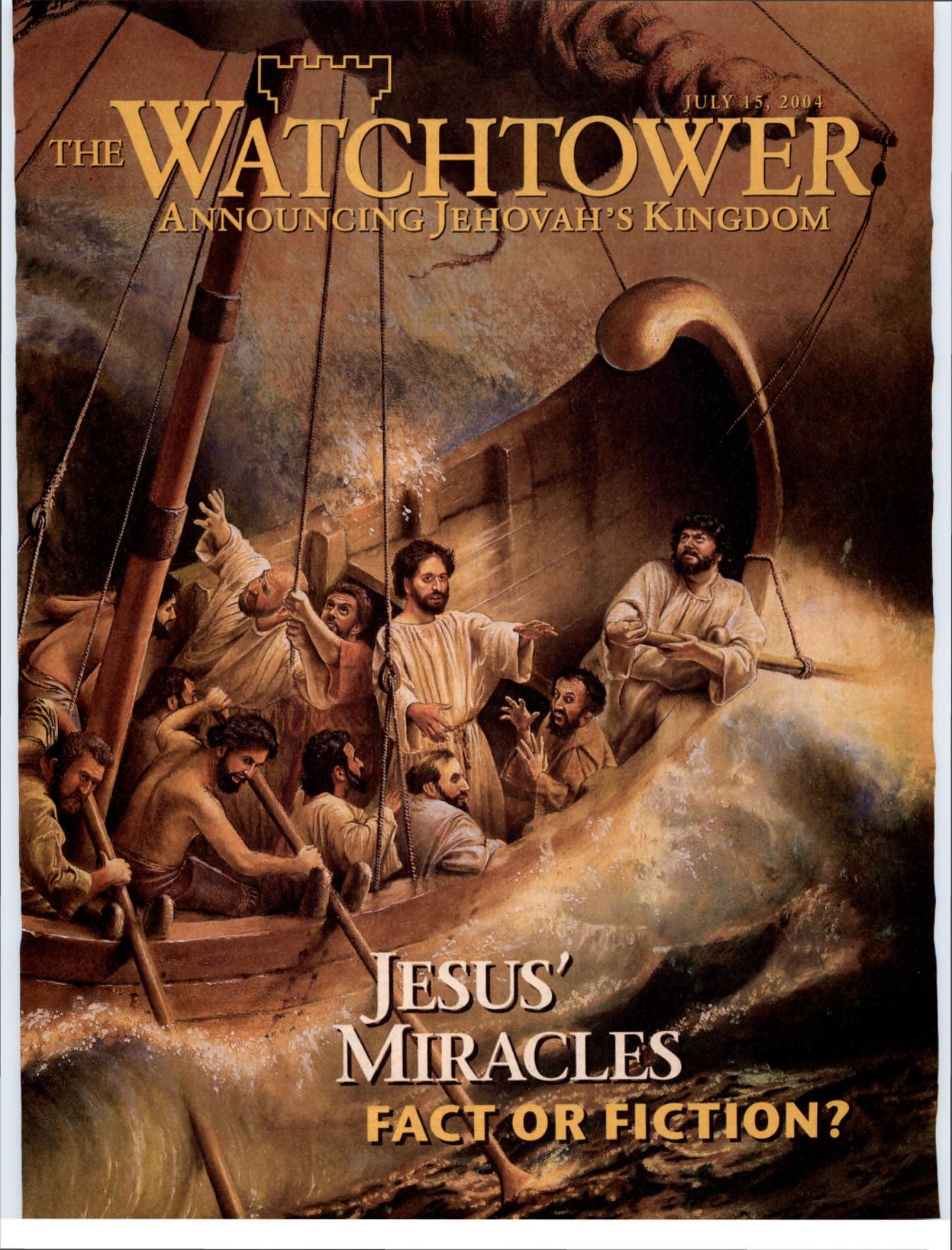


JULY 15, 2004

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



A dramatic painting depicting a scene from the New Testament. In the center, Jesus Christ stands on a small boat, reaching out towards the right. He is surrounded by his twelve apostles, who appear惊恐 and are clinging to the boat's hull. The boat is tilted significantly to the right, suggesting it is about to capsize. The background is filled with dark, turbulent waves, with a bright, golden glow emanating from behind Jesus, creating a sense of divine power and intervention. The overall mood is one of awe and wonder.

**JESUS'
MIRACLES
FACT OR FICTION?**

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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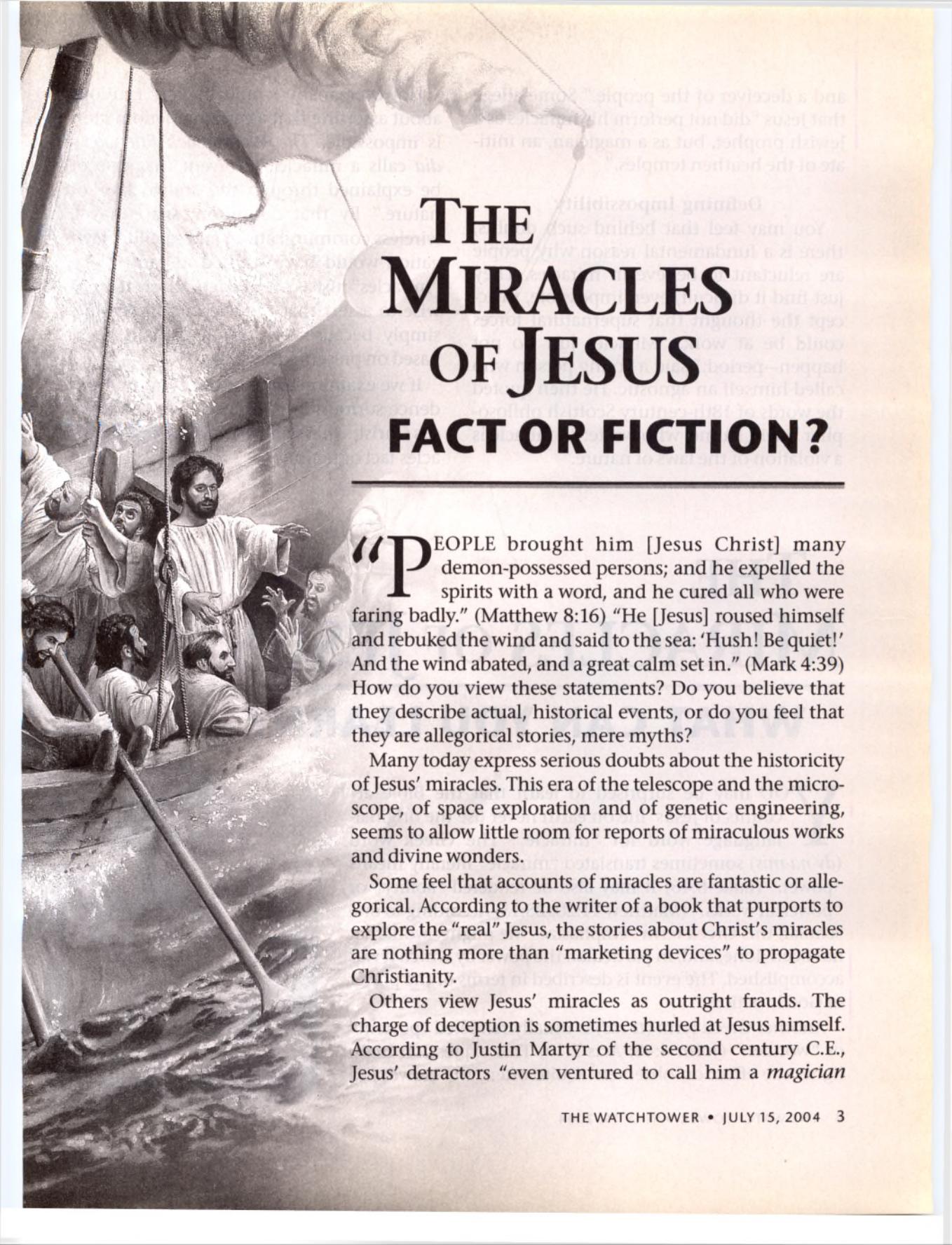
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THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

FACT OR FICTION?

“**P**EOPLE brought him [Jesus Christ] many demon-possessed persons; and he expelled the spirits with a word, and he cured all who were faring badly.” (Matthew 8:16) “He [Jesus] roused himself and rebuked the wind and said to the sea: ‘Hush! Be quiet!’ And the wind abated, and a great calm set in.” (Mark 4:39) How do you view these statements? Do you believe that they describe actual, historical events, or do you feel that they are allegorical stories, mere myths?

Many today express serious doubts about the historicity of Jesus’ miracles. This era of the telescope and the microscope, of space exploration and of genetic engineering, seems to allow little room for reports of miraculous works and divine wonders.

Some feel that accounts of miracles are fantastic or allegorical. According to the writer of a book that purports to explore the “real” Jesus, the stories about Christ’s miracles are nothing more than “marketing devices” to propagate Christianity.

Others view Jesus’ miracles as outright frauds. The charge of deception is sometimes hurled at Jesus himself. According to Justin Martyr of the second century C.E., Jesus’ detractors “even ventured to call him a *magician*

and a deceiver of the people." Some allege that Jesus "did not perform his miracles as a Jewish prophet, but as a magician, an initiate of the heathen temples."

Defining Impossibility

You may feel that behind such doubts, there is a fundamental reason why people are reluctant to believe in miracles. They just find it difficult, even impossible, to accept the thought that supernatural forces could be at work. "Miracles just do not happen—period," said a young person who called himself an agnostic. He then quoted the words of 18th-century Scottish philosopher David Hume, who wrote: "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature."

However, many would be very cautious about asserting that a certain phenomenon is impossible. *The World Book Encyclopedia* calls a miracle "an event that cannot be explained through the known laws of nature." By that definition, space travel, wireless communication, and satellite navigation would have seemed to most to be "miracles" just a century ago. Surely it is unwise to assert that miracles are impossible simply because we cannot explain them based on present knowledge.

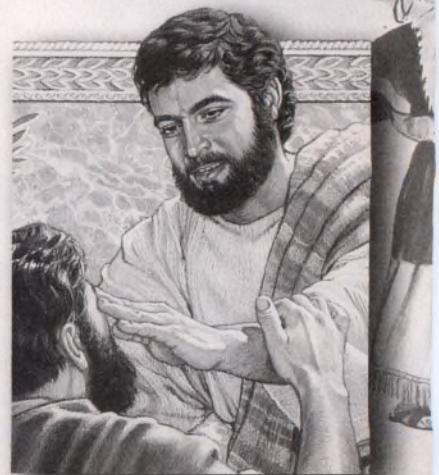
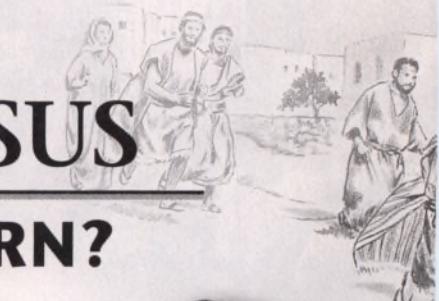
If we examine some of the Scriptural evidence surrounding miracles ascribed to Jesus Christ, what will we find? Are Jesus' miracles fact or fiction?

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

WHAT CAN YOU LEARN?

YOU may be surprised to learn that the Bible accounts of Jesus' life on earth never use the original-language word for "miracle." The Greek word (*dy'na·mis*) sometimes translated "miracle" literally means "power." (Luke 8:46) It may also be rendered "ability" or "powerful works." (Matthew 11:20; 25:15) According to one scholar, this Greek term "emphasizes the mighty work that has been done, and, in particular, the power by which it was accomplished. The event is described in terms of the power of God in action."

Another Greek term (*te'ras*) is usually rendered "portent" or "wonder." (John 4:48; Acts 2:19) This expression highlights the effect on observers. Quite often, the crowd and



the disciples were amazed and astounded at Jesus' powerful works.—Mark 2:12; 4:41; 6:51; Luke 9:43.

A third Greek term (*se-me'i-on*) referring to Jesus' miracles denotes a "sign." It "focuses upon the deeper meaning of the miracle," says scholar Robert Deffinbaugh. He adds: "A sign is a miracle which conveys a truth about our Lord Jesus."

Illusion or God-Given Power?

The Bible does not describe Jesus' miracles as tricks or illusions designed to entertain people. They were manifestations of "the majestic power of God," as in the case of a boy from whom Jesus expelled a demon. (Luke 9:37-43) Would such powerful works be impossible for Almighty God—the One who is described as having an "abundance of

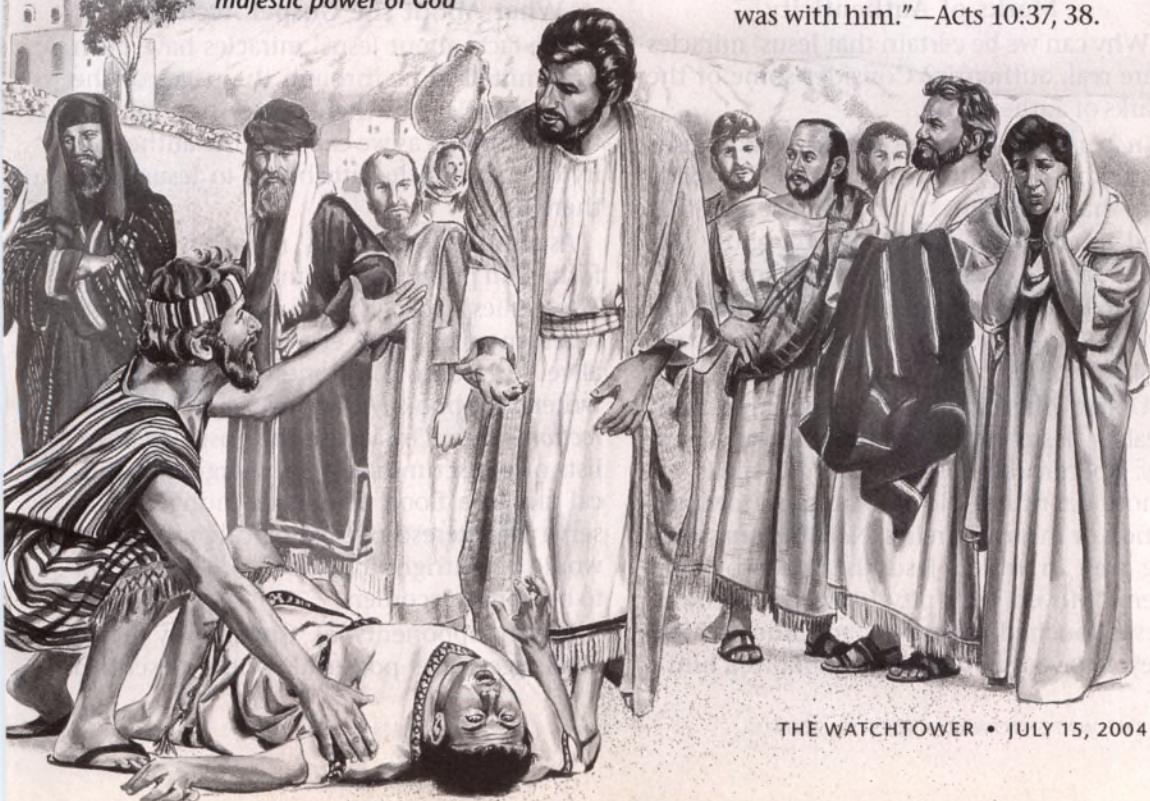
Jesus' miracles were a manifestation of "the majestic power of God"

dynamic energy"? (Isaiah 40:26) Of course not!

The Gospel accounts refer to some 35 miracles of Jesus. But the total number of his miracles is not revealed. For instance, Matthew 14:14 states: "He [Jesus] saw a great crowd; and he felt pity for them, and he cured their sick ones." We are not told how many sick people he cured on that occasion.

Such powerful works were central to Jesus' claim that he was the Son of God, the promised Messiah. The Scriptures did indeed show that God-given power enabled Jesus to perform miracles. The apostle Peter referred to Jesus as "a man publicly shown by God to you through powerful works and portents and signs that God did through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know." (Acts 2:22) On another occasion, Peter pointed out that "God anointed him [Jesus] with holy

spirit and power, and he went through the land doing good and healing all those oppressed by the Devil; because God was with him."—Acts 10:37, 38.



The miracles of Jesus were intertwined with his message. Mark 1:21-27 reveals the reaction of the crowd to Jesus' teaching and to one of his miracles. Mark 1:22 says that the crowds "became astounded at his way of teaching," and verse 27 points out that the people were "astonished" when he expelled a demon. Both Jesus' powerful works and his message provided proof that he was the promised Messiah.

Jesus did not merely claim that he was the Messiah; along with his words and other deeds, the God-given power displayed in his miracles furnished evidence of his Messiahship. When questions about his role and commission arose, Jesus boldly replied: "I have the witness greater than that of John [the Baptizer], for the very works that my Father assigned me to accomplish, the works themselves that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father dispatched me." —John 5:36.

Marks of Authenticity

Why can we be certain that Jesus' miracles were real, authentic? Consider some of the marks of authenticity.

In performing his powerful works, Jesus never drew attention to himself. He made sure that the result of any miracle was that God received the credit and the glory. Before curing a blind man, for instance, Jesus stressed that the healing would take place "in order that the works of God might be made manifest in his case." —John 9:1-3; 11:1-4.

Unlike illusionists, magicians, and faith healers, Jesus never used hypnotism, trickery, spectacular displays, magic spells, or emotional rituals. He did not resort to superstition or the use of relics. Note the unassuming way in which Jesus healed two blind men. "Moved with pity," says the account, "Jesus touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight, and they followed him."

(Matthew 20:29-34) No ritual, ceremony, or showy display was involved. Jesus performed his miraculous works in the open, often before numerous eyewitnesses. He did not use special lighting, staging, or props. In contrast, alleged modern-day miracles often defy documentation.—Mark 5:24-29; Luke 7:11-15.

Jesus sometimes acknowledged the faith of those who benefited from his miracles. But a person's lack of faith did not prevent Jesus from performing a miracle. While he was in Capernaum in Galilee, "people brought him many demon-possessed persons; and he expelled the spirits with a word, and he cured all who were faring badly." —Matthew 8:16.

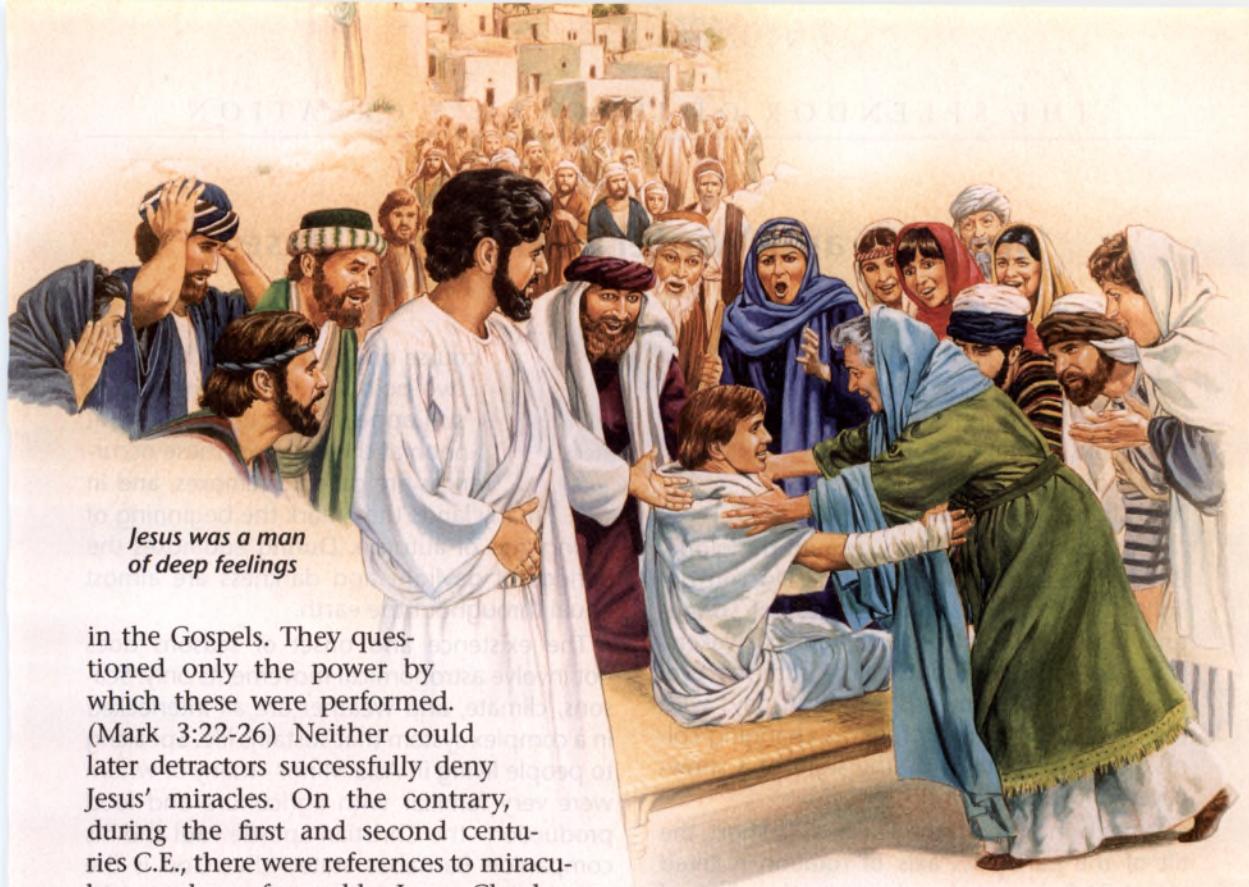
The miracles of Jesus were performed to meet actual physical needs of people, not to satisfy someone's curiosity. (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 23:8) And Jesus never performed miracles in order to profit personally in any way. —Matthew 4:2-4; 10:8.

What About the Gospel Accounts?

The facts about Jesus' miracles have been transmitted to us through the pages of the four Gospels. Are there reasons to rely on these accounts as we examine the authenticity of the miracles attributed to Jesus? Yes, there are.

As already noted, Jesus' miracles were performed in public, before many eyewitnesses. The earliest Gospels were penned at a time when most of those eyewitnesses were still alive. Regarding the honesty of the Gospel writers, the book *The Miracles and the Resurrection* notes: "To accuse the gospel evangelists of indiscriminately submerging historical fact in a flood of miracle-mongering to serve the interests of theological propaganda would be outright injustice. . . . They meant to be honest recorders."

Jewish opponents of Christianity never challenged the powerful works described



*Jesus was a man
of deep feelings*

in the Gospels. They questioned only the power by which these were performed. (Mark 3:22-26) Neither could later detractors successfully deny Jesus' miracles. On the contrary, during the first and second centuries C.E., there were references to miraculous works performed by Jesus. Clearly, we have every reason to view the Gospel accounts of his miracles as authentic.

The Man Behind the Miracles

An examination of Jesus' miracles would be incomplete were it to be limited to logical arguments about their authenticity. In describing Jesus' powerful works, the Gospels reveal a man of deep feelings and unrivaled compassion, with a keen interest in the welfare of fellow humans.

Consider the case of a leper who approached Jesus with the desperate plea: "If you just want to, you can make me clean." "Moved with pity," Jesus reached out and touched the leper, saying: "I want to. Be made clean." The man was instantly healed. (Mark 1:40-42) Jesus thus demonstrated the empathy that moved him to use his God-given power to perform miracles.

What happened when Jesus met up with a funeral procession coming out of the city of Nain? The deceased young man was the only son of a widow. "Moved with pity" for the woman, Jesus approached her and said: "Stop weeping." Then he raised her son back to life.—Luke 7:11-15.

A comforting lesson that can be drawn from Jesus' miracles is that he was "moved with pity" and did things to help people. But such miracles are not mere history. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever," says Hebrews 13:8. He now rules as heavenly King, ready and able to use his God-given miraculous powers in a far grander way than he did when on earth as a human. Soon, Jesus will use them to heal obedient mankind. Jehovah's Witnesses will gladly help you to learn more about this bright prospect for the future.

'Summer and Winter Will Never Cease'

A BLISTERING sun beats down on the desert. In other parts of the earth, it brings warmth after a cold winter. Yes, the sun's heat is one of the prime factors behind climates and seasons.

Seasonal conditions vary around the globe. But how do seasons affect you? Do you delight in the invigorating freshness of springtime when you see trees and flowers awaken? How do you feel about balmy summer evenings? Do you enjoy crisp autumn days with their dazzling displays of leaves changing colors? Are you soothed by the sight of a snow-covered forest?

What brings about the seasons? In short, the tilt of the earth. Its axis of rotation is tilted about 23.5 degrees in relation to the plane of earth's orbit around the sun. If earth's axis were not tilted, there would be no seasons. The climate would be the same all the time. This would affect vegetation and the cycle of crop production.

Behind the succession of seasons, one can see the hand of the Creator. Addressing Jehovah God, the psalmist aptly stated: "It was you that set up all the boundaries of the earth; *summer and winter—you yourself formed them.*"—Psalm 74:17.*

From the standpoint of an earthly observer, heavenly bodies serve as unmistakable indicators of seasons. When creating our solar system, God decreed: "Let luminaries come to be in the expanse of the heavens . . . , and they must serve as signs and for seasons and for days and years." (Genesis 1:14) In the



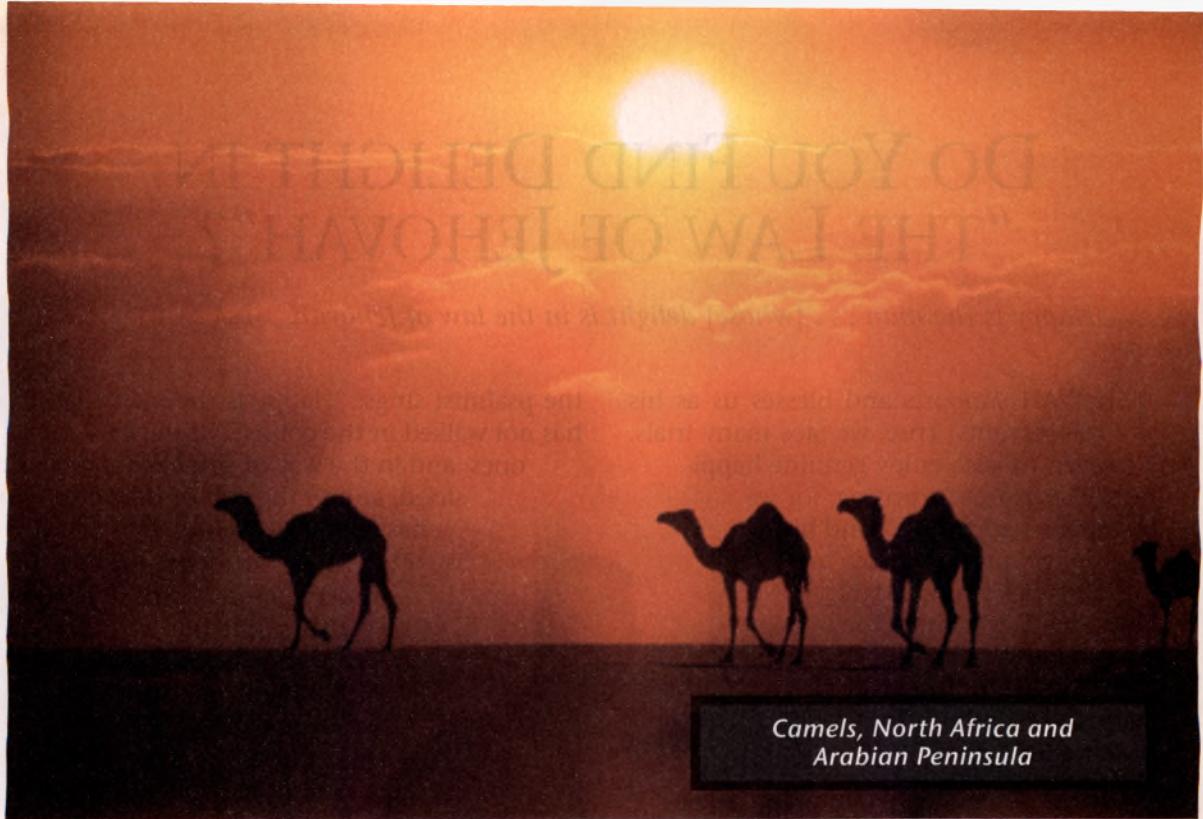
course of a year, the earth reaches two points in its orbit where the sun appears directly overhead at noon at the equator. These occurrences are called equinoxes, and in many lands they mark the beginning of spring and of autumn. During equinoxes the periods of daylight and darkness are almost equal throughout the earth.

The existence and onset of seasons does not involve astronomical movements only. Seasons, climate, and weather are all interlocked in a complex system that sustains life. Speaking to people living in Asia Minor—many of whom were very familiar with agriculture and food production—the Christian apostle Paul and his companion Barnabas stated that God is the one "giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts to the full with food and good cheer."—Acts 14:14-17.

The marvelous process of photosynthesis supports vegetation on land and phytoplankton in the seas. Because of this, the current food chain and the web of biodiversity respond to weather and climate in intricate ways. Paul made a fitting reference to Jehovah's hand in all of this, saying: "The ground that drinks in the rain which often comes upon it, and that then brings forth vegetation suitable to those for whom it is also cultivated, receives in return a blessing from God."—Hebrews 6:7.

The word "blessing" takes on new meaning if you just stop and think about what happens in those places where spring brings moderate

* See the 2004 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses, July/August.



Camels, North Africa and Arabian Peninsula



A Satellite Crucial to Life

Down through the ages, the moon has inspired and amazed humans. Do you realize, though, that the moon influences the seasons? The moon's presence helps to regulate the earth's obliquity, that is, the degree of tilt of its spin axis. This plays "a vital role in producing conditions on Earth that can sustain life," states science author Andrew Hill. If there were no large natural satellite to stabilize our planet's axial tilt, temperatures would soar and would likely make life on earth impossible. Thus, a team of astronomers concluded: "One might consider the Moon to act as a potential climate regulator for the Earth."—Psalm 104:19.



temperatures, longer days, more sunshine, and favorable rains. Flowers bloom and insects emerge from their winter sanctuaries, ready to pollinate crops. Birds, such as the blue jay you see here, fill the forest with color and song, and the landscape becomes vibrant. The pulse of life quickens, and organisms continue their life cycles of birth, rebirth, and growth. (Song of Solomon 2:12, 13) This sets the stage for harvesting in late summer or in autumn.—Exodus 23:16.

Jehovah's works are wonderfully attested to by the motion of the earth, providing for day and night, seasons, and seedtime and harvest. We are confident that summer will follow winter. After all, it was God who promised: "For all the days the earth continues, seed sowing and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, will never cease."—Genesis 8:22.

DO YOU FIND DELIGHT IN “THE LAW OF JEHOVAH”?

“Happy is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of Jehovah.”—PSALM 1:1, 2.

J EHOVAH supports and blesses us as his loyal servants. True, we face many trials. However, we also enjoy genuine happiness. This is not surprising, for we serve “the happy God,” and his holy spirit produces joy in our hearts. (1 Timothy 1:11; Galatians 5:22) Joy is the state of true happiness resulting from the expectation or acquisition of something good. And our heavenly Father certainly gives us good gifts. (James 1:17) No wonder we are happy!

² Happiness is featured prominently in the book of Psalms. For instance, this is true of Psalms 1 and 2. Jesus Christ’s early followers ascribed the second psalm to Israel’s King David. (Acts 4:25, 26) The unnamed composer of the first psalm begins his inspired song with the words: “Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones.” (Psalm 1:1) In this article and the next, let us see how Psalms 1 and 2 give us reason to rejoice.

The Secret of Happiness

³ Psalm 1 shows why a godly person is happy. Giving some reasons for such happiness,

1. Why are we happy as Jehovah’s servants?
2. Which psalms are we going to discuss?
3. According to Psalm 1:1, what are some reasons why a godly person is happy?

the psalmist sings: “Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones, and in the way of sinners has not stood, and in the seat of ridiculers has not sat.”—Psalm 1:1.

⁴ To be truly happy, we must comply with Jehovah’s righteous requirements. Zechariah and Elizabeth, who had the joyous privilege of becoming the parents of John the Baptizer, “were righteous before God because of walking blamelessly in accord with all the commandments and legal requirements of Jehovah.” (Luke 1:5, 6) We can

be happy if we pursue a similar course and firmly refuse to ‘walk in the counsel of the wicked’ or to be guided by their ungodly advice.

⁵ If we reject the thinking of wicked ones, we will not be ‘standing in the way of sinners.’ In fact, we literally will not be found where they often are—in places of immoral entertainment or of ill repute. What if we are tempted to join sinners in their unscriptural conduct? Then let us pray for God’s help to act in harmony with the apostle Paul’s words: “Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship

4. What exemplary course was pursued by Zechariah and Elizabeth?
5. What can help us to avoid “the way of sinners”?





Prayer will help us to avoid companionship with wicked ones

do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14) If we rely on God and are "pure in heart," we will reject the spirit and life-style of sinners and will have clean motives and desires, along with "faith without hypocrisy."—Matthew 5:8; 1 Timothy 1:5.

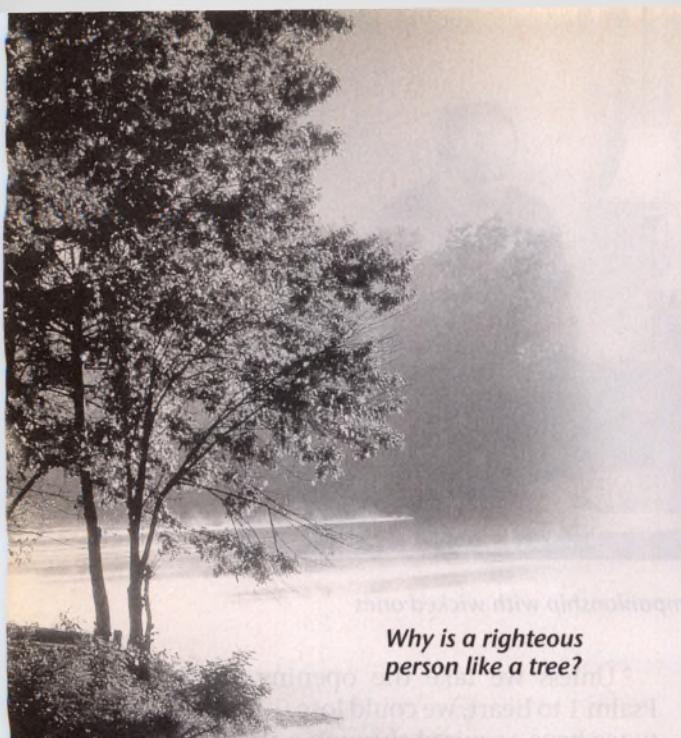
⁶ To please Jehovah, we surely 'must not sit in the seat of ridiculers.' Some ridicule godliness itself, but in these "last days," former Christians who have become apostates often prove to be especially scornful in their ridicule. The apostle Peter warned fellow believers: "Beloved ones, . . . you know this first, that in the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" (2 Peter 3:1-4) If we never 'sit in the seat of ridiculers,' we will avoid the disaster that is sure to befall them.—Proverbs 1:22-27.

6. Why should we be on guard respecting ridiculers?

⁷ Unless we take the opening words of Psalm 1 to heart, we could lose the spirituality we have acquired through a study of the Scriptures. In fact, we could then go from bad to worse. Our downward spiral might begin if we follow the counsel of the wicked. Then we might associate with them regularly. In time, we might even become faithless apostate ridiculers. Obviously, friendship with wicked ones can foster an ungodly spirit within us and can destroy our relationship with Jehovah God. (1 Corinthians 15:33; James 4:4) May we never allow that to happen to us!

⁸ Prayer will help us to keep our minds fixed on spiritual things and to avoid companionship with wicked ones. "Do not be anxious over anything," wrote Paul, "but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." The apostle encouraged consideration

7. Why should we take the words of Psalm 1:1 to heart?
8. What will help us to keep our minds fixed on spiritual things?



Why is a righteous person like a tree?

of things that are true, of serious concern, righteous, chaste, lovable, well spoken of, virtuous, and praiseworthy. (Philippians 4:6-8) Let us act in harmony with Paul's counsel and never stoop to the level of wicked ones.

⁹ Although we reject wicked practices, we do give a tactful witness to others, even as the apostle Paul spoke to Roman Governor Felix "about righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come." (Acts 24:24, 25; Colossians 4:6) We preach the good news of the Kingdom to all sorts of people, and we treat them in a kind manner. We are confident that those "rightly disposed for everlasting life" will become believers and delight in God's law.—Acts 13:48.

He Delights in Jehovah's Law

¹⁰ Regarding the happy man, the psalmist

9. Although we avoid wicked practices, how do we try to help all sorts of people?

10. What will help to make a lasting impression on our mind and heart during periods of personal study?

further says: "His delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night." (Psalm 1:2) As God's servants, we 'delight in the law of Jehovah.' When possible, during periods of personal study and meditation, we may read "in an undertone," sounding out the words. Doing this when reading any portion of the Scriptures will help to make a lasting impression on our mind and heart.

¹¹ "The faithful and discreet slave" has encouraged us to read the Bible daily. (Matthew 24:45) Because of a keen desire to become better acquainted with Jehovah's message for mankind, we may well read the Bible "day and night"—yes, even when we cannot sleep for some reason. Peter urged us: "As newborn infants, form a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word, that through it you may grow to salvation." (1 Peter 2:1, 2) Do you find delight in reading the Bible daily and meditating on God's Word and purposes at night? The psalmist did.—Psalm 63:6.

¹² Our eternal happiness depends on our taking delight in God's law. It is perfect and righteous, and there is a great reward in keeping it. (Psalm 19:7-11) The disciple James wrote: "He who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it." (James 1:25) If we truly delight in Jehovah's law, not a day will pass without our giving consideration to spiritual matters. Indeed, we will be motivated to 'search into the deep things of God' and to keep Kingdom interests first in life.—1 Corinthians 2:10-13; Matthew 6:33.

He Becomes Like a Tree

¹³ Further describing the upright person,

11. Why should we read the Bible "day and night"?

12. What will we do if we delight in Jehovah's law?

13-15. In what sense can we be like a tree planted beside a plentiful water source?

the psalmist says: "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." (Psalm 1:3) Like all other imperfect humans, we who serve Jehovah experience difficulties in life. (Job 14:1) We may suffer persecution and various other trials related to our faith. (Matthew 5:10-12) With God's help, however, we are able to endure these tests successfully, just as a healthy tree withstands comparatively strong winds.

¹⁴ A tree planted by an unfailing water source does not dry up in hot weather or during a drought. If we are God-fearing individuals, our strength comes from an unfailing Source—Jehovah God. Paul looked to God for help and could say: "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him [Jehovah] who imparts power to me." (Philippians 4:13) When we are guided and spiritually sustained by Jehovah's holy spirit, we do not wither away, becoming unfruitful or spiritually dead. We are fruitful in God's service and also manifest the fruitage of his spirit.—Jeremiah 17:7, 8; Galatians 5:22, 23.

¹⁵ By using the Hebrew word form rendered "like," the psalmist is employing a simile. He is comparing two things that are different, though they share a particular quality. Men and trees differ, but the luxuriance of a tree planted beside a plentiful water source evidently reminded the psalmist of the spiritual prosperity of those whose "delight is in the law of Jehovah." If we take delight in God's law, our days can become like those of a tree. In fact, we can live forever. —John 17:3.

¹⁶ As we pursue an upright course, Jehovah helps us to bear the pressure of trials and difficulties. We are joyful and fruitful in God's

16. Why and in what respect is it that 'everything we do succeeds'?

service. (Matthew 13:23; Luke 8:15) 'Everything we do succeeds' because our main objective is to do Jehovah's will. Since his purposes always succeed and we delight in his commandments, we prosper spiritually. (Genesis 39:23; Joshua 1:7, 8; Isaiah 55:11) This is so even when we face adversities. —Psalm 112:1-3; 3 John 2.

The Wicked Seem to Prosper

¹⁷ How the lot of the wicked differs from that of the righteous! Wicked ones may appear to prosper materially for a time, but they are not prospering spiritually. This is evident from the psalmist's further words: "The wicked are not like that, but are like the chaff that the wind drives away. That is why the wicked ones will not stand up in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of righteous ones." (Psalm 1:4, 5) Note that the psalmist says, "the wicked are not like that." He means that they are not like godly people, who have just been compared to fruitful, long-lasting trees.

¹⁸ Even if wicked ones prosper materially, they have no lasting security. (Psalm 37:16; 73:3, 12) They are like the unreasonable rich man Jesus mentioned in an illustration when asked to arbitrate in a matter involving an inheritance. Jesus told those present: "Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness, because even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses." Jesus illustrated this point by saying that the land of a certain rich man produced so well that he planned to tear down his storehouses and build bigger ones to hold all his good things. The man then planned to eat, drink, and enjoy himself. But God said: "Unreasonable one, this night they are

17, 18. (a) To what does the psalmist liken the wicked? (b) Even if the wicked prosper materially, why do they have no lasting security?

demanding your soul from you. Who, then, is to have the things you stored up?" Making his powerful point, Jesus added: "So it goes with the man that lays up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."—Luke 12:13-21.

¹⁹ The wicked are not "rich toward God." Hence, they have no more security and stability than does chaff, the thin covering on kernels of grain. After grain was harvested in ancient times, it was taken to a threshing floor, a flat area generally on high ground. There sledges with sharp stone or iron teeth on their underside were pulled over the grain by animals to break the stalks into pieces and loosen the kernels from the chaff. Next, a winnowing shovel was used to pick up the whole mixture and toss it into the air against the wind. (Isaiah 30:24) The kernels fell back onto the threshing floor, while the breeze carried the straw off to the side and blew the

19, 20. (a) Describe the ancient threshing and winnowing process. (b) Why are the wicked likened to chaff?

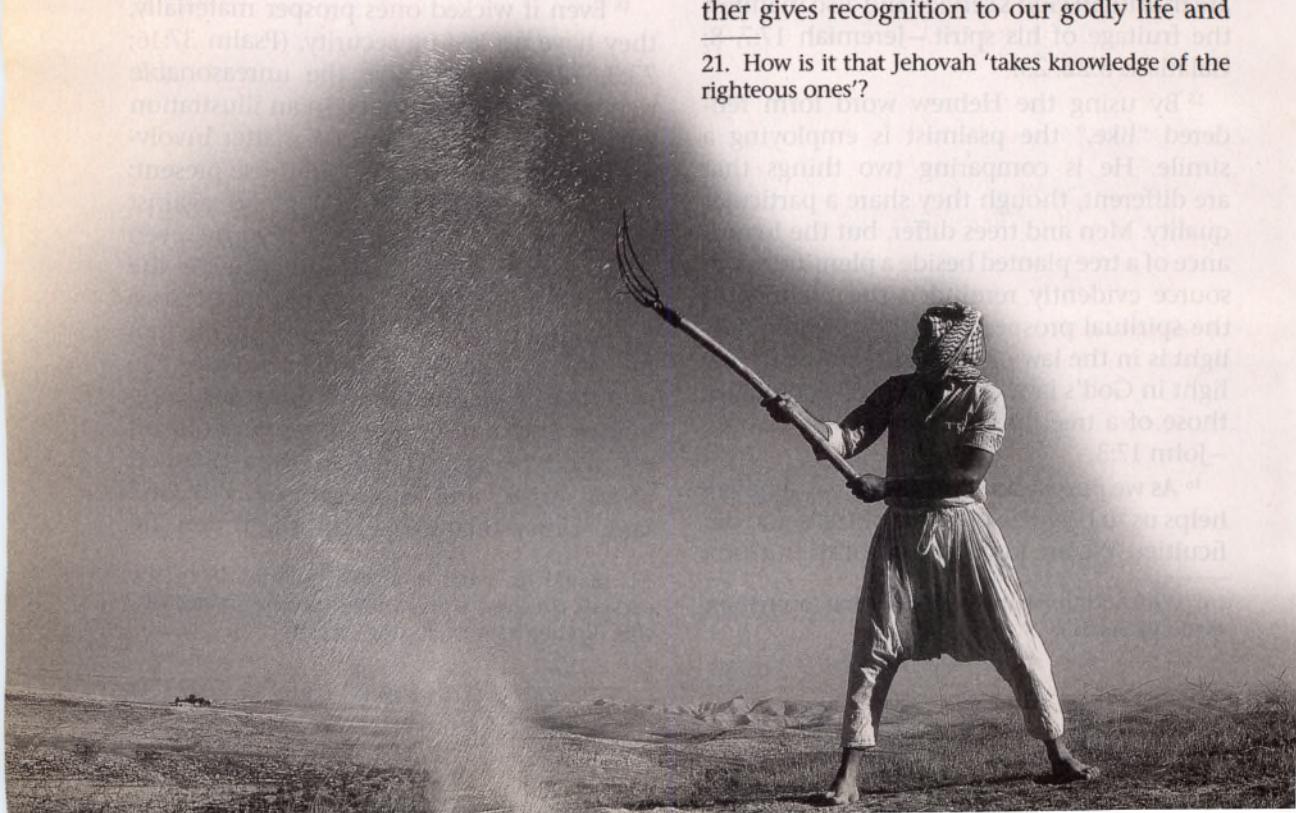
chaff away. (Ruth 3:2) After the grain was passed through a sieve to remove pebbles and the like, it was ready for storage or grinding. (Luke 22:31) But the chaff was gone.

²⁰ Just as the kernels of grain dropped to the ground and were preserved while the chaff was blown away, so the righteous will remain and the wicked will be removed. Surely, though, we are happy that such evildoers will soon be gone forever. With them out of the way, people who take delight in Jehovah's law will be greatly blessed. Indeed, obedient humans will eventually receive God's gift of everlasting life.—Matthew 25:34-46; Romans 6:23.

The Blessed "Way of Righteous Ones"

²¹ The first psalm concludes with these words: "Jehovah is taking knowledge of the way of righteous ones, but the very way of wicked ones will perish." (Psalm 1:6) How does God 'take knowledge of the righteous ones'? Well, if we are pursuing an upright course, we can be sure that our heavenly Father gives recognition to our godly life and

21. How is it that Jehovah 'takes knowledge of the righteous ones'?



views us as his approved servants. In turn, we can and should throw all our anxiety upon him with the conviction that he really cares for us.—Ezekiel 34:11; 1 Peter 5:6, 7.

²² “The way of righteous ones” will remain forever, but incorrigibly wicked people will perish because of Jehovah’s adverse judgment. And their “way,” or course of life, will end with them. We can have confidence in the fulfillment of David’s words: “Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace. The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it.”—Psalm 37:10, 11, 29.

22, 23. What will happen to the wicked and to the righteous?

²³ What happiness we will experience if we are privileged to live on a paradise earth when wicked ones no longer exist! The meek and righteous will then enjoy true peace because they will always find delight in “the law of Jehovah.” Before then, however, “the decree of Jehovah” must be put in force. (Psalm 2:7a) The next article will help us to see what that decree is and what it will mean for us and for the entire human family.

How Would You Answer?

- Why is a godly person happy?
- What shows that we find delight in Jehovah’s law?
- How can an individual be like a well-watered tree?
- How does the way of the righteous differ from that of the wicked?

“THE DECREE OF JEHOVAH” CANNOT FAIL

“Let me refer to the decree of Jehovah; he has said to me: ‘You are my son . . . Ask of me, that I may give nations as your inheritance.’”—PSALM 2:7, 8.

JEHOVAH GOD has a purpose for mankind and the earth. The nations also have a purpose. But how these purposes differ! We ought to expect this, for God says: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” God’s purpose is certain to be fulfilled, for he goes on to say: “Just as the pouring rain descends,

1. What contrast is there between God’s purpose and that of the nations?

and the snow, from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth and makes it produce and sprout, and seed is actually given to the sower and bread to the eater, so my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it.”—Isaiah 55:9-11.



David sang about the triumphant Messianic King

Nations in Tumult

⁴ Referring to the actions of the nations and their rulers, the psalmist begins his composition by singing: "Why have the nations been in tumult and the national groups themselves kept muttering an empty thing? The kings of earth take their stand and high officials themselves have massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one."—Psalm 2:1, 2.*

⁵ What "empty thing" have the present-day national groups "kept muttering"? Instead of accepting God's Anointed One—the Messiah, or Christ—the nations have "kept muttering," or meditating on, the perpetuation of their own authority. These words of the second psalm also had an application in the first century C.E. when Jewish and Roman authorities worked together to kill God's King-Designate, Jesus Christ. However, the major fulfillment began in 1914 when Jesus was installed as heavenly King. Since then, not one political entity on earth has acknowledged God's enthroned King.

⁶ What was meant when the psalmist asked 'why national groups were muttering an empty thing'? It is their purpose that is empty; it is futile and doomed to failure. They cannot bring peace and harmony to this globe. Yet, they carry their actions so far as to oppose divine rulership. In fact, they have unitedly taken a belligerent stand and

* Initially, King David was the "anointed one," and "the kings of earth" were Philistine rulers who massed their armies against him.

4. How would you summarize the main points of Psalm 2:1, 2?

5, 6. The national groups have "kept muttering" what "empty thing"?

² That God's purpose regarding his Messianic King will be fulfilled is made clear in the second psalm. Its composer, King David of ancient Israel, was divinely inspired to foretell that there would be a notable time when the nations would be in tumult. Their rulers would take a stand against Jehovah God and his Anointed One. However, the psalmist also sang: "Let me refer to the decree of Jehovah; he has said to me: 'You are my son . . . Ask of me, that I may give nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your own possession.'”—Psalm 2:7, 8.

³ What does "the decree of Jehovah" portend for the nations? How does it affect mankind in general? Indeed, what do these developments mean for all God-fearing readers of the second psalm?

2, 3. What is made clear in the second psalm, but what questions are raised?

massed themselves together against the Most High and his Anointed One. What folly!

Jehovah's Triumphant King

⁷ Jesus' followers applied the words of Psalm 2:1, 2 to him. Persecuted for their faith, they prayed: "Sovereign Lord [Jehovah], you are the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them, and who through holy spirit said by the mouth of our forefather David, your servant, 'Why did nations become tumultuous and peoples meditate upon empty things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one.' Even so, both Herod [Antipas] and Pontius Pilate with men of nations and with peoples of Israel were in actuality gathered together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed." (Acts 4:24-27; Luke 23:1-12)* Yes, there was a conspiracy against God's anointed servant Jesus in the first century. However, this psalm would have another fulfillment centuries later.

⁸ When ancient Israel had a human king, such as David, pagan nations and rulers gathered together against God and his enthroned anointed one. But what about our time? Present-day nations do not want to comply with the requirements of Jehovah and the Messiah. Therefore, they are represented as saying: "Let us

* Other texts of the Christian Greek Scriptures also show that Jesus is God's Anointed One referred to in the second psalm. This is evident from a comparison of Psalm 2:7 with Acts 13:32, 33 and Hebrews 1:5; 5:5. See also Psalm 2:9 and Revelation 2:27.

7. In prayer, how did Jesus' early followers apply Psalm 2:1, 2?

8. How does Psalm 2:3 apply to present-day nations?

Rulers and the people of Israel conspired against Jesus Christ

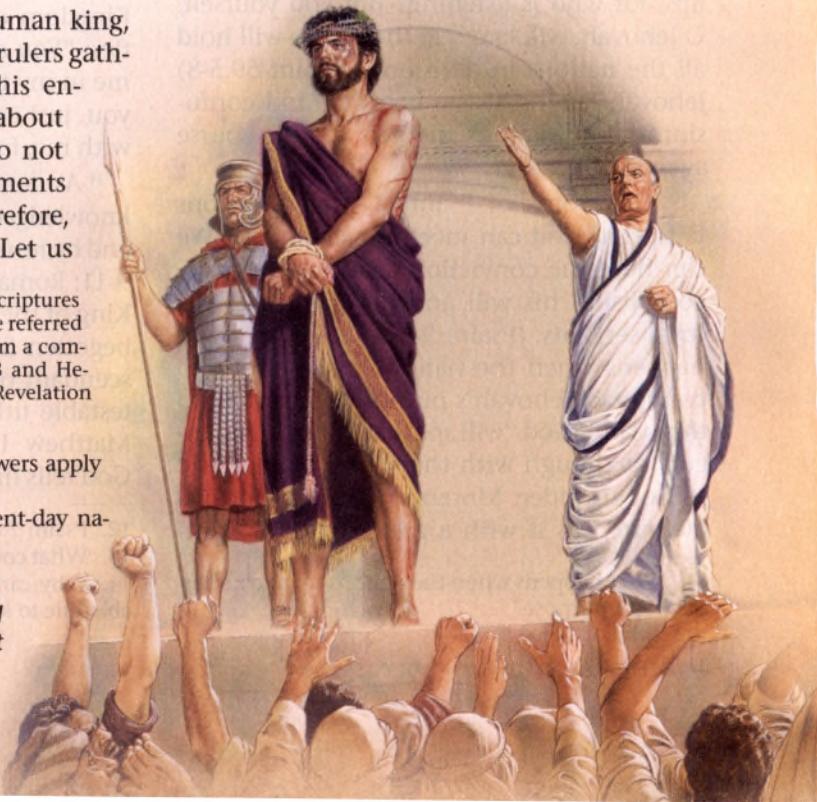
tear their bands apart and cast their cords away from us!" (Psalm 2:3) Any restrictions imposed by God and his Anointed One would be opposed by rulers and nations. Of course, any efforts to tear apart such bands and cast away such cords will be futile.

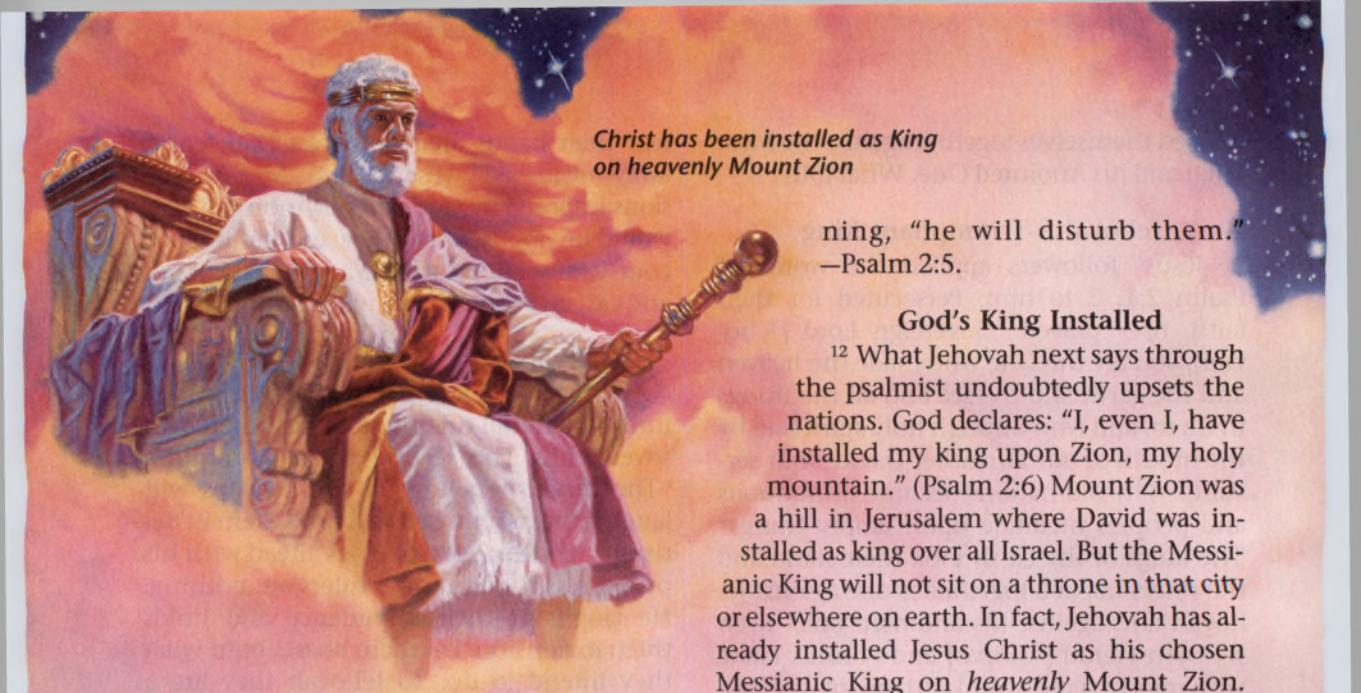
Jehovah Holds Them in Derision

⁹ Jehovah is not concerned about any efforts of national rulers to establish their own sovereignty. The second psalm continues: "The very One sitting in the heavens will laugh; Jehovah himself will hold them in derision." (Psalm 2:4) God goes ahead with his purpose as though these rulers are nothing. He laughs at their impudence and holds them in derision. Let them boast about what they intend to do. To Jehovah they are a laughingstock. He laughs at their futile opposition.

¹⁰ Elsewhere in his psalms, David refers to enemy men and nations and sings: "You,

9, 10. Why does Jehovah hold the nations in derision?





*Christ has been installed as King
on heavenly Mount Zion*

ning, “he will disturb them.”
—Psalm 2:5.

God's King Installed

¹² What Jehovah next says through the psalmist undoubtedly upsets the nations. God declares: “I, even I, have installed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain.” (Psalm 2:6) Mount Zion was a hill in Jerusalem where David was installed as king over all Israel. But the Messianic King will not sit on a throne in that city or elsewhere on earth. In fact, Jehovah has already installed Jesus Christ as his chosen Messianic King on *heavenly* Mount Zion.
—Revelation 14:1.

¹³ The Messianic King now speaks. He says: “Let me refer to the decree of Jehovah [who has made with his Son a covenant for the Kingdom]; he [Jehovah God] has said to me: ‘You are my son; I, today, I have become your father.’” (Psalm 2:7) Christ referred to the Kingdom covenant when he told his apostles: “You are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials; and I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom.”—Luke 22:28, 29.

¹⁴ As foretold at Psalm 2:7, Jehovah acknowledged Jesus as His Son at his baptism and by resurrecting him to spirit life. (Mark 1:9-11; Romans 1:4; Hebrews 1:5; 5:5) Yes, the King of the heavenly Kingdom is God’s only-begotten Son. (John 3:16) As the royal descendant of King David, Jesus holds uncontested title to kingship. (2 Samuel 7:4-17; Matthew 1:6, 16) According to this psalm, God tells his Son: “Ask of me, that I may give

O Jehovah God of armies, are the God of Israel. Do wake up to turn your attention to all the nations. Do not show favor to any hurtful traitors. They keep returning at evening time; they keep barking like a dog and go all around the city. Look! They make a bubbling forth with their mouth; swords are on their lips, for who is listening? But you yourself, O Jehovah, will laugh at them; you will hold all the nations in derision.” (Psalm 59:5-8) Jehovah laughs at the boasting and confusion of the nations in their foolish course against him.

¹¹ The words of Psalm 2 strengthen our faith that God can meet any challenge. We can have the conviction that he always accomplishes his will and never forsakes his loyal servants. (Psalm 94:14) So, then, what happens when the nations make efforts to counteract Jehovah’s purpose? According to this psalm, God “will speak to them in his anger,” as though with the sound of a terrible roll of thunder. Moreover, “in his hot displeasure,” as if with a great stroke of light-

11. What happens when the nations try to counteract God’s purpose?

12. Psalm 2:6 applies to what enthronement?

13. What covenant did Jehovah make with his Son?

14. Why can it be said that Jesus holds uncontested title to kingship?

nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your own possession.”—Psalm 2:8.

¹⁵ The King—God’s own Son—holds the position closest to Jehovah. Jesus is Jehovah’s tried, loyal, and reliable one. Moreover, Jesus has the inheritance as God’s Firstborn. Indeed, Jesus Christ “is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.” (Colossians 1:15) All he has to do is ask and God ‘gives him nations as his inheritance and the ends of the earth as his possession.’ Jesus makes this request as one ‘fond of things relating to the sons of men’ and because of his keen desire to carry out his heavenly Father’s will toward the earth and mankind.—Proverbs 8:30, 31.

Jehovah’s Decree Against the Nations

¹⁶ Since the second psalm is undergoing fulfillment now, during Jesus Christ’s invisible presence, what is in store for the nations? The King will soon carry out God’s declaration: “You will break them [the nations] with an iron scepter, as though a potter’s vessel you will dash them to pieces.”—Psalm 2:9.

¹⁷ The scepters of kings of ancient times were symbols of royal authority. Some scepters were made of iron, like the one spoken of in this psalm. The imagery here used indicates the ease with which Christ the King will destroy the nations. A powerful blow with an iron scepter would shatter a potter’s earthenware vessel, smashing it beyond recovery.

¹⁸ Do national rulers have to witness such a destructive shattering? No, for the psalmist appeals to them with these words: “Now, O kings, exercise insight; let yourselves be

15. Why does Jesus request the nations as his inheritance?

16, 17. According to Psalm 2:9, what is in store for the nations?

18, 19. To gain God’s approval, what would the kings of the earth need to do?

corrected, O judges of the earth.” (Psalm 2:10) Kings are called on to take heed, to exercise insight. They should consider the emptiness of their plans, in contrast with what God’s Kingdom will do for the benefit of mankind.

¹⁹ To gain God’s approval, the kings of the earth would need to change their course. They are admonished to “serve Jehovah with fear and be joyful with trembling.” (Psalm 2:11) What if they were to take such action? Instead of being in tumult, or disorderly agitation of mind, they could rejoice at the prospects that the Messianic King would set before them. It would be necessary for earth’s rulers to abandon the pride and haughtiness they demonstrate in their rulership. Moreover, they would have to change without delay and exercise insight regarding the unequaled superiority of Jehovah’s sovereignty and the irresistible power of God and his Messianic King.

“Kiss the Son”

²⁰ Psalm 2 now extends a merciful invitation to the rulers of the nations. Instead of massing together in opposition, they are advised: “Kiss the son, that He [Jehovah God] may not become incensed and you may not perish from the way, for his anger flares up easily.” (Psalm 2:12a) The Sovereign Lord Jehovah should be heeded when he issues a decree. When God set his Son upon the throne, the rulers of the earth should have quit “muttering an empty thing.” They should have acknowledged the King immediately and rendered him full obedience.

²¹ Why “kiss the son”? When this psalm was composed, kissing was an expression of friendship and was used to welcome guests into one’s home, where they could enjoy hospitality. Kissing could also be an act of fidelity, or faithfulness. (1 Samuel 10:1) In

20, 21. What does it mean to “kiss the son”?

this verse of the second psalm, God is commanding the nations to kiss, or welcome, his Son as anointed King.

²² Those refusing to recognize the authority of God's chosen King insult Jehovah. They deny Jehovah God's universal sovereignty and his authority and ability to select the King that is the best ruler for mankind. The rulers of the nations will find that God's fury will overtake them suddenly, when they are trying to implement their own plans. "His anger flares up easily," or blazes quickly and irresistibly. The national rulers ought to accept this warning gratefully and act in harmony with it. Doing so means life.

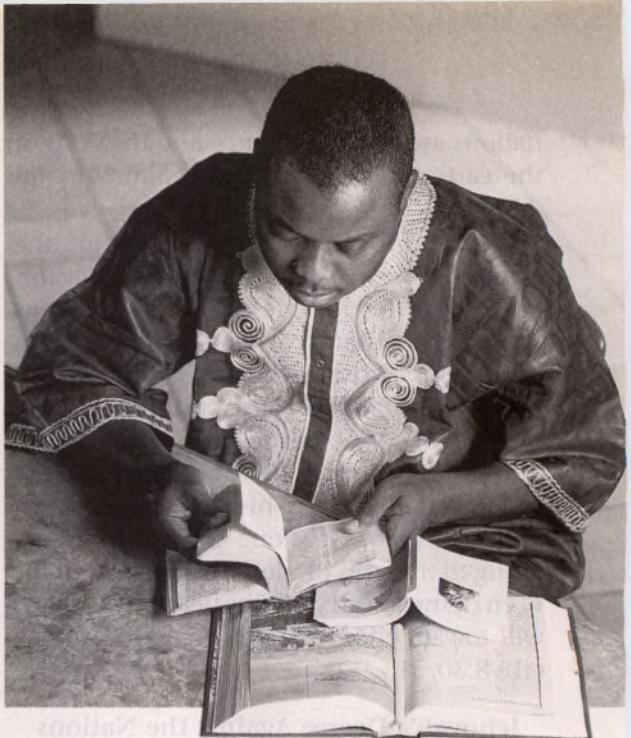
²³ This dramatic psalm concludes: "Happy are all those taking refuge in him [Jehovah]." (Psalm 2:12b) There is still time for individuals to find safety. That is true even of individual rulers who have been going along with the plans of the nations. They can flee to Jehovah, who provides refuge under Kingdom rule. But they must act before the Messianic Kingdom smashes the opposing nations.

²⁴ If we diligently study the Scriptures and apply their counsel in life, we can live a more satisfying life even now in this troubled world. Applying Scriptural counsel results in

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22. Rulers of the nations ought to heed what warning?
 23. There is still time for individuals to do what?
 24. How can we live a more satisfying life even in this troubled world?

How Would You Answer?

- What "empty thing" have national groups "kept muttering"?
- Why does Jehovah hold the nations in derision?
- What is God's decree against the nations?
- What does it mean to "kiss the son"?



happier family relations and freedom from many of the worries and fears that beset this world. Following Bible guidelines imparts confidence that we are pleasing the Creator. No one other than the Universal Sovereign can give a guarantee of "the life now and that which is to come" after he clears the earth of those who oppose what is right by rejecting Kingdom rule.—1 Timothy 4:8.

²⁵ "The decree of Jehovah" cannot fail. As our Creator, God knows what is best for mankind and will accomplish his purpose to bless obedient humans with peace, contentment, and lasting security under the Kingdom of his dear Son. Regarding our time, the prophet Daniel wrote: "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. . . . It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." (Daniel 2:44) Surely, then, it is high time to "kiss the Son" and serve the Sovereign Lord, Jehovah!

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25. Since "the decree of Jehovah" cannot fail, what can we expect to occur in our time?

Use SPIRITUAL GOALS to Glorify Your Creator

WHEN a man does not know what harbor he is making for, no wind is the right wind." These words, attributed to a first-century Roman philosopher, point to the truism that for life to have direction, goals are essential.

The Bible provides examples of individuals who were goal oriented. Working some 50 years, Noah "constructed an ark for the saving of his household." The prophet Moses "looked intently toward the payment of the reward." (Hebrews 11:7, 26) Moses' successor, Joshua, received the God-given objective of conquering the land of Canaan.—Deuteronomy 3:21, 22, 28; Joshua 12:7-24.

In the first century C.E., the apostle Paul's spiritual goals were no doubt greatly influenced by Jesus' words that "this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth." (Matthew 24:14) Spurred on by personal messages and visions from the Lord Jesus, including the assignment to "bear [Jesus'] name to the nations," Paul became instrumental in establishing a chain of Christian congregations across Asia Minor and on into Europe.—Acts 9:15; Colossians 1:23.

Yes, Jehovah's servants down through the ages have set lofty goals and have met them, to God's glory. How may we today set spiritual goals? What goals can we strive for, and what practical steps can we take to reach them?

Right Motives Are Essential

Goals may be set in just about any area of life, and this world has its share of goal-

oriented people. Theocratic goals, however, are not the same as worldly ambitions. The primary motives behind many goals in the world are an obsessive desire for wealth and an insatiable hunger for position and power. What a mistake it would be to pursue a goal to gain power and prominence! Goals that bring glory to Jehovah God are directly connected with our worship of him and with Kingdom interests. (Matthew 6:33) Such goals stem from love for God and fellowman and have godly devotion as their aim.—Matthew 22:37-39; 1 Timothy 4:7.

May our motives be pure as we set and pursue spiritual goals, be they for increased service privileges or for making personal spiritual advancement. Yet, even rightly motivated goals are at times not realized. How can we set goals and increase the likelihood of reaching them?

Strong Desire a Must

Consider how Jehovah accomplished the creation of the universe. With the words "there came to be evening and there came to be morning," Jehovah marked off the successive periods of creation. (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) At the beginning of each creative time period, he well knew his goal, or objective, for that day. And God carried out his purpose to create things. (Revelation 4:11) "[Jehovah's] own soul has a desire, and he will do it," said the patriarch Job. (Job 23:13) How satisfying it must have been for Jehovah to see "everything he had made" and declare it "very good"!—Genesis 1:31.

Spiritual Goals to Consider

- **Reading the Bible daily**
- **Reading each issue of
*The Watchtower and Awake!***
- **Improving the quality of our prayers**
- **Displaying the fruitage of the spirit**
- **Reaching out for increased service**
- **Becoming more effective in preaching and teaching**
- **Developing such skills as telephone, informal, and business witnessing**

For our goals to become a reality, we too must have a strong desire to achieve them. What will help us develop such an intense desire? Even while the earth was formless and waste, Jehovah could foresee the end result—a beautiful jewel in space, bringing him glory and honor. Similarly, our desire to accomplish what we set out to do can be cultivated by meditating on the results and benefits of achieving the goal. That was the experience of 19-year-old Tony. He never forgot his first impression of a visit to a branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Western Europe. From then on, the question that occupied Tony's mind was, 'What would it be like to live and serve in a place like that?' Tony never stopped thinking about the possibility, and he continued to reach out for it. How happy he was when several years later his application to serve at the branch was approved!

Our association with others who have already reached a certain goal can also create in us a desire to attain it. Jayson, age 30, did not enjoy sharing in the field ministry when he was in his early teens. But after completing his high school education, he eagerly

entered pioneer service, thus becoming a full-time Kingdom proclaimer. What helped Jayson cultivate the desire to pioneer? He answers: "Talking to others who have pioneered and working with them in the ministry strongly influenced me."

Committing Our Goals to Writing Can Help

An abstract idea takes on clarity and form when we choose words to express it. Solomon noted that proper words can be powerful like oxgoads in giving direction in life. (Ecclesiastes 12:11) When those words are written down, they make a deep impression on the mind and heart. Why else would Jehovah command the kings of Israel to make a personal written copy of the Law? (Deuteronomy 17:18) We may therefore wish to commit our goals and the strategy for reaching them to paper, listing the obstacles we expect along with ways to overcome them. It can also be helpful to identify the subjects we must become knowledgeable in, the skills we need to acquire, and the individuals who can help and support us.

Setting spiritual goals for himself had a stabilizing effect on Geoffrey, a longtime special pioneer in an isolated territory in an Asian country. Tragedy struck when his wife died unexpectedly. Following an adjustment period, Geoffrey decided to immerse himself completely in his pioneer ministry by setting goals. After writing down his plans on paper, he prayerfully set out to start three new Bible studies by the end of the month. Each day, he reviewed his activity, and every ten days, he checked his progress. Did he reach his goal? With a report of four new Bible studies, he joyfully answers yes!

Set Short-Term Goals as Markers

Some goals may initially appear formidable. To Tony, mentioned earlier, serving at

a branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses seemed like a dream. That was so because his life-style had been wayward, and he had not even made a dedication to God. But Tony decided to harmonize his life with Jehovah's ways and made it his goal to qualify for baptism. After achieving that goal, he reached out for auxiliary pioneering and regular pioneering, marking on his calendar the starting dates. After he had pioneered for some time, service at the branch office did not seem like an unrealistic goal.

We too may do well to break down our long-term goals into a few short-term goals. The intermediate goals can serve as reachable markers along the way to attaining a long-term goal. Regularly measuring our progress with respect to such road markers can help us to keep our mind focused. Repeatedly praying to Jehovah about our plans will also help us stay on course. "Pray incessantly," exhorted the apostle Paul.—1 Thessalonians 5:17.

Determination and Persistence Needed

Despite our having well-laid plans and a strong desire to carry them out, some goals remain unattainable. How disappointed the disciple John Mark must have been when the apostle Paul did not want to take him along on Paul's second missionary journey! (Acts 15:37-40) Mark had to learn from this disappointment and adjust his goal for in-



creased service. He evidently did. Later on, Mark was favorably mentioned by Paul and enjoyed close association with the apostle Peter in Babylon. (2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13) Perhaps his greatest privilege was that of writing an inspired account of Jesus' life and ministry.

In our pursuit of spiritual goals, we too may experience setbacks. Rather than giving up, we must review, reevaluate, and readjust. When obstacles arise, we need to stretch forward with determination and persistence. "Roll your works upon Jehovah himself and your plans will be firmly established," wise King Solomon assures us.—Proverbs 16:3.

Yet, at times circumstances make pursuing certain goals unrealistic. For example, poor health or family obligations may place some goals beyond our reach. May we never lose sight of the fact that the ultimate prize is everlasting life—in heaven or in Paradise on earth. (Luke 23:43; Philippians 3:13,

14) How is this gained? "He that does the will of God remains forever," wrote the apostle John. (1 John 2:17) While our situation may not allow us to reach a particular goal, we can still "fear the true God and keep his commandments." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Spiritual goals help us stay focused on doing the divine will. Let us therefore use them to glorify our Creator.

CAPPADOCIA

Where People Lived in Dwellings Carved by Wind and Water

THE apostle Peter spoke of Cappadocia. He addressed his first inspired letter, in part, to "the temporary residents scattered about in . . . Cappadocia." (1 Peter 1:1) What type of land was Cappadocia? Why did its inhabitants live in dwellings carved out of stone? How were they exposed to Christianity?

"We found ourselves suddenly lost in a forest of cones and pillars of rock," said British traveler W. F. Ainsworth, who visited Cappadocia in the 1840's. The unique landscape still startles modern-day visitors to this region of Turkey. Huddled like mute sentinels among the Cappadocian valleys are strange "statues" of stone. Some look like gigantic chimneys towering 100 feet or more into the sky. Others resemble gigantic ice-cream cones, obelisks, or mushrooms.

How beautifully the sun paints these statues with different colors during the course of the day! At dawn they are a pale pink. By midday they take on the color of bleached ivory, and the setting sun turns them a golden ochre. What formed this "forest of cones and pillars of rock"? And why did the people of the region make their homes in them?

Carved by Wind and Water

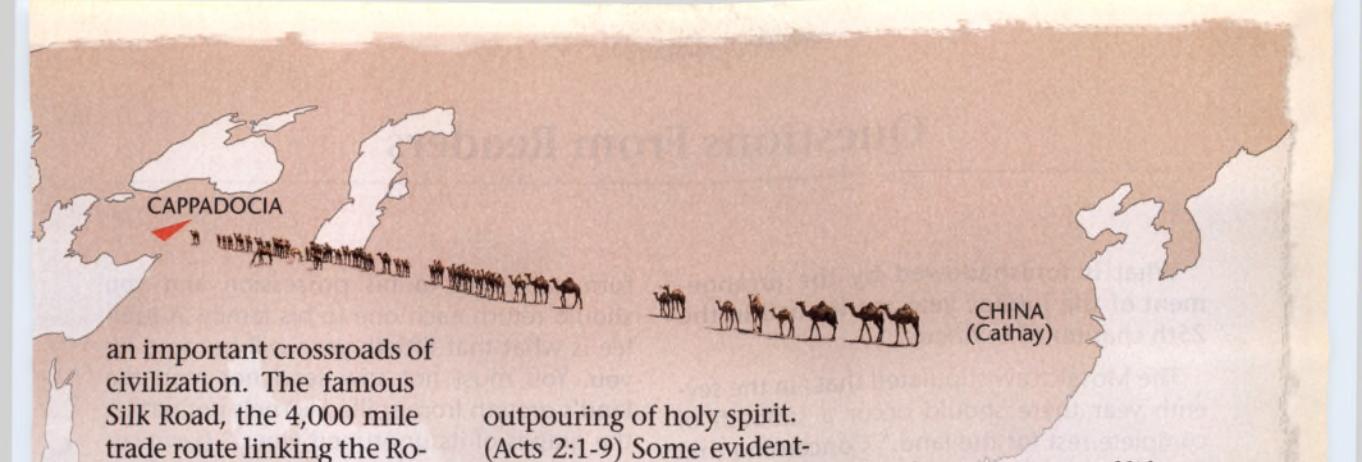
Cappadocia is located in the heart of the Anatolian Peninsula, which bridges Asia and Europe. This region would be a plateau were it not for its two volcanoes. Millenniums ago, their mighty volcanic eruptions covered the area with two types of rock—hard basalt and soft tufa, a white rock formed from solidified volcanic ash.



As rivers, rain, and wind began to erode the soft tufa, canyons opened up. In time, some of the cliffs bordering these canyons gradually broke up into a myriad of columns of rocky cones, endowing the land with sculptures found nowhere else on earth. Some of the rocky cones took on the appearance of veritable honeycombs. The local inhabitants carved out rooms in the soft rock and added more rooms as the family grew. They also found these dwellings to be cool in summer and warm in winter.

Living at a Crossroads of Civilization

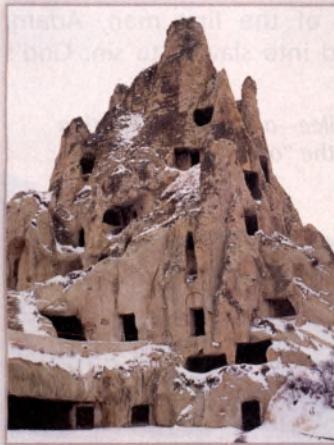
The cave dwellers of Cappadocia would likely have been left largely to themselves had they not lived at



CAPPADOCIA

CHINA
(Cathay)

an important crossroads of civilization. The famous Silk Road, the 4,000 mile trade route linking the Roman Empire with China, went through Cappadocia. Besides the tradesmen, Persian, Greek, and Roman armies traveled along this route. These travelers brought new religious ideas.



By the second century B.C.E., Jewish settlements were evident in Cappadocia. And Jews from this region were present in Jerusalem in the year 33 C.E. They were there to celebrate the Festival of Pentecost. Thus, the apostle Peter preached to Cappadocian Jews after the

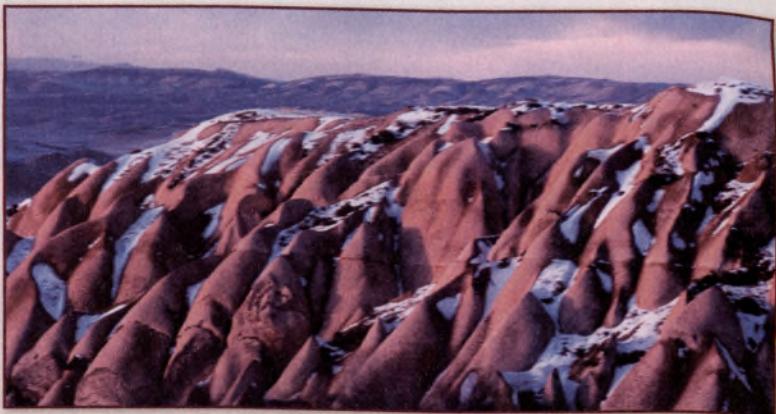
outpouring of holy spirit. (Acts 2:1-9) Some evidently responded to his message and took their newfound faith back home. Hence, Peter addressed Cappadocian Christians in his first letter.

As the years went by, though, Christians in Cappadocia began to be influenced by pagan philosophies. Three principal Cappadocian church leaders of the fourth century even strongly defended the unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity. They were Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil the Great, and his brother Gregory of Nyssa.

Basil the Great also encouraged a monastic lifestyle. The humble Cappadocian dwellings carved out of stone were well-suited

for the austere way of life he recommended. As the monastic community grew, complete churches were constructed inside some of the larger cones. By the 13th century, about three hundred churches had been carved out of the rock. Many of these have been preserved until today.

Although the churches and monasteries have fallen into disuse, the lifestyle of the local people has changed little over the centuries. Many caves still serve as dwellings. Few who visit Cappadocia fail to marvel at how its ingenious inhabitants converted natural formations into practical homes.



Questions From Readers

What is foreshadowed by the arrangement of the Jubilee year mentioned in the 25th chapter of Leviticus?

The Mosaic Law stipulated that "in the seventh year there should occur a sabbath of complete rest for the land." Concerning that year, the Israelites were commanded: "Your field you must not sow with seed, and your vineyard you must not prune. The growth from spilled kernels of your harvest you must not reap, and the grapes of your unpruned vine you must not gather. There should occur a year of complete rest for the land." (Leviticus 25:4, 5) Thus, every seventh year was to be a year of Sabbath for the land. And every 50th year, following the year of the seventh Sabbath year, was to be a Jubilee. What was to happen in that year?

Jehovah told Israel through Moses: "You must sanctify the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty in the land to all its inhabitants. It will become a Jubilee for you, and you must re-

turn each one to his possession and you should return each one to his family. A Jubilee is what that fiftieth year will become for you. You must not sow seed nor reap the land's growth from spilled kernels nor gather the grapes of its unpruned vines." (Leviticus 25:10, 11) A Jubilee meant a second consecutive year of Sabbath for the land. But to its inhabitants, it brought liberty. Any Jews who had been sold into slavery were to be set free. The hereditary property that a person may have been forced to sell was to be returned to his family. The Jubilee was to be a year of restoration and liberation for ancient Israel. What does it foreshadow for Christians?

The rebellion of the first man, Adam, brought mankind into slavery to sin. God's

The Millennial Jubilee—a time of restoration and liberation for the "other sheep"



provision for freeing mankind from the grip of sin is the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ.* (Matthew 20:28; John 3:16; 1 John 2:1, 2) When are Christians set free from the law of sin? Addressing anointed Christians, the apostle Paul said: "The law of that spirit which gives life in union with Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." (Romans 8:2) Those with the hope of life in heaven receive this freedom when they are anointed with the holy spirit. Though their bodies are fleshly and imperfect, God declares them righteous and adopts them as his

* Jesus, in fact, was sent forth "to proclaim liberty to those taken captive." (Isaiah 61:1-7; Luke 4:16-21) He announced a spiritual liberation.

spiritual sons. (Romans 3:24; 8:16, 17) For the anointed as a group, the Christian Jubilee began at Pentecost 33 C.E.

What about the "other sheep," having the prospect of everlasting life on earth? (John 10:16) For the other sheep, the Thousand Year Reign of Christ will prove to be a time of restoration and liberation. During this Millennial Jubilee, Jesus will apply the benefits of his ransom sacrifice to believing mankind and will reverse the effects of sin. (Revelation 21:3, 4) By the end of Christ's Millennial Reign, mankind will reach human perfection and will be completely free from inherited sin and death. (Romans 8:21) With that accomplished, the Christian Jubilee will be over.

"Everyone Shrewd Will Act With Knowledge"

THE guidance from God's Word, the Bible, 'is more to be desired than gold—than much refined gold.' (Psalm 19:7-10) Why? Because "the law of the wise one [Jehovah] is a source of life, to turn one away from the snares of death." (Proverbs 13:14) When applied, the counsel from the Scriptures not only improves the quality of our life but also helps us to avoid snares that endanger it. How vital that we seek out knowledge of the Scriptures and comply with what we learn!

As recorded at Proverbs 13:15-25, King Solomon of ancient Israel gave advice that helps us act with knowledge so that we can enjoy a better and longer life.* Using concise

proverbs, he shows how God's Word can help us gain favor with others, remain faithful in our ministry, have a right attitude toward discipline, and choose our associates wisely. He also considers the prudence of leaving an inheritance for our offspring as well as disciplining them in love.

Good Insight Wins Favor

"Good insight itself gives favor," says Solomon, "but the way of those dealing treacherously is rugged." (Proverbs 13:15) The original-language expression for "good insight," or good understanding, "describes the capacity for good sense, sound judgment, and wise opinions," states one reference work. A person having such qualities does not find it difficult to gain the favor of others.

* For a discussion of Proverbs 13:1-14, see pages 21-5 of the September 15, 2003, issue of *The Watchtower*.

Consider the insightful way in which the apostle Paul dealt with his fellow Christian Philemon when sending back Philemon's runaway slave Onesimus, who had become a Christian. Paul exhorted Philemon to receive Onesimus back in a kind manner, even as he might welcome the apostle himself. In fact, Paul offered to make the payment if Onesimus owed Philemon anything. Yes, Paul could have used his authority and ordered Philemon to do the right thing. But the apostle chose to handle the matter tactfully and lovingly. In doing so, Paul felt confident that he would win Philemon's cooperation, moving him to do even more than what he was asked to do. Should we not also deal with fellow believers in this way?—Philemon 8:21.

The way of the treacherous, on the other hand, is rugged, or "hard." (*New International Version*) In what sense? According to one scholar, the word used here means "strong

or firm, referring to the callous behavior of wicked people. . . . The man who is set in his evil ways, callous and indifferent to the wise instruction of others, is on a path to ruin."

Solomon continues: "*Everyone shrewd will act with knowledge, but the one that is stupid will spread abroad foolishness.*" (Proverbs 13:16) This shrewd one is not a crafty person. Shrewdness here is connected with knowledge and is associated with a prudent person, who thinks things out before acting. When facing unfair criticism or even insult, the shrewd person keeps his lips in check. He prayerfully tries to manifest the fruitage of the holy spirit so that he does not get overly irritated. (Galatians 5:22, 23) The prudent one does not allow the other person or the situation to control him. Rather, he stays in control and avoids the fights that frequently befall an individual who quickly flares up when offended.

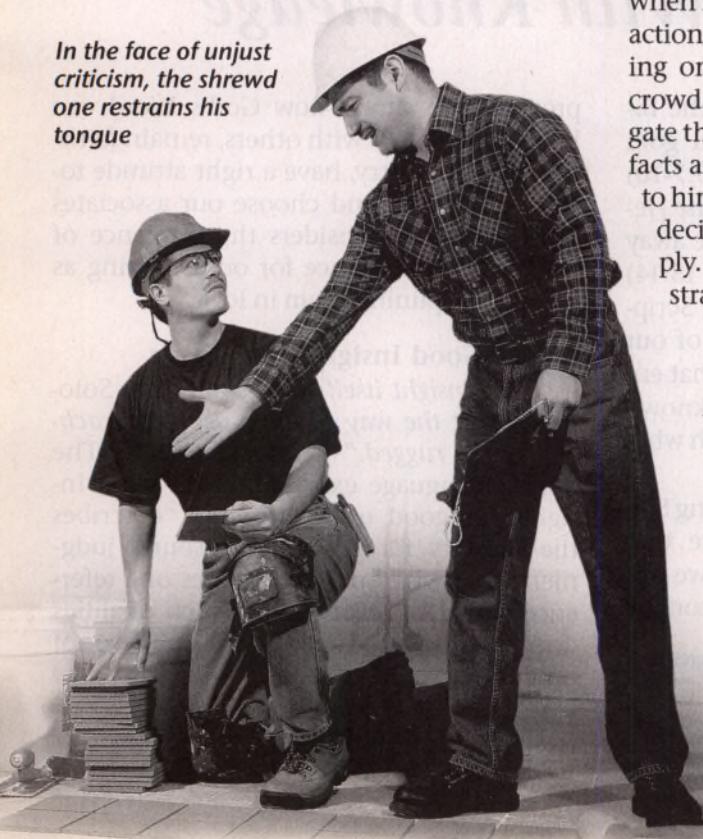
The shrewd one also acts with knowledge when making decisions. He knows that wise actions are rarely a product of guessing, acting on emotions, or simply following the crowd. Therefore, he takes time to investigate the situation at hand. He gathers all the facts and determines what options are open to him. Then he searches the Scriptures and decides which Bible laws or principles apply. The path of such a person remains straight.—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

"A Faithful Envoy Is a Healing"

As Jehovah's Witnesses, we are entrusted with the proclamation of a God-given message. The words of the next proverb help us to remain faithful in fulfilling our commission. It says: "*A messenger that is wicked will fall into bad, but a faithful envoy is a healing.*"—Proverbs 13:17.

The emphasis here is on the qualities of the messenger. What if the

In the face of unjust criticism, the shrewd one restrains his tongue





bearer of the message wickedly distorts or alters the message? Will he not receive an adverse judgment? Think of the prophet Elisha's attendant Gehazi, who greedily delivered a false message to the Syrian army chief Naaman. The leprosy that Naaman had been cured of came upon Gehazi. (2 Kings 5:20-27) What if the envoy becomes unfaithful and stops declaring the message altogether? "[If] you actually do not speak out to warn the wicked one from his way," states the Bible, "he himself as a wicked one will die in his own error, but his blood I [Jehovah] shall ask back at your own hand."—Ezekiel 33:8.

On the other hand, the faithful envoy is a healing to himself and to those who listen to him. Paul exhorted Timothy: "Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you." (1 Timothy 4:16) Think of the healing that faithful declaration of the Kingdom good news accomplishes. It awakens people of right heart condition and leads them to

A faithful Kingdom proclaimer accomplishes much good

the truth that sets them free. (John 8:32) Even if people fail to give ear to the message, the loyal messenger 'will certainly deliver his own soul.' (Ezekiel 33:9) May we never neglect to fulfill our commission to preach. (1 Corinthians 9:16) And let us always be careful to "preach the word," never watering it down or sugarcoating it with compromises.—2 Timothy 4:2.

'The One Keeping Reproof Is Glorified'

Should a prudent person resent any helpful advice he receives? Proverbs 13:18 states: "*The one neglecting discipline comes to poverty and dishonor, but the one keeping a reproof is the one that is glorified.*" We are wise to welcome even unrequested reproof. Sound advice may be most helpful when we do not realize that we need it. Heeding such counsel can spare us heartaches and help us to avoid tragedy. Neglecting it will bring dishonor.

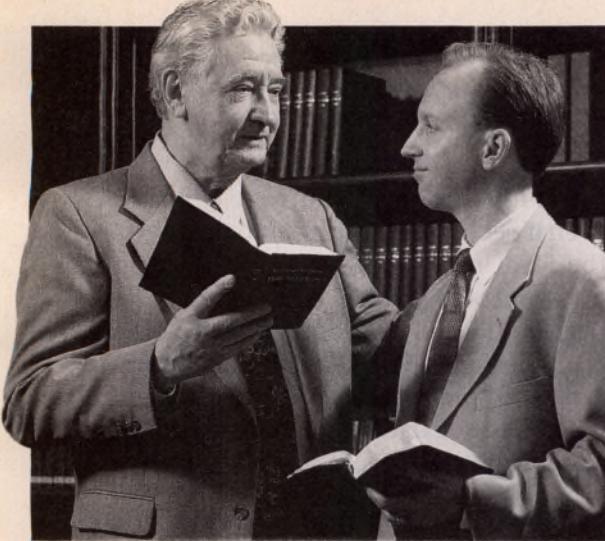
Commendation, when deserved, lifts our spirit and is indeed encouraging. But we also need to expect and accept reproof. Consider the two letters that the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy. While commanding him for his faithfulness, the letters are full of counsel for Timothy. Paul freely counsels the younger

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

**God's Kingdom Government
—A Reality Today**

**Cultivating a Christlike View
of Greatness**

What Gives Life True Meaning?



While commendation is encouraging, we must welcome correction

says: "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Proverbs 13:20) Yes, our association, even through entertainment, the Internet, and what we read, has a bearing on what we are and will become. How important it is to choose our associates wisely!

"Leave an Inheritance"

"Sinners are the ones whom calamity pursues," declares the king of Israel, "but the righteous are the ones whom good rewards." (Proverbs 13:21) The pursuit of righteousness is rewarding, for Jehovah cares for the righteous. (Psalm 37:25) However, we must recognize that "time and unforeseen occurrence" befall us all. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Can we do anything to prepare for untimely events?

"One who is good will leave an inheritance to sons of sons," states Solomon. (Proverbs 13:22a) What a valuable inheritance parents leave behind when they help their children to take in knowledge of Jehovah and cultivate a good relationship with him! But would it not also be prudent to make arrangements, when possible, for the material welfare of the family in case of a parent's untimely death? In many places, family heads may be able to arrange for insurance, make a legal will, and set aside some savings.

What can be said about the inheritance of the wicked? "The wealth of the sinner is something treasured up for the righteous one," continues Solomon. (Proverbs 13:22b) In addition to any benefits now, this will prove to be true when Jehovah fulfills his promise to create "new heavens and a new earth" in which "righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:

'Walk With Wise Persons'

"Desire when realized is pleasurable to the soul," says the wise king, "but it is something detestable to the stupid ones to turn away from bad." (Proverbs 13:19) Concerning the meaning of this proverb, one reference work notes: "When a goal has been reached or a wish realized, the whole of man's nature becomes suffused with a feeling of satisfaction . . . Since to accomplish one's aim is a most pleasant experience, it follows that to depart from evil must be *an abomination to fools*. Their aspirations can only be achieved by bad methods, and were they to abandon evil, they would be denied the pleasure of ever fulfilling their wishes." How vital that we cultivate proper desires!

What a powerful effect our associates have on our thoughts, our likes, and our dislikes! Solomon states a timeless truth when he

13) The wicked will then have been cleared out of the way, and "the meek ones themselves will possess the earth."—Psalm 37:11.

A prudent person acts with knowledge even when he possesses very little. "*Plowed ground of persons of little means yields a great deal of food,*" says Proverbs 13:23, "*but there exists the one that is swept away for lack of judgment.*" Very little is made much by hard work and God's blessings. When justice is lacking, however, unfair judgment can sweep away fortunes.

"Look for Him With Discipline"

Imperfect people need discipline, and they need it from childhood onward. "*The one holding back his rod is hating his son,*" says the king of Israel, "*but the one loving him is he that does look for him with discipline.*"—Proverbs 13:24.

A rod is a symbol of authority. At Proverbs 13:24, it refers to parental authority. In this context, employing the rod of discipline does not necessarily mean spanking a child. Rather, it represents the means of correction, whatever form it may take. In one case, a rebuke kindly given to a child may be sufficient to correct improper behavior. Another child may require a stronger reproof. "A rebuke works deeper in one having understanding than striking a stupid one a hundred times," says Proverbs 17:10.

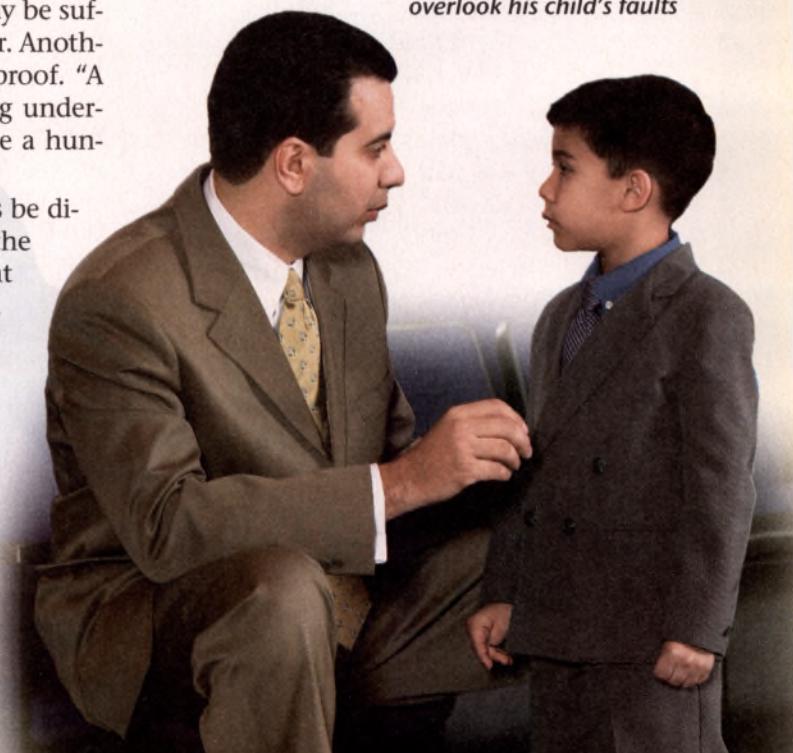
Parental discipline should always be directed by love and wisdom for the benefit of children. A loving parent does not overlook his child's faults. On the contrary, he looks for them so that they can be removed before they become too deeply rooted. Of course, a loving parent takes to heart Paul's admonition: "Fathers, do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline

and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Ephesians 6:4.

What if a parent is permissive and fails to provide needed correction? Will such a parent get thanks later for his permissiveness? Hardly! (Proverbs 29:21) The Bible states: "A boy let on the loose will be causing his mother shame." (Proverbs 29:15) To hold back on exercising parental authority shows indifference or a lack of love. Exercising authority kindly and firmly, however, reflects loving concern.

A prudent and upright person who acts with true knowledge will be blessed. Solomon assures us: "*The righteous is eating to the satisfaction of his soul, but the belly of the wicked ones will be empty.*" (Proverbs 13:25) Jehovah knows what is good for us in any area of life—our family affairs, our relationship with others, our ministry, or when we are being disciplined. And by wisely applying the counsel found in his Word, we will unquestionably enjoy the best way of life.

A loving parent does not overlook his child's faults



"To Promote Jehovah's Name"

WORLDWIDE, *The Watchtower* and its companion magazine, *Awake!*, are appreciated for their spiritual content and instructive value. Reflecting this, a reader in France recently wrote the following letter:

"I am a young woman, originally from Africa, with very little schooling. Not long ago, I began reading your magazines. Drawn by the subjects, I am discovering the value of reading. Thanks to you, I have improved my vocabulary and can write a letter with fewer mistakes in it.

"I am amazed that you handle everything having to do with humans, the planet, and the Creator. These articles are so explicit that they make a person want to become an avid reader. No one else has the ability to teach all kinds of people at the same time.

"I am also amazed when I see that all of this is not done for commercial ends but simply to promote Jehovah's name. I know that you have his approval, and I thank you. Please continue to draw strength from the Creator in order to teach."

Jehovah's Witnesses are currently pursuing their Bible educational work in 235 lands. *The Watchtower* is published in 148 languages and *Awake!* in 87. These journals are not printed to bring praise to any human. The Bible-based counsel and up-to-date information found in them is designed to honor the Creator, who says: "I, Jehovah, am . . . the One teaching you to benefit yourself." (Isaiah 48:17) May you benefit yourself by reading the Holy Scriptures regularly with these Bible study aids in hand.

