes reading God’s Word regularly and thinking about what you read. The knowledge acquired will draw you closer to Jehovah God, and you will come to love him. You will also learn to talk to him in prayer and ask for his guidance and for his spirit to support you as you do his will. Jesus told us to persist in prayer. (Luke 11:9-

13) The apostle Paul said: “Pray incessantly.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17) The privilege of speaking to God in prayer with the absolute confidence that he hears you is an important part of the spiritual paradise.

As time goes by, your life will be changed for the better by what you learn, and eventually you will want to talk to others about it. Then you will be able to obey Jesus’ command: “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens.” (Matthew 5:16) Sharing with others the knowledge of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ and extolling the great love these have shown to mankind brings much happiness.

The time is coming when all the earth will be a physical paradise—a gardenlike place free of pollution and a fitting home for faithful mankind. The existence of the spiritual paradise in these “critical times hard to deal with” is an evidence of the power of God and a token of what he can and will accomplish in the future.—2 Timothy 3:1.

Even now, those enjoying the spiritual paradise experience a spiritual fulfillment of Isaiah 49:10: “They will not go hungry, neither will they go thirsty, nor will parching heat or sun strike them. For the One who is having pity upon them will lead them, and by the springs of water he will conduct them.” José will testify to the truth of that. He dreamed of becoming a famous musician, but he found more satisfaction in serving God with the Christian congregation. He says: “Now I enjoy a meaningful life. I feel secure within the Christian brotherhood, and I know Jehovah as a loving Father whom we can trust.” The happiness of José—and of millions of others like him—is thus well described at Psalm 64:10: “The righteous one will rejoice in Jehovah and will indeed take refuge in him.” What a fine description of the spiritual paradise!

REJOICING FOR THOSE WHO WALK IN THE LIGHT

"Come and let us walk in the light of Jehovah."—ISAIAH 2:5.

JEHOVAH is the Source of light. The Bible calls him "the Giver of the sun for light by day, the statutes of the moon and the stars for light by night." (Jeremiah 31:35; Psalm 8:3) He is the One who created our sun, which is, in effect, an enormous nuclear furnace releasing into space vast quantities of energy, some in the form of light and heat. The very small percentage of that energy that reaches us as sunlight sustains life on this earth. Without sunlight, we could not exist. Earth would be a lifeless planet.

² With that in mind, we can understand the gravity of a situation described by the prophet Isaiah. He said: "Look! darkness itself will cover the earth, and thick gloom the national groups." (Isaiah 60:2) Of course, this does not refer to darkness in a physical sense. Isaiah did not mean that some day the sun, moon, and stars would cease to shine. (Psalm 89:36, 37; 136:7-9) Rather, he was talking of spiritual darkness. But spiritual darkness is death dealing. In the long run, we cannot live without spiritual light any more than we can live without physical light.—Luke 1:79.

³ In view of this, it is of serious concern to note that Isaiah's words, although fulfilled on ancient Judah, are having a greater fulfillment today. Yes, in our time the world is shrouded in spiritual darkness. In such a dangerous situation, spiritual light is of the utmost impor-

1, 2. (a) How important is light? (b) Why is the warning that darkness would cover the earth so grave?

3. In view of Isaiah's words, what should Christians do?

tance. That is why Christians do well to heed Jesus' exhortation: "Let your light shine before men." (Matthew 5:16) Faithful Christians can lighten the darkness for meek ones, thus giving them the opportunity to gain life.—John 8:12.

Dark Times in Israel

⁴ Isaiah's words about darkness covering the earth were first fulfilled when Judah lay desolate and her people were in exile in Babylon. However, even before that, in Isaiah's own day, much of the nation was already shrouded in spiritual darkness, a fact that moved him to urge his fellow countrymen: "O men of the house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of Jehovah!"—Isaiah 2:5; 5:20.

⁵ Isaiah prophesied in Judah "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah." (Isaiah 1:1) It was a turbulent time of political unrest, religious hypocrisy, judicial corruption, and oppression of the poor. Even during the reigns of faithful kings, such as Jotham, altars of false gods could be seen on many hilltops. Under the unfaithful kings, the situation was worse. Wicked King Ahaz, for example, went so far as to offer up his offspring in a ritual sacrifice to the god Molech. That was darkness indeed!—2 Kings 15:32-34; 16:2-4.

4. When were Isaiah's prophetic words first fulfilled, but what situation already existed in his own day?

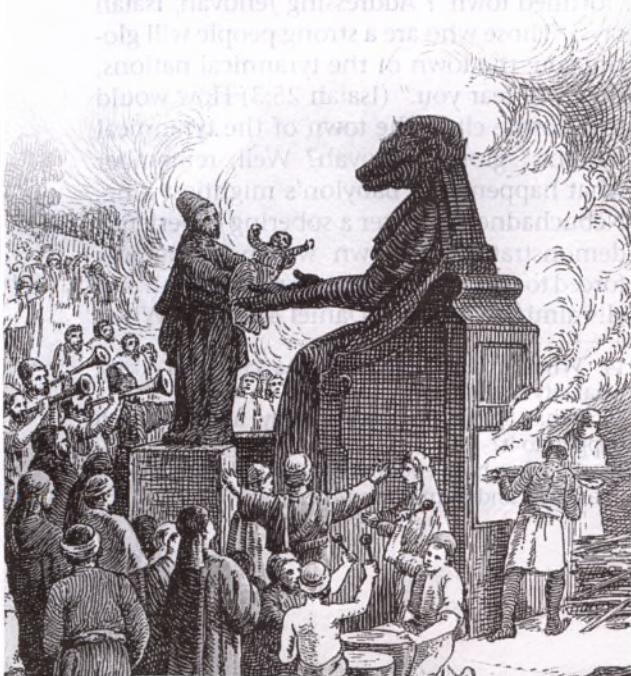
5, 6. What factors contributed to the darkness in Isaiah's day?

⁶ The international situation was also gloomy. Moab, Edom, and Philistia stood menacingly at Judah's borders. The northern kingdom of Israel, although related by blood, was an avowed enemy. Farther north, Syria threatened Judah's peace. Even more dangerous was cruel Assyria, ever on the lookout for opportunities to expand its power. During the period of Isaiah's prophesying, Assyria took the nation of Israel completely off the map and almost destroyed Judah. At one time every fortified city in Judah except Jerusalem was in Assyrian hands.—Isaiah 1:7; 8; 36:1.

⁷ God's covenant people suffered such disasters because Israel and Judah were disloyal to him. Like those mentioned in the book of Proverbs, they were "leaving the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness." (Proverbs 2:13) Yet, while Jehovah was angry with his people, he did not completely abandon them. Instead, he raised up Isaiah and other prophets to provide spiritual light for any in the nation who still sought to serve Jehovah faithfully. The light provided through

7. What path did Israel and Judah choose, and how did Jehovah respond?

Inhabitants of Judah sacrificed children to Molech



these prophets was precious indeed. It was life-giving.

Times of Darkness Today

⁸ The situation in Isaiah's day was very similar to conditions today. In our time, human leaders have turned their backs on Jehovah and his enthroned King, Jesus Christ. (Psalm 2:2, 3) The religious leaders of Christendom have deceived their flocks. Such leaders claim to serve God, but in truth most of them promote the gods of this world—nationalism, militarism, wealth, and prominent individuals—to say nothing of teaching pagan doctrines.

⁹ In one place after another, Christendom's religions have been involved in wars and civil strife that feature ethnic cleansing and other horrors. Furthermore, rather than taking a stand for Bible-based morality, many churches are either winking at or actively supporting immoral practices like fornication and homosexuality. As a result of such a rejection of Bible standards, Christendom's flocks are like those men spoken of by the ancient psalmist: "They have not known, and they do not understand; in darkness they keep walking about." (Psalm 82:5) Truly, Christendom, like ancient Judah, is in deep darkness.—Revelation 8:12.

¹⁰ Amid such darkness, Jehovah is causing light to shine for the sake of meek ones. For this, he is using his anointed servants on earth, "the faithful and discreet slave," and these are "shining as illuminators in the world." (Matthew 24:45; Philippians 2:15) That slave class, supported by millions of "other sheep" companions, reflects spiritual light based on God's Word, the Bible. (John 10:16) In this bedarkened world, such light gives meek ones hope, assists them to have a relationship with God, and helps

8, 9. What factors contribute to the world's darkness today?

10. How does light shine in the darkness today, and how do meek ones benefit?

them to avoid spiritual pitfalls. It is precious, life-giving.

"I Laud Your Name"

¹¹ In the dark days during which Isaiah lived and in the even darker days thereafter when the Babylonians carried Jehovah's nation off into captivity, what kind of guidance did Jehovah supply? Besides supplying moral guidance, he clearly outlined in advance how he would fulfill his purposes with regard to his people. Consider, for example, the wonderful prophecies contained in Isaiah chapters 25 to 27. The words in these chapters indicate how Jehovah handled matters back then and how he does so today.

¹² First, Isaiah declares: "O Jehovah, you are my God. I exalt you, I laud your name." What a heartfelt expression of praise! But what moved the prophet to utter such a prayer? A major factor is revealed in the second half of the verse, where we read: "For you [Jehovah] have done wonderful things, counsels from early times, in faithfulness, in trustworthiness."—Isaiah 25:1.

¹³ By Isaiah's day, Jehovah had done many wonderful things for Israel, and these had been recorded in writing. Isaiah was evidently familiar with these writings. He knew, for example, that Jehovah brought his people out of slavery in Egypt and saved them from the wrath of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea. He knew that Jehovah led his people through the wilderness and brought them into the Promised Land. (Psalm 136:1, 10-26) Such historical accounts showed that Jehovah God is faithful and trustworthy. His "counsels"—all the things he purposes—come true. Divinely provided accurate knowledge strengthened Isaiah to keep on walking in the light. Thus,

11. What information did Jehovah make available in Isaiah's day?
12. What heartfelt expression does Isaiah make?
13. (a) What knowledge strengthened Isaiah's appreciation for Jehovah? (b) How can we learn from Isaiah's example?

he was a fine example for us. If we carefully study God's written Word and apply it in our lives, we too will remain in the light.—Psalm 119:105; 2 Corinthians 4:6.

A City Is Destroyed

¹⁴ An example of God's counsel is found at Isaiah 25:2, where we read: "You have made a city a pile of stones, a fortified town a crumbling ruin, a dwelling tower of strangers to be no city, which will not be rebuilt even to time indefinite." What is this city? Isaiah was likely speaking prophetically of Babylon. Indeed, the time did come when Babylon became a mere pile of stones.

¹⁵ Does the city mentioned by Isaiah have a counterpart today? Yes. The book of Revelation speaks of "the great city that has a kingdom over the kings of the earth." (Revelation 17:18) That great city is "Babylon the Great," the worldwide empire of false religion. (Revelation 17:5) Today, the principal part of Babylon the Great is Christendom, whose clergy take the lead in opposing the Kingdom-preaching work of Jehovah's people. (Matthew 24:14) Like ancient Babylon, however, Babylon the Great will soon be destroyed, never to rise again.

¹⁶ What else does Isaiah prophesy about the "fortified town"? Addressing Jehovah, Isaiah says: "Those who are a strong people will glorify you; the town of the tyrannical nations, they will fear you." (Isaiah 25:3) How would this hostile city, "the town of the tyrannical nations," glorify Jehovah? Well, remember what happened to Babylon's mightiest king, Nebuchadnezzar. After a sobering experience demonstrating his own weakness, he was forced to confess the greatness of Jehovah and His almighty power. (Daniel 4:34, 35) When

14. What is prophesied about a city, and likely, what city was it?
15. What "great city" exists today, and what will happen to it?
- 16, 17. How have enemies of Jehovah glorified him in ancient and in modern times?



Knowledge of Jehovah's mighty acts moved Isaiah to laud Jehovah's name

Jehovah exercises his power, even his enemies are forced to acknowledge, albeit reluctantly, his powerful works.

¹⁷ Was Babylon the Great ever forced to acknowledge Jehovah's powerful works? Yes. During the first world war, Jehovah's anointed servants preached under tribulation. In 1918 they went into spiritual captivity when leading officers of the Watch Tower Society were imprisoned. The organized preaching work virtually ceased. Then, in 1919, Jehovah restored them and reinvigorated them with his spirit, whereupon they set out to fulfill the commission to preach the good news in all the inhabited earth. (Mark 13:10) All of this was prophesied in the book of Revelation, as was the effect upon their opponents. These "became frightened and gave glory to the God of heaven." (Revelation 11:3, 7, 11-13) Not that they all were converted, but they were forced to recognize the powerful work of Jehovah on this occasion, just as Isaiah had foretold.

"A Stronghold to the Lowly One"

¹⁸ Turning now to Jehovah's kindly dealings

^{18, 19. (a)} Why have opponents failed to break the integrity of Jehovah's people? (b) How will "the melody itself of the tyrannical ones" be suppressed?

with those who walk in the light, Isaiah says to Jehovah: "You have become a stronghold to the lowly one, a stronghold to the poor one in the distress that he has, a refuge from the rainstorm, a shade from the heat, when the blast of the tyrannical ones is like a rainstorm against a wall. Like the heat in a waterless country, the noise of strangers you subdue, the heat with the shadow of a cloud. The melody itself of the tyrannical ones becomes suppressed."—Isaiah 25:4, 5.

¹⁹ Since 1919, tyrants have tried everything to break the integrity of true worshipers, but they have failed. Why? Because Jehovah is the stronghold and the refuge of his people. He provides cool shade from the burning

Can You Explain?

- Why is it vital today to walk in the light?
- Why did Isaiah laud Jehovah's name?
- Why will enemies never break the integrity of God's people?
- What rich blessings await those who walk in the light?

heat of persecution and stands like a sturdy wall against the rainstorm of opposition. We who walk in God's light confidently look forward to the time when 'the melody of the tyrannical ones will be suppressed.' Yes, we eagerly await the day when Jehovah's enemies will be gone.

²⁰ Jehovah does more than protect his servants. He provides for them as their loving Father. After liberating his people from Babylon the Great in 1919, he set before them a victory banquet, an abundant supply of spiritual food. This was foretold at Isaiah 25:6, where we read: "Jehovah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples, in this mountain, a banquet of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow, of wine kept on the dregs, filtered." How blessed we are to share in that feast! (Matthew 4:4) "The table of Jehovah" is truly laden down with good things to eat. (1 Corinthians 10:21) Through "the faithful and discreet slave," we are given everything we could ever need in a spiritual sense.

²¹ And there is more to this divinely provided banquet. The spiritual feast that we now enjoy reminds us of the abundance of physical food that will be available in God's promised new world. Then, the "banquet of well-oiled dishes" will include physical food in abundance. No one will need to be hungry in a physical or a spiritual sense. What a relief that will be for those dear faithful ones who now suffer because of the foretold "food shortages" that are part of "the sign" of Jesus' presence! (Matthew 24:3, 7) For them, the words of the psalmist are comforting indeed. He said: "There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow."—Psalm 72:16.

^{20, 21.} What banquet does Jehovah provide, and what will that banquet include in the new world?

²² Listen now to an even more wonderful promise. Comparing sin and death to a "woven work," or an "envelopment," Isaiah says: "In this mountain [Jehovah] will certainly swallow up the face of the envelopment that is enveloping over all the peoples, and the woven work that is interwoven upon all the nations." (Isaiah 25:7) Just think! Sin and death, which have weighed on mankind like a suffocating blanket, will be no more. How we long for the day when the benefits of Jesus' ran-

22, 23. (a) What "woven work," or "envelopment," will be removed, and how? (b) How will 'the reproach of Jehovah's people' be removed?

*The righteous will be bathed
in Jehovah's light forever*



som sacrifice are fully applied to obedient and faithful humankind!—Revelation 21:3, 4.

²³ Pointing to that glorious time, the inspired prophet assures us: “[God] will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces. And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for Jehovah himself has spoken it.” (Isaiah 25:8) No one will die from natural causes or weep because of losing a loved one. What a blessed change! Furthermore, nowhere on earth will there be heard the reproach and lying propaganda that God and his servants have so long endured. Why not? Because Jehovah will remove their source—the father of the lie, Sa-

tan the Devil, along with all of Satan’s seed.—John 8:44.

²⁴ Upon contemplating such manifestations of Jehovah’s power, those who walk in the light are moved to exclaim: “Look! This is our God. We have hoped in him, and he will save us. This is Jehovah. We have hoped in him. Let us be joyful and rejoice in the salvation by him.” (Isaiah 25:9) Soon, righteous mankind will have every reason to rejoice. The darkness will be completely dispelled, and faithful ones will be bathed in Jehovah’s light for all eternity. Could any hope be more glorious? No, indeed!

24. How do those who walk in the light respond to Jehovah’s powerful works in their behalf?

SALVATION FOR THOSE WHO CHOOSE THE LIGHT

“Jehovah is my light and my salvation. Of whom shall I be in fear?”—PSALM 27:1.

JEOVAH is the Source of the sunlight that makes life possible on earth. (Genesis 1:2, 14) He is also the Creator of spiritual light, which dispels the death-dealing darkness of Satan’s world. (Isaiah 60:2; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8-11; 6:12) Those who choose the light can say with the psalmist: “Jehovah is my light and my salvation. Of whom shall I be in fear?” (Psalm 27:1a) However, as happened in Jesus’ time, those who prefer the darkness can only expect an unfavorable judgment.—John 1:9-11; 3:19-21, 36.

² In the days of Isaiah, most of Jehovah’s covenant people rejected the light. As

1. What life-giving provisions does Jehovah make?
2. In ancient times, what happened to those who rejected Jehovah’s light and to those who listened to his word?

a result, Isaiah saw the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel as a nation. And in 607 B.C.E., Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed and the inhabitants of Judah carried off into exile. However, those who listened to Jehovah’s word were strengthened to resist the apostasy of those days. Regarding 607 B.C.E., Jehovah promised that those who listened to him would survive. (Jeremiah 21: 8, 9) Today, we who love the light can learn much from what happened back then.—Ephesians 5:5.

The Happiness of Those in the Light

³ “We have a strong city. [God] sets

3. Today, what confidence can we have, what “righteous nation” do we love, and what “strong city” does that “nation” have?

salvation itself for walls and rampart. Open the gates, you men, that the righteous nation that is keeping faithful conduct may enter." (Isaiah 26:1, 2) These are the exultant words of people who trusted in Jehovah. Faithful Jews in Isaiah's day looked to Jehovah, not to the false gods of their fellow countrymen, as the only real Source of security. Today, we have the same confidence. Moreover, we love Jehovah's "righteous nation"—"the Israel of God." (Galatians 6:16; Matthew 21:43) Jehovah too loves this nation because of its faithful conduct. With his blessing, the Israel of God has "a strong city," a citylike organization that supports and protects it.

⁴ Those within this "city" are well aware that "the inclination that is well supported [Jehovah] will safeguard in continuous peace, because it is in [Jehovah] that one is made to trust." Jehovah supports those mentally inclined to trust in him and comply with his righteous principles. Thus, the faithful ones in Judah heeded Isaiah's exhortation: "Trust in Jehovah, you people, for all times, for in Jah Jehovah is the Rock of times indefinite." (Isaiah 26:3, 4; Psalm 9:10; 37:3;

4. What mental attitude do we do well to cultivate?

Proverbs 3:5) Those with that mind-set look to "Jah Jehovah" as the only secure Rock. They enjoy "continuous peace" with him. —Philippians 1:2; 4:6, 7.

Humiliation for God's Enemies

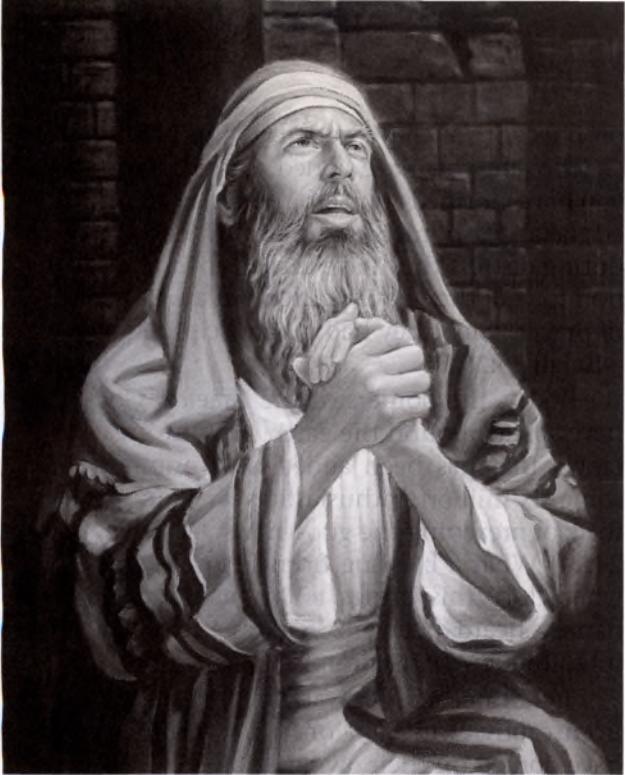
⁵ What if those who trust in Jehovah suffer tribulation? They need not fear. Jehovah allows such things for a time, but eventually he brings relief, and those causing the tribulation face his judgment. (2 Thessalonians 1:4-7; 2 Timothy 1:8-10) Consider the case of a certain "elevated town." Isaiah says: "[Jehovah] has laid low those inhabiting the height, the elevated town. He abases it, he abases it to the earth; he brings it in touch with the dust. The foot will trample it down, the feet of the afflicted one, the steps of the lowly ones." (Isaiah 26:5, 6) The elevated town here mentioned may be Babylon. That city certainly afflicted God's people. But what happened to Babylon? In 539 B.C.E., it fell to the Medes and the Persians. What an abasement!

⁶ In our day Isaiah's prophetic words well describe what has happened to "Babylon the

5, 6. (a) How was ancient Babylon humiliated? (b) In what way was "Babylon the Great" humiliated?

Only the righteous are allowed in Jehovah's "strong city," his organization





Isaiah sought Jehovah "in the night"

Great" since 1919. That elevated town suffered a humiliating fall in that year when it was forced to release Jehovah's people from spiritual captivity. (Revelation 14:8) What occurred next was even more humiliating. That small band of Christians turned to 'trampling down' their old captor. In 1922 they began to announce the coming end of Christendom, publicizing the four angelic trumpet blasts of Revelation 8:7-12 and the three woes foretold at Revelation 9:1-11:15.

"The Path of the Righteous One Is Uprightness"

⁷ Jehovah provides salvation for those who turn to his light, and he guides their path, as Isaiah next shows: "The path of the righteous one is uprightness. You being upright, you will smooth out the very course of a

7. What guidance do those who turn to Jehovah's light receive, in whom do they hope, and what do they cherish?

righteous one. Yes, for the path of your judgments, O Jehovah, we have hoped in you. For your name and for your memorial the desire of the soul has been." (Isaiah 26:7, 8) Jehovah is a righteous God, and those who worship him must observe his righteous standards. When they do, Jehovah guides them, smoothing their course. By heeding his guidance, these meek ones show that they hope in Jehovah and wholeheartedly cherish his name—his "memorial."—Exodus 3:15.

⁸ Isaiah cherished Jehovah's name. That is evident from his next words: "With my soul I have desired you in the night; yes, with my spirit within me I keep looking for you; because, when there are judgments from you for the earth, righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn." (Isaiah 26:9) Isaiah desired Jehovah 'with his soul'—with his whole being. Picture the prophet using the quiet times of the night to pray to Jehovah, expressing his deepest thoughts and ardently seeking Jehovah's guidance. What a fine example! Moreover, Isaiah learned righteousness from Jehovah's judgment acts. In this, he reminds us of the need for constant vigilance, keeping alert to discern Jehovah's will.

Some Choose the Darkness

⁹ Jehovah showed great loving-kindness to Judah, but unhappily not all responded. Frequently, the majority chose rebellion and apostasy rather than the light of Jehovah's truth. Isaiah said: "Though the wicked one should be shown favor, he simply will not learn righteousness. In the land of straightforwardness he will act unjustly and will not see the eminence of Jehovah."—Isaiah 26:10.

8. What exemplary attitude did Isaiah display?
9, 10. What acts of kindness did Jehovah perform toward his unfaithful nation, but how did they respond?

¹⁰ In Isaiah's day when Jehovah's hand protected Judah against her enemies, the majority refused to recognize this. When he blessed them with his peace, the nation showed no gratitude. Hence, Jehovah abandoned them to serve "other masters," finally letting the Jews be taken off to captivity in Babylon in 607 B.C.E. (Isaiah 26:11-13) Still, eventually a remnant of the nation returned, chastened, to their homeland.

¹¹ What about Judah's captors? Isaiah prophetically answers: "They are dead; they will not live. Impotent in death, they will not rise up. Therefore you have turned your attention that you might annihilate them and destroy all mention of them." (Isaiah 26:14) Yes, after her fall in 539 B.C.E., Babylon had no future. In time, the city would be no more. She would be "impotent in death," and her huge empire consigned to the history books. What a warning for those who hope in the powerful ones of this world!

¹² Aspects of this prophecy had a fulfillment when God allowed his anointed servants to go into spiritual captivity in 1918 and then liberated them in 1919. From that point on, the future of their former captor, principally Christendom, was bleak. But the blessings in store for Jehovah's people were rich indeed.

"You Have Added to the Nation"

¹³ God blessed the repentant spirit of his anointed servants in 1919 and gave them increase. First, attention was given to gathering the final members of the Israel of God, and then "a great crowd" of "other sheep" began to be gathered. (Revelation 7:9; John 10:16) These blessings were foretold in Isaiah's

^{11, 12. (a)} What future did Judah's captors have?
^(b) In 1919 what future did the former captor of Jehovah's anointed servants have?
^{13, 14.} What rich blessings have Jehovah's anointed servants enjoyed since 1919?

prophecy: "You have added to the nation; O Jehovah, you have added to the nation; you have glorified yourself. You have extended afar all the borders of the land. O Jehovah, during distress they have turned their attention to you; they have poured out a whisper of prayer when they had your disciplining." —Isaiah 26:15, 16.

¹⁴ Today, the borders of the Israel of God have spread around the earth, and the great crowd that has been added now numbers some six million enthusiastic sharers in the work of preaching the good news. (Matthew 24:14) What a blessing from Jehovah! And what glory this brings to his name! That name is heard today in 235 lands—a wonderful fulfillment of his promise.

¹⁵ Judah needed Jehovah's help to escape from captivity in Babylon. They could not have done it on their own. (Isaiah 26:17, 18) Similarly, the liberation of the Israel of God in 1919 was proof of Jehovah's support. It could not have happened without him. And so startling was the change in their condition that Isaiah likens it to a resurrection: "Your dead ones will live. A corpse of mine—they will rise up. Awake and cry out joyfully, you residents in the dust! For your dew is as the dew of mallows, and the earth itself will let even those impotent in death drop in birth." (Isaiah 26:19; Revelation 11:7-11) Yes, those impotent in death would, as it were, be reborn for renewed activity!

Protection in Dangerous Times

¹⁶ Jehovah's servants always need his protection. Soon, though, he will stretch out his hand for the last time against Satan's world, and his worshipers will need his help as never before. (Isaiah 26:19; Revelation 11:7-11)
^{15.} What symbolic resurrection occurred in 1919?
^{16, 17. (a)} In 539 B.C.E., what did the Jews need to do in order to survive the fall of Babylon? (b) Likewise, what are the "interior rooms" today, and how do they benefit us?

er before. (1 John 5:19) Regarding that dangerous time, Jehovah warns us: "Go, my people, enter into your interior rooms, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself for but a moment until the denunciation passes over. For, look! Jehovah is coming forth from his place to call to account the error of the inhabitant of the land against him, and the land will certainly expose her bloodshed and will no longer cover over her killed ones." (Isaiah 26:20, 21; Zephaniah 1:14) This warning showed the Jews how to survive the fall of Babylon in 539 B.C.E. Those who heeded it would have stayed in their houses, safe from the conquering soldiers out in the streets.

¹⁷ Today, the "interior rooms" of the prophecy likely have to do with the tens of thousands of congregations of Jehovah's people around the world. Such congregations are a protection even now, a place where Christians find safety among their brothers, under the loving care of the elders. (Isaiah 32:1, 2; Hebrews 10:24, 25) This is especially true in view of the nearness of the end of this system of things when survival will depend on obedience.—Zephaniah 2:3.

¹⁸ Regarding that time, Isaiah prophesies: "In that day Jehovah, with his hard and great

18. How will Jehovah soon "kill the sea monster"?

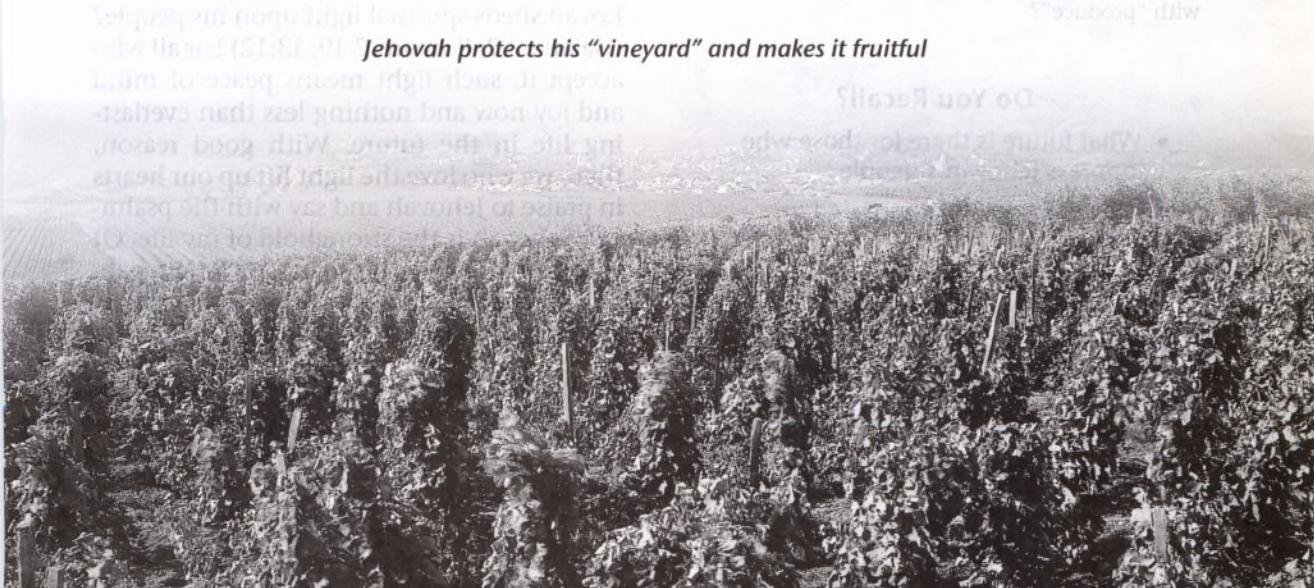
Jehovah protects his "vineyard" and makes it fruitful

and strong sword, will turn his attention to Leviathan, the gliding serpent, even to Leviathan, the crooked serpent, and he will certainly kill the sea monster that is in the sea." (Isaiah 27:1) What is the modern-day "Leviathan"? Apparently, it is "the original serpent," Satan himself, along with his wicked system of things, which he uses to wage war against the Israel of God. (Revelation 12:9, 10, 17; 13:14, 16, 17) In 1919, Leviathan lost its hold on God's people. In time, it will disappear altogether. (Revelation 19:19-21; 20:1-3, 10) Thus, Jehovah will "kill the sea monster." Meantime, nothing that Leviathan may try against Jehovah's people will have lasting success. (Isaiah 54:17) How comforting to be assured of that!

"A Vineyard of Foaming Wine"

¹⁹ In view of all this light from Jehovah, do we not have every reason to rejoice? Yes, indeed! Isaiah beautifully describes the joy of Jehovah's people when he writes: "In that day sing to her, you people: 'A vineyard of foaming wine! I, Jehovah, am safeguarding her. Every moment I shall water her. In order that no one may turn his attention against her, I shall safeguard her even night and day!'" (Isaiah 27:2, 3) Jehovah has cared

19. What is the condition of the remnant today?



for his "vineyard," the remnant of the Israel of God, and for their hardworking associates. (John 15:1-8) The result has been fruitage that brings glory to his name and causes great rejoicing among his servants on earth.

²⁰ We can be thrilled that Jehovah's earlier anger against his anointed servants—because of which he allowed them to go into spiritual captivity in 1918—has ceased. Jehovah himself says: "There is no rage that I have. Who will give me thornbushes and weeds in the battle? I will step on such. I will set such on fire at the same time. Otherwise let him take hold of my stronghold, let him make peace with me; peace let him make with me." (Isaiah 27:4, 5) To ensure that his vines continue to produce an abundance of "foaming wine," Jehovah crushes and consumes any weedlike influence that could corrupt them. Hence, let no one endanger the welfare of the Christian congregation! Let all 'take hold of Jehovah's stronghold,' seeking his favor and protection. In so doing, we make peace with God—something of such importance that Isaiah mentions it twice.—Psalm 85:1, 2, 8; Romans 5:1.

²¹ The blessings continue: "In the coming days Jacob will take root, Israel will put

20. How does Jehovah protect the Christian congregation?

21. In what way has the productive land been filled with "produce"?

Do You Recall?

- What future is there for those who oppress Jehovah's people?
- What increase is prophesied in Isaiah?
- Within what "interior rooms" should we remain, and why?
- Why does the condition of Jehovah's people bring praise to him?

NEW PUBLICATION

Most of the information discussed in these two study articles was presented as a talk on the district convention program for 2000/2001. At the end of the talk, a new publication was released, entitled *Isaiah's Prophecy—Light for All Mankind I*. This 416-page book contains a verse-by-verse discussion of the first 40 chapters of the book of Isaiah.

forth blossoms and actually sprout; and they will simply fill the surface of the productive land with produce." (Isaiah 27:6) This verse has been fulfilled since 1919, providing wonderful evidence of Jehovah's power. Anointed Christians have filled the earth with "produce," nourishing spiritual food. In the midst of a corrupt world, they joyfully preserve God's elevated standards. And Jehovah continues to bless them with increase. As a result, their millions of companions, the other sheep, "are rendering [God] sacred service day and night." (Revelation 7:15) May we never lose sight of the grand privilege of partaking of "produce" and sharing it with others!

²² In these critical times, when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the national groups, are we not thankful that Jehovah sheds spiritual light upon his people? (Isaiah 60:2; Romans 2:19; 13:12) For all who accept it, such light means peace of mind and joy now and nothing less than everlasting life in the future. With good reason, then, we who love the light lift up our hearts in praise to Jehovah and say with the psalmist: "Jehovah is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be in dread? Hope in Jehovah; be courageous and let your heart be strong. Yes, hope in Jehovah."—Psalm 27:1b, 14.

22. What blessings come to those who accept the light?



SUSTAINED BY JEHOVAH ALL MY DAYS

AS TOLD BY
FORREST LEE

The police had just confiscated our gramophones and our Bible literature. World War II provided an excuse for opposers to persuade a new governor-general of Canada to declare the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses illegal. This occurred on July 4, 1940.

UNDAUNTED by what had happened, we got more literature from where it was stored and continued our preaching. I will always remember Dad's words on that occasion: "We don't stop that easily. Jehovah has commanded us to preach." At the time, I was an energetic ten-year-old. But even today, Dad's determination and his zeal for the ministry are still a constant reminder of how our God, Jehovah, sustains his loyal ones.

The next time the police stopped us, not only did they take our literature but they also took Dad to jail, leaving Mom alone with four children. That happened in September 1940

in Saskatchewan. Soon afterward I was expelled from school for following my Bible-trained conscience and not saluting the flag or singing the national anthem. Continuing my schooling by correspondence afforded me a flexible schedule, and I shared more fully in the preaching work.

In 1948 a call went out for pioneers, full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses, to move to the east coast of Canada. So off I went to pioneer in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and in Cape Wolfe, Prince Edward Island. The following year, I accepted an invitation to work for two weeks at the branch office

With Dad, my brothers, and my sister, next to our house car, used during pioneer days. I am on the right



of Jehovah's Witnesses in Toronto. Those two weeks turned into over six rewarding years of service. Eventually, I met Myrna, who shared my love for Jehovah, and we were married in December 1955. We settled in Milton, Ontario, and soon a new congregation was formed there. The basement of our home became the Kingdom Hall.

Desire to Expand Our Ministry

In the years that followed, we became parents to six children in rather quick succession. Our daughter Miriam was first. Then came Charmaine, Mark, Annette, Grant, and finally Glen. I often came home from work to find the little ones sitting around the fireplace on the floor, with Myrna reading to them from the Bible, explaining Bible accounts and inculcating in their hearts a real love for Jehovah. Thanks to her loving support, all our children acquired a good knowledge of the Bible at a tender age.

My father's zeal for the ministry had left an indelible impression on my mind and heart. (Proverbs 22:6) Thus, in 1968, when families of Jehovah's Witnesses were invited to move to Central and South America to help with

the preaching work, our family desired to answer the call. By then our children ranged in age from 5 to 13, and none of us knew a word of Spanish. Following the direction given, I made a trip to various countries to check out living conditions. After I returned, as a family we prayerfully considered our options and decided to move to Nicaragua.

Serving in Nicaragua

By October 1970 we were in our new home, and within three weeks I was assigned a small part on the program at a congregation meeting. I struggled through the part in my very limited Spanish and concluded by inviting the whole congregation to our home for *cerveza* on Saturday at 9:30 a.m. I meant to say *servicio*, the word for field service, but in fact, I was inviting everyone for beer. Learning the language was indeed a challenge!

At first, I wrote a presentation on my hand and rehearsed it on my way to the door. I would say: "With the book comes a free home Bible study." One person who accepted the offer said afterward that he had to come to our meetings to figure out what I was trying to tell him. This man became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. How evident it is that God is the one who makes the seeds of truth grow

in humble hearts, even as the apostle Paul acknowledged!—1 Corinthians 3:7.

After about two years in the capital city of Managua, we were asked to move to the southern part of Nicaragua. There we worked with the congregation in Rivas and with neighboring isolated groups of interested ones. Pedro Peña, a faithful older Witness, accompanied me when we visited these groups. One was located on a volcanic island in Lake Nicaragua, where there was only one family of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Although this family had very little materially, they made a great effort to show appreciation for our visit. The evening we arrived, a meal was ready for us. We stayed for a week, and many of the dear people there who loved the Bible shared their food with us. We were thrilled to have 101 attend the public Bible talk on Sunday.

I feel that Jehovah's sustaining power was manifest when, on another occasion, we were to visit a group of interested people in the mountains near the border of Costa Rica. On the day we were to leave, Pedro came to pick me up, but I was in bed with malaria. "I can't go, Pedro," I said. Putting his hand on my forehead, he replied: "You've got a bad fever, but you have to come! The brothers are waiting." He then uttered one of the most heartfelt prayers I have ever heard.

Afterward, I said: "Go get a *fresco* (fruit drink) for yourself. I'll be ready in about ten minutes." Two Witness families lived in the area we visited, and they took excellent care of us. The following day we went preaching with them, although I was still weak with fever. How strengthening it was to see over a hundred people in attendance for our Sunday meeting!

On the Move Again

In 1975 our seventh child, Vaughn, was born. The following year, we had to return to Canada for financial reasons. Leaving Nicara-

gua was not easy because we had truly felt Jehovah's sustaining power during our stay. By the time we left, over 500 in our congregation's territory were attending meetings.

Earlier, when our daughter Miriam and I were appointed special pioneers in Nicaragua, Miriam asked me: "Daddy, if you ever have to go back to Canada, would you let me stay here?" I had no intention of ever leaving, so I said: "Well, of course!" So when we left, Miriam remained behind to continue her full-time ministry. Later, she married Andrew Reed. In 1984 they attended the 77th class of Gilead, the missionary school of Jehovah's Witnesses, then located in Brooklyn, New York. Miriam now serves with her husband in the Dominican Republic, fulfilling a desire instilled in her by the excellent missionaries in Nicaragua.

Meanwhile, Dad's words, "we don't stop that easily," still burned in my heart. So by 1981 when we had saved enough money to return to Central America, we moved again, this time to Costa Rica. While serving there, we were invited to help with the construction of their new branch facilities. In 1985, however, our son Grant required medical attention, so we returned to Canada. Glen stayed in Costa Rica to work on the branch construction project, while Annette and Charmaine served as special pioneers. Those of us who left Costa Rica never dreamed we would not return.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Resurrection of Jesus
—Fact or Legend?

Gaining the Victory
Over Human Weakness

"Happy Is the Man
That Has Found Wisdom"

Dealing With Adversity

September 17, 1993, dawned bright and sunny. Our eldest son, Mark, and I were shingling a roof. We worked side by side and chatted about spiritual matters, as was our custom. Somehow I lost my balance and rolled off the roof. When I regained consciousness, all I could see were bright lights and people dressed in white. It was the trauma room of the hospital.

Because of what the Bible says, my initial reaction was: "No blood, no blood!" (Acts 15:28, 29) How reassuring to hear Charmaine say: "It's OK, Dad. We're all here." I learned later that the doctors saw my medical document, and the use of blood was never an issue. I had broken my neck and was completely paralyzed, unable even to breathe on my own.

Immobilized, I needed more than ever to be sustained by Jehovah. A tracheotomy, performed to insert a respirator tube, cut off the passage of air to my vocal cords. I could not talk. People had to read my lips to understand what I was trying to say.

Expenses mounted quickly. With my wife and most of my children in the full-time ministry, I wondered whether they would have to leave this service to care for these financial responsibilities. However, Mark was able to get work that in only three months helped to cover much of this expense. As a result, all were able to remain in the full-time ministry except my wife and me.

Hundreds of cards and letters from six different coun-

With my wife, Myrna

tries covered the walls of my hospital room. Jehovah was truly sustaining me. The congregation also helped my family by providing meals during part of the five and a half months I was in the intensive care unit. Every day, a Christian elder spent the afternoon with me, reading to me from the Bible and Bible publications, as well as relating encouraging experiences.

Two family members prepared for each congregation meeting with me, so I never missed out on vital spiritual food.

While I was still in the hospital, provision was made for me to attend a special assembly day program. The hospital staff arranged for a registered nurse and a respiratory technician to accompany me the whole day. What a delight it was to be with my Christian brothers and sisters again! I will never forget

A recent picture of our family



seeing hundreds line up, waiting their turn to greet me.

Maintaining Spirituality

About a year after the accident, I was able to move back home with my family, although I still require 24-hour-a-day nursing care. A



I still witness by letters

specially equipped van enables me to get to meetings, which I seldom miss. I must admit, though, it takes determination to go. Since coming home, I have been able to attend all district conventions.

Eventually, in February 1997, I regained my ability to speak to a limited degree. Some of my nurses listen appreciatively as I share with them my Bible-based hope. One nurse has read the entire book *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* to me as well as other Watch Tower publications. I correspond with people by using a stick to operate a computer. Though typing this way is very tedious, it is rewarding to be able to remain involved in the ministry.

I suffer a great deal from nerve pain. But it seems that when I am sharing Bible truths with others or hearing these read to me, I feel some relief. Occasionally, I do street witnessing with my supportive wife, who interprets for me when I need help. On several occa-

sions, I have been able to serve as an auxiliary pioneer. Serving as a Christian elder gives me a sense of joy, especially when brothers come up to me at meetings or visit me in my home and I am able to help and encourage them.

I must confess that it is easy to get depressed. So whenever I feel down, I immediately pray that I might have joy. Night and day I pray that Jehovah will keep sustaining me. A letter or a visit from someone always cheers me up. Reading a *Watchtower* or an *Awake!* magazine also fills my mind with upbuilding thoughts. Different nurses sometimes read these magazines to me. Since my accident, I have listened to the reading of the entire Bible on cassette tapes seven times. These are among the various ways that Jehovah has sustained me.—Psalm 41:3.

My change in circumstances has afforded me a lot of time to meditate on how our Grand Instructor, Jehovah, educates us for life. He gives us accurate knowledge of his will and purpose, a meaningful ministry, counsel on the secret to family happiness, and discernment to know what to do in adversity. Jehovah has blessed me with a faithful and wonderful wife. My children too have loyally stuck by my side, and it is a joy to me that they have all shared in the full-time ministry. In fact, on March 11, 2000, our son Mark and his wife, Allyson, graduated from the 108th class of Gilead School and were assigned to Nicaragua. My wife and I were able to attend their graduation. I can truthfully say that adversity has changed my life but not my heart.—Psalm 127:3, 4.

I thank Jehovah for the wisdom he has provided to enable me to pass on to my family the spiritual heritage that I received. I am strengthened and encouraged to see my children serving their Creator with an attitude similar to that of my father, who said, "We don't stop that easily. Jehovah commanded us to preach." Indeed, Jehovah has sustained me and my family all our days.

CYRIL and METHODIUS

Bible Translators Who Invented an Alphabet

"Our nation is baptized and yet we have no teacher. We understand neither Greek nor Latin. . . . We do not understand written characters nor their meaning; therefore send us teachers who can make known the words of the Scriptures and their sense."

—Rostislav, prince of Moravia, 862 C.E.

TODAY, the more than 435 million people who speak languages of the Slavic family have access to a translation of the Bible in their native tongue.* Of them, 360 million use the Cyrillic alphabet. Yet, 12 centuries ago there was neither a written language nor an alphabet in the dialects of their ancestors. The men who helped to correct that situation were named Cyril and Methodius, brothers by birth. People who love God's Word will find that the bold and innovative efforts of these two brothers make an intriguing chapter in the history of the preservation and promotion of the Bible. Who were these men, and what obstacles did they face?

"The Philosopher" and the Governor
Cyril (827-869 C.E., originally named Constantine) and Methodius (825-885 C.E.) were born into a noble family in Thessalonica, Greece. Thessalonica was then a bilingual

city; its inhabitants spoke Greek and a form of Slavic. The presence of numerous Slavs and the close contact between its citizens and the surrounding Slav communities may have given Cyril and Methodius the opportunity to acquire an intimate knowledge of the language of the southern Slavs. And one biographer of Methodius even mentions that their mother was of Slavic origin.

After his father's death, Cyril moved to Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire. There he studied at the imperial university and associated with distinguished educators. He became librarian of Hagia Sophia, the most prominent church building in the East, and later became a professor of philosophy. In fact, because of his academic achievements, Cyril earned the nickname The Philosopher.

In the meantime, Methodius pursued the same career as his father—political administration. He reached the rank of archon (governor) in a frontier Byzantine district where many Slavs lived. Nevertheless, he withdrew

* The Slavic languages are spoken in Eastern and Central Europe and include Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Polish, Czech, Bulgarian, and similar tongues.



into a monastery in Bithynia, Asia Minor. Cyril joined him there in 855 C.E.

In 860 C.E., the patriarch of Constantinople sent the two brothers on a foreign mission. They were dispatched to the Khazar, a people dwelling northeast of the Black Sea, who were still hesitating to decide between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. On his way there, Cyril remained for a time at Chersonese, in Crimea. Some scholars believe that there he learned Hebrew and Samaritan and that he translated a Hebrew grammar into the language of the Khazar.

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Cyrillic or Glagolitic?

The nature of the alphabet Cyril contrived has provoked much controversy, since linguists are not certain what alphabet it was. The alphabet called Cyrillic is based closely on the Greek alphabet, with a dozen or so additional characters invented to represent Slavonic sounds not found in Greek. Some of the earliest Slavonic manuscripts, however, use a very different script, known as Glagolitic, and it is this script that many scholars believe Cyril invented. A few of the Glagolitic characters appear to come from cursive Greek or Hebrew. Some may have been derived from medieval diacritics, but most are original and complex creations. Glagolitic seems to be a highly distinct and original creation. However, it is Cyrillic that has developed into the present-day Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Macedonian scripts, besides 22 additional languages, some of which are not Slavonic.

A Call From Moravia

In 862 C.E., Rostislav, prince of Moravia (modern-day eastern Czechia, western Slovakia, and western Hungary), sent to Byzantine Emperor Michael III the request appearing in the opening paragraph—that he send teachers of the Scriptures. Moravia's Slavic-speaking citizens had already been introduced to church teachings by missionaries from the East Frankish kingdom (now Germany and Austria). Rostislav, however, was concerned about the political and ecclesiastical influence of the Germanic tribes. He hoped that religious ties with Constantinople would help keep his nation politically and religiously autonomous.

The emperor decided to send Methodius and Cyril to Moravia. Academically, educationally, and linguistically, the two brothers were well-equipped to lead such a mission. A ninth-century biographer tells us that the emperor, in urging them to go to Moravia, reasoned: "You are both natives of Thessalonica, and all Thessalonians speak pure Slav."

An Alphabet and a Bible Translation Are Born

During the months before their departure, Cyril prepared for the mission by developing a written script for the Slavs. It has been said that he had a keen ear for phonetics. Thus, using Greek and Hebrew characters, he tried to provide a letter for each speech sound in Slavonic.* Some researchers believe that he had already spent years laying the groundwork for such an alphabet. And there is still uncertainty about the exact form of the alphabet that Cyril contrived.—See the box "Cyrillic or Glagolitic?"

* "Slavonic," as used in this article, denotes the Slavic dialect that Cyril and Methodius used for their mission and literary work. Some today use the terms "Old Slavonic" or "Old Church Slavonic." Linguists agree that there was no single common language spoken by the Slavs in the ninth century C.E.

At the same time, Cyril launched a quick program of Bible translation. According to tradition, he began by translating from Greek into Slavonic the first phrase of the Gospel of John, using the newly developed alphabet: "In the beginning the Word was . . ." Cyril went on to translate the four Gospels, the letters of Paul, and the book of Psalms.

Did he work alone? Methodius most probably helped with the task. Moreover, the book *The Cambridge Medieval History* states: "It is easy to imagine that [Cyril] had others to help him, who must have been in the first instance people of native Slav origin with a Greek education. If we examine the oldest translations, . . . we have the best proof of a highly developed Slavonic sense of language, which must be attributed to collaborators who were themselves Slavs." The rest of the Bible was completed later by Methodius, as we shall see.

"Like Rooks Upon a Falcon"

In 863 C.E., Cyril and Methodius began their mission in Moravia, where they were warmly welcomed. Their work included teaching a group of local people the newly invented Slavonic script, besides translating Biblical and liturgical texts.

All was not easy, however. The Frankish clergy in Moravia fiercely opposed the use of Slavonic. They held to a trilingual theory, maintaining that only Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were acceptable for use in worship. Hoping to gain the support of the pope for their newly developed written language, the brothers journeyed to Rome in 867 C.E.

En route, in Venice, Cyril and Methodius had another encounter with a group of trilingual Latin clergymen. A medieval biographer of Cyril tells us that the local bishops, priests, and monks fell upon him "like rooks upon a falcon." According to that account, Cyril retorted by citing 1 Corinthians 14:8, 9: "For truly, if the trumpet sounds an indistinct call, who will get ready for battle? In the same way also, unless you through the tongue

utter speech easily understood, how will it be known what is being spoken? You will, in fact, be speaking into the air."

When the brothers finally reached Rome, Pope Adrian II granted full approval for their use of Slavonic. After some months, and while still in Rome, Cyril became seriously ill. Less than two months later, he died at the age of 42.

Pope Adrian II encouraged Methodius to return to work in Moravia and around the town of Nitra, in what is now Slovakia. Wishing to strengthen his influence over that area, the pope gave Methodius letters approving the use of Slavonic and appointed him archbishop. However, in 870 C.E., the Frankish bishop Hermanrich, with the help of Prince Svatopluk of Nitra, arrested Methodius. He was imprisoned for two and a half years in a monastery in southeastern Germany. Finally, Adrian II's successor, Pope John VIII, ordered Methodius' release, reinstalled him in his diocese, and reaffirmed papal support for the use of Slavonic in worship.

But opposition from the Frankish clergy continued. Methodius successfully defended himself against accusations of heresy, and he eventually won from Pope John VIII a bull expressly authorizing the use of Slavonic in the church. As the current pope, John Paul II, has admitted, Methodius' life was spent "amidst journeys, privations, sufferings, hostility and persecution, . . . even a period of cruel imprisonment." Ironically, this was at the hands of bishops and princes favorably disposed toward Rome.

The Complete Bible Is Translated

Despite the unrelenting resistance, Methodius, with the help of several shorthand writers, finished translating the remainder of the Bible into Slavonic. According to tradition, he accomplished this huge task in just eight months. However, he did not translate the apocryphal books of the Maccabees.

(Poland)

*A Slavonic Bible in
Cyrillic text from 1581*



Bible: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica-Slovenija-Ljubljana



Today, it is not easy to assess accurately the quality of the translation made by Cyril and Methodius. Only a few manuscript copies still exist that date close to the time of the initial translation. By examining those rare early specimens, linguists note that the translation was precise and conveyed a natural freshness. The work *Our Slavic Bible* states that the two brothers "had to create many new words and expressions . . . And they did all this with amazing precision [and] opened the Slavic language to unprecedented lexical richness."

An Enduring Legacy

After Methodius died in 885 C.E., his disciples were expelled from Moravia by their Frankish opponents. They took refuge in Bohemia, southern Poland, and Bulgaria. Thus

the work of Cyril and Methodius was carried on and actually spread. The Slavonic language, which was given a written and more permanent form by the two brothers, flourished, developed, and later became diversified. Today, the Slavic family includes 13 distinct languages and many dialects.

Furthermore, the bold Bible translation efforts of Cyril and Methodius bore fruit in the various Slavic translations of the Scriptures that are available today. Millions who speak these languages benefit by having God's Word in their vernacular. Despite bitter opposition, how true are the words: 'The word of our God will last to time indefinite'!—Isaiah 40:8.

Bloodless Surgery

"A Major Medical Trend"

UNDER the heading "Bloodless" Surgery," *Maclean's* magazine reported that doctors across Canada have been "developing new techniques that, over the past five years, have turned so-called bloodless surgery into a major medical trend." Brian Muirhead, an anesthesiologist at Winnipeg's Health Sciences Centre, is one of them. What prompted his search for alternative nonblood management?

In 1986, Dr. Muirhead took on the challenge of operating on a 70-year-old man with a bleeding ulcer who, because of his Bible-based beliefs as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, had asked for treatment that did not require a blood transfusion. (Acts 15:28, 29) Dr. Muirhead "resorted to a little-used method of pumping saline solution into the patient to keep his blood pressure up," reports *Maclean's*. "The procedure was a success, and it reinforced Muirhead's growing belief that 'we were giving too many blood transfusions. I thought it was time to look at alternatives.'

The quest for bloodless surgery was "spurred both by concerns over the future supply of donated blood—and by many patients' fears of getting a disease virus from a transfusion." Thanks to the research by innovative doctors, not only Jehovah's Witnesses but many others have benefited. "Besides eliminating the need for transfusions in many cases, bloodless surgery reduces the risk—however slight—of infection from tainted blood," says *Maclean's*. But even "clean" blood can pose a risk of infection by temporarily suppressing patients' immune systems.

