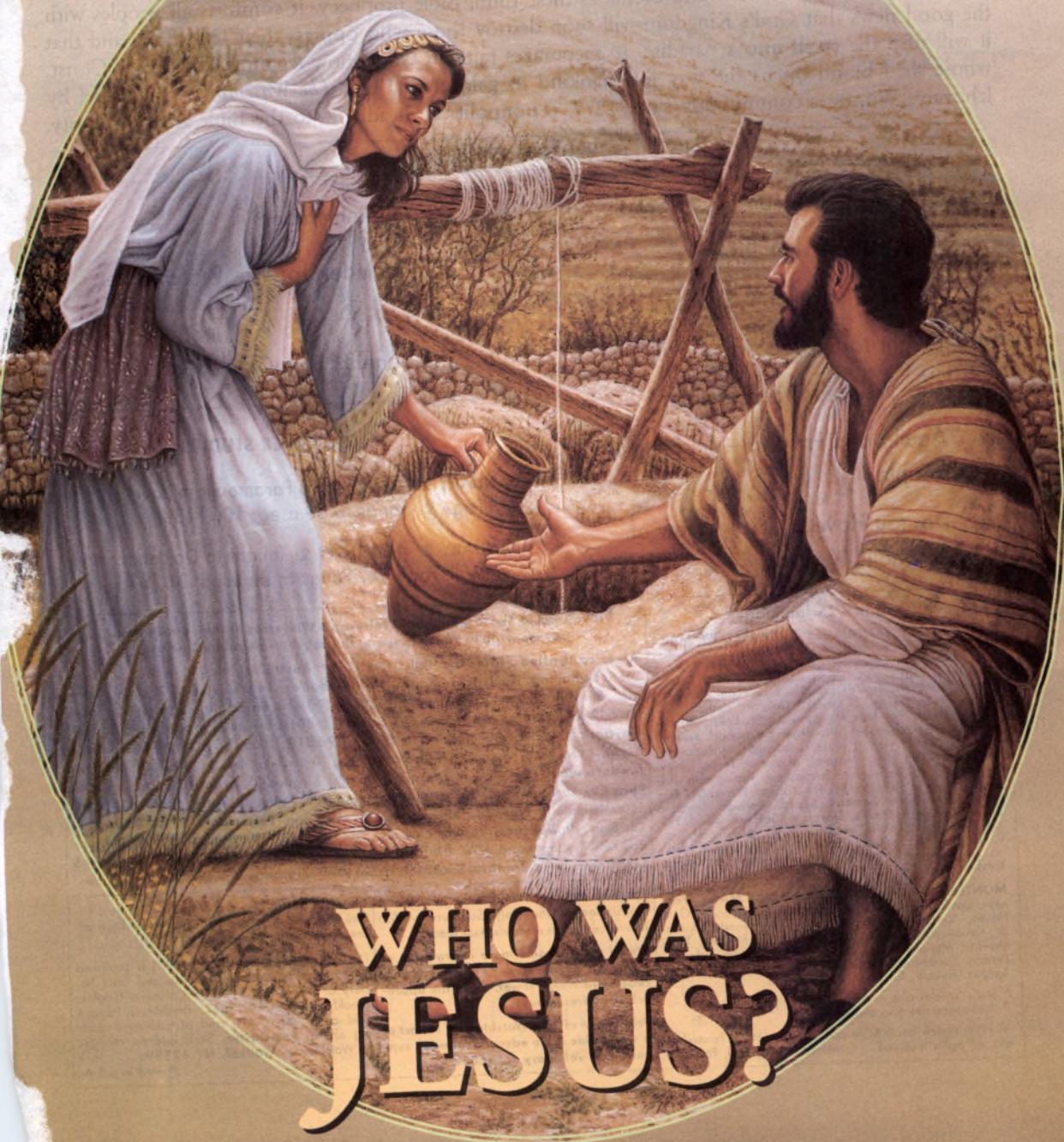


DECEMBER 15, 1996

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHO WAS
JESUS?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

December 15, 1996

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

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The Gospel According to Scholars

WHO are the crowds saying that I am?" (Luke 9:18) Jesus asked this of his disciples almost two millenniums ago. The question was controversial then. It seems to be even more so now, especially around the Christmas season, which is supposed to center on Jesus. Many believe that Jesus was sent from heaven to redeem mankind. Is that what you think?

Some scholars propose another view. "The image of Jesus as one who taught that he was the Son of God who was to die for the sins of the world is not historically true," claims Marcus J. Borg, professor of religion and culture.

Other scholars claim that the real Jesus was different from the one we read about in the Bible. Some hold that all the Gospels were penned four decades or more after Jesus' death and that by then Jesus' true identity had been embellished. The problem was not with the Gospel writers' recall, assert the scholars, but with their interpretation. After Jesus' death the disciples came to view him differently—as the Son of God, Savior, and Messiah. Some boldly claim that Jesus was no more than a wandering sage, a social revolutionary. Such, say the scholars, is the gospel truth.

The "Scholarly" View of Jesus

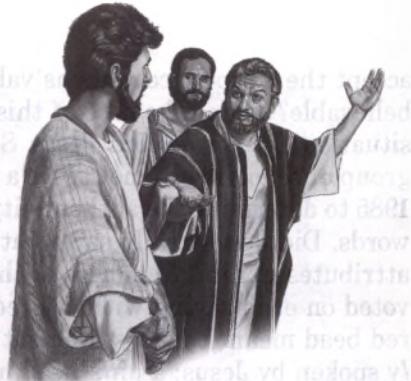
To defend their "scholarly" view, critics seem eager to dismiss anything about Jesus

that seems supernatural. For example, some say that the virgin birth was a cover-up for Jesus' illegitimacy. Others reject Jesus' prophecies regarding Jerusalem's destruction, insisting that these were inserted into the Gospels after their "fulfillment." Some even say that Jesus' healings were purely psychosomatic—mind over matter. Do you find such positions sound or preposterous?

Certain scholars even claim that Jesus' disciples fabricated the resurrection to keep their movement from collapsing. After all, the scholars reason, Jesus' followers were powerless without him, so they wrote their Master back into the story. In effect, it was Christianity, not Christ, that was resurrected. If that seems like scholarly flailing about, what of theologian Barbara Thiering's proposal that Jesus was not executed at all? She believes that Jesus survived his impalement and went on to marry twice and father three children.

All these assertions bring Jesus down to the only level upon which many scholars will accept him: that of a wise man, marginal Jew, social reformer—*anything* but the Son of God, who came "to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many."—Matthew 20:28.

Perhaps around this time of the year, you have read parts of the Gospels, such as the part about Jesus' birth in a manger. Or you may have heard such in church. Did you



accept the Gospel accounts as valuable and believable? Then take note of this shocking situation. In a so-called Jesus Seminar, a group of scholars has met twice a year since 1985 to determine the authenticity of Jesus' words. Did Jesus really say what the Bible attributes to him? Members of the seminar voted on each saying with colored beads. A red bead meant that a statement was *surely* spoken by Jesus; a pink bead meant that Jesus *probably* said it; a gray bead signified doubt; and a black bead denoted falsification.

You might be disturbed to learn that the Jesus Seminar has declared that 82 percent of the words attributed to Jesus were probably not uttered by him. Only one quote from Mark's Gospel was deemed trustworthy. Luke's Gospel was said to be so full of propaganda as to be "beyond recovery." All but three lines of John's Gospel got the black bead vote, denoting falsification, and

the bit that remained was accorded the gray bead of doubt.

More Than Academics

Do you agree with the scholars? Are they presenting us with a more accurate portrayal of Jesus than that found in the Bible? These questions are more than a matter for scholarly debate. At this time of the year, you may be reminded that, according to the Bible, God sent Jesus "in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."

—John 3:16.

If Jesus was no more than a wandering sage about whom we may know little, it would be pointless to 'exercise faith' in him. On the other hand, if the Bible's portrayal of Jesus is truthful, our eternal salvation is involved. Therefore, we need to know—does the Bible contain the truth about Jesus?



THE MANGER—DECEMBER 25, 1994

The Truth About Jesus



THREE seems to be no end of theories and speculations as to who Jesus was and what he accomplished. But what of the Bible itself? What does it tell us about Jesus Christ?

What the Bible Says

Carefully reading the Bible, you will note these key facts:

- Jesus is the only-begotten Son of God, the firstborn of all creation.—John 3:16; Colossians 1:15.
- Some two millenniums ago, God transferred Jesus' life to the womb of a Jewish virgin to be born as a human.—Matthew 1:18; John 1:14.
- Jesus was more than just a good man. He was in every respect a faithful reflection of the beautiful personality of his Father, Jehovah God.—John 14:9, 10; Hebrews 1:3.
- During his earthly ministry, Jesus lovingly attended to the needs of the oppressed. He miraculously healed the sick and even raised the dead.—Matthew 11:4-6; John 11:5-45.
- Jesus proclaimed God's Kingdom as the only hope for distressed humanity, and he trained his disciples to continue this preaching work.—Matthew 4:17; 10:5-7; 28:19, 20.
- On Nisan 14 (about April 1), 33 C.E., Jesus was arrested, tried, sentenced, and executed on the false charge of sedition.—Matthew 26:18-20, 48-27:50.
- Jesus' death serves as a ransom, releasing believing mankind from their sinful state and thus opening the way to eternal life for all who exercise faith in him.—Romans 3:23, 24; 1 John 2:2.
- On Nisan 16, Jesus was resurrected, and shortly thereafter he ascended back to heaven to pay over to his Father the ransom value of his perfect human life.—Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-9.
- As Jehovah's appointed King, the resurrected Jesus has full authority to carry out God's original purpose for man.—Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 1:32, 33.

Thus, the Bible presents Jesus as the key figure in the outworking of God's purposes. But how can you be sure that this is the *real* Jesus—the Jesus of history, who was born in Bethlehem and walked on this earth some 2,000 years ago?

Basis for Confidence

Many doubts can be allayed simply by reading the Christian Greek Scriptures with an unprejudiced mind. In doing so, you will find that the Bible account is not a vague narrative of events, which is the case with mythology. Rather, names, specific times, and exact places are stated. (For example, see Luke 3:1, 2.) Furthermore, Jesus' disciples are portrayed with remarkable honesty, with a candor that instills confidence in the reader. The writers whitewashed no one—not even themselves—in the interests of making a faithful record.

CENTURIES OF CRITICISM

Criticism of the Christian Greek Scriptures took root more than 200 years ago, when German philosopher Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) asserted: "We are justified in drawing an absolute distinction between the teaching of the Apostles in their writings and what Jesus Himself in His own lifetime proclaimed and taught." Since Reimarus, many scholars have been taught to feel similarly.

The book *The Real Jesus* notes that many critics of the past did not consider themselves to be apostates. Rather, "they perceived themselves as the more genuinely Christian for having broken free from the shackles of dogma and superstition." Higher criticism, they felt, was a "purified form of Christianity."

The sad fact is that Christendom has become a breeding ground for man-made tradition. The doctrines of the immortal soul, the Trinity, and a fiery hell are just some of the teachings that are contrary to the Bible. But the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures were not responsible for this corruption of truth. On the contrary, they fought the first traces of false teachings in the middle of the first century, when Paul wrote that an apostasy among professed Christians was "already at work." (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7) We can be confident that what is contained in the Christian Greek Scriptures is a record of historical and doctrinal truth.

Yes, you will see that the Bible has the ring of truth.—Matthew 14:28-31; 16:21-23; 26:56, 69-75; Mark 9:33, 34; Galatians 2:11-14; 2 Peter 1:16.

Yet there is more. Archaeological discoveries have repeatedly borne out the Bible record. For example, if you visit the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, you can see a stone that has an inscription that names Pontius Pilate. Other archaeological discoveries confirm Lysanias and Sergius Paulus, whom the Bible mentions, as real persons rather than fictitious creations of the early Christians. Events reported in the Christian Greek Scriptures (New Testament) find abundant confirmation in references by ancient writers, including Juvenal, Tacitus, Seneca, Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, Lucian, Celsus, and the Jewish historian Josephus.*

The accounts presented in the Christian Greek Scriptures were accepted without question by thousands living in the first cen-

tury. Even the enemies of Christianity did not deny the truthfulness of what Jesus was reported to have said and done. As to the possibility that Jesus' character was embellished by his disciples after his death, Professor F. F. Bruce comments: "It can have been by no means so easy as some writers seem to think to invent words and deeds of Jesus in those early years, when so many of His disciples were about, who could remember what had and had not happened. . . . The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies (not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts), which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so."

Why They Do Not Believe

Nevertheless, some scholars remain skeptical. While they *assume* that the Biblical record is fictitious, they eagerly scour apocryphal writings and accept these as credible! Why? Obviously, the Bible record contains things that many modern intellectuals do not want to believe.

In his *Union Bible Companion*, published in 1871, S. Austin Allibone pre-

* For more information, see *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?*, chapter 5, pages 55-70, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

sented a challenge to skeptics. He wrote: "Ask any one who professes to doubt the truth of the Gospel history what reason he has for believing that Cæsar died in the Capitol, or that the Emperor Charlemagne was crowned Emperor of the West by Pope Leo III. in 800? . . . We believe all the assertions . . . made respecting these men; and that because we have historical evidence of their truth. . . . If, on the production of such proof as this, any still refuse to believe, we abandon them as stupidly perverse or hopelessly ignorant. What shall we say, then, of those who, notwithstanding the abundant evidence now produced of the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures, profess themselves unconvinced? . . . They do not wish to believe that which humbles their pride, and will force them to lead different lives."

Yes, some skeptics have ulterior motives in rejecting the Christian Greek Scriptures. The problem they have is not with its credibility but with its standards. For example, Jesus said of his followers: "They are no part

of the world, just as I am no part of the world." (John 17:14) However, many professed Christians are deeply involved in the political affairs of this world, even being involved in bloody wars. Rather than conform to Bible standards, many people would wish the Bible to conform to their own standards.

Consider, too, the matter of morals. Jesus gave strong counsel to the congregation at Thyatira for tolerating the practice of fornication. "I am he who searches the kidneys and hearts," he told them, "and I will give to you individually according to your deeds."* (Revelation 2:18-23) Yet, is it not true that many professing to be Christian throw moral standards by the wayside? They would rather reject what Jesus said than reject their immoral course of conduct.

Inclined not to accept the Jesus of the Bible, scholars have created a Jesus of their own making. They become guilty of the mythmaking of which they falsely accuse the Gospel writers. They hold onto the parts

* In the Bible, the kidneys sometimes represent one's deepest thoughts and emotions.

WHEN WERE THE GOSPELS WRITTEN?

Many New Testament critics insist that the Gospels were written long after the events they describe and are therefore almost certain to contain inaccuracies.

However, evidence suggests an early date for the writing of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Subscripts in some manuscript copies of Matthew indicate that the original writing took place as early as 41 C.E. Luke was probably written between 56 and 58 C.E., for the book of Acts (likely completed by 61 C.E.) indicates that the writer, Luke, had already composed his "first account," the Gospel. (Acts 1:1) Mark's Gospel is considered to have been composed in Rome during either the first or the second imprisonment of the apostle Paul—probably between 60 and 65 C.E.

Professor Craig L. Blomberg agrees with an earlier dating of those Gospels. He notes that even when we add John's Gospel, which was composed at the end of the first century, "we are still far closer to the original events than with many ancient biographies. The two earliest biographers of Alexander the Great, for example, Arrian and Plutarch, wrote more than four hundred years after Alexander's death in 323 B.C., yet historians generally consider them to be trustworthy. Fabulous legends about the life of Alexander did develop over time, but for the most part only during the several centuries after these two writers." The historical parts of the Christian Greek Scriptures certainly are worthy of at least as much credence as secular histories.



**Joy will reign supreme for all in
the coming earthly Paradise**

of Jesus' life that they want to accept, reject the rest, and add a few details of their own. In reality, their wandering sage or social revolutionary is *not* the Jesus of history that they claim to be searching for; rather, he is simply a figment of proud scholarly imaginations.

Finding the Real Jesus

Jesus endeavored to awaken the hearts of those sincerely hungering for truth and righteousness. (Matthew 5:3, 6; 13:10-15) Such ones respond to Jesus' invitation: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my

yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light."—Matthew 11:28-30.

The real Jesus is not to be uncovered in the books written by modern scholars; nor is he to be found in the churches of Christendom, which have become a breeding ground of man-made tradition. You can find the historical Jesus in your copy of the Bible. Would you like to learn more about him? Jehovah's Witnesses would be happy to help you do so.

WHAT IS PARAMOUNT IN YOUR LIFE?

"Make known to me the way in which I should walk." —PSALM 143:8.

YOU probably know as well as anyone that life is filled with activities and concerns. When you think about it, you can identify some of those as being essential. Other activities and concerns are less important or even vain. That you realize this means you are in harmony with one of the wisest men ever, King Solomon. After having thoroughly reviewed life's activities, he concluded: "Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man." (Ecclesiastes 2: 4-9, 11; 12:13) What significance does this have for us today?

² If you want to "fear the true God and keep his commandments," ask yourself this challenging question, 'What is paramount in my life?' Granted, you might not ponder that question daily, but why not consider it now? In fact, it suggests some related questions, such as, 'Might I be putting undue emphasis on my job or profession or on material things? Where do my home, family, and loved ones fit into the picture?' A youth may ask, 'To what extent does education take up my attention and time? Really, is a hobby, sport, or some form of entertainment or technology my prime interest?' And no matter what our age or situation, we should rightly ask, 'What place does serving God

1. What did King Solomon conclude about human pursuits and accomplishments?
2. What basic question should God-fearing people ask themselves, leading to what related questions?

have in my life?' You would likely agree on the need for priorities. But how and where can we gain assistance to set them wisely?

³ "Paramount" has the basic sense of something that comes ahead of all else or needs to be considered first. Whether you are one of Jehovah's Witnesses or you are among the millions of sincere students of God's Word associated with them, consider this truth: "For everything there is an appointed time, even a time for every affair under the heavens." (Ecclesiastes 3:1) Rightfully, that includes your showing loving concern for family relationships. (Colossians 3:18-21) It involves making honest provision for your household by means of secular work. (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; 1 Timothy 5:8) And for a change of pace, you may take time out for a hobby or occasional entertainment or recreation. (Compare Mark 6:31.) Upon serious thought, though, do you not see that none of these are paramount in life? Something else is more important.

⁴ You probably recognize that the Bible's guiding principles are valuable aids in setting priorities and making wise decisions. For example, at Philippians 1:9, 10, Christians are urged to "abound yet more and more with accurate knowledge and full

3. What does establishing priorities involve for Christians?
4. How does Philippians 1:9, 10 relate to our setting priorities?



Reproduced from *Illustrierte Pracht - Bibel/Heilige Schrift des Alten und Neuen Testaments, nach der deutschen Uebersetzung D. Martin Luthers*.

discernment." To what end? The apostle Paul added: "That you may make sure of the more important things." Does that not make sense? On the basis of accurate knowledge, a discerning Christian can determine what should be of first interest—paramount—in life.

A Model as to What Is Paramount

⁵ We find a precious facet of knowledge in the apostle Peter's words: "To this course you were called, because even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely." (1 Peter 2:21) Yes, for clues as to what is paramount in life, we can examine what Jesus Christ thought about it. Psalm 40:8 said prophetically of him: "To do your will, O my God, I have delighted, and your law is within my inward parts." This is how he stated the same thought: "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." —John 4:34; Hebrews 12:2.

5. In describing the model left for Christians, how do the Scriptures show what was paramount in Jesus' life?

David's actions proved his reliance on Jehovah

⁶ Note that key—the doing of God's will. Jesus' example emphasizes what his disciples should rightly make paramount in their lives, for he said that "everyone that is perfectly instructed will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40) And as Jesus walked in the way his Father purposed, he showed that there was "rejoicing to satisfaction" in keeping God's will paramount. (Psalm 16:11; Acts 2:

28) Do you see what that implies? As Jesus' followers choose the doing of God's will as the paramount thing in their lives, they will enjoy "rejoicing to satisfaction" and real life. (1 Timothy 6:19) So there is more than one reason for the doing of God's will to be the priority in our lives.

⁷ Right after Jesus symbolized the presentation of himself to do God's will, the Devil sought to turn him aside. How? With temptation in three areas. Each time Jesus replied in Scriptural, unequivocal terms. (Matthew 4:1-10) But further trials awaited him—persecution, ridicule, betrayal by Judas, false accusations, and then death on a torture stake. Still, none of these trials made God's loyal Son swerve from his course. At a critical point, Jesus prayed: "Not as I will, but as you will. . . . Let your will take place." (Matthew 26:39, 42) Should not each of us be deeply moved by this aspect of the model left for us, caus-

6. How can we have the same results as Jesus did in putting God's will first?
- 7, 8. What trials did Jesus face, and what can we learn from this?

ing us to "persevere in prayer"?—Romans 12:12.

⁸ Yes, when we set our priorities in life, divine guidance is particularly helpful, especially if we face enemies of truth and opposers of God's will. Call to mind faithful King David's entreaty for guidance when he experienced enemy opposition. We will see this as we consider a portion of Psalm 143. This should help us to discern how we can strengthen our personal relationship with Jehovah and be fortified to keep the doing of God's will foremost in our lives.

Jehovah Hears and Answers Our Prayers

⁹ Though a sinful mortal, David had faith that Jehovah would give ear to his entreaty. He humbly pleaded: "O Jehovah, hear my prayer; do give ear to my entreaty. In your faithfulness answer me in your righteousness. And do not enter into judgment with your servant; for before you no one alive can be righteous." (Psalm 143:1, 2) David was conscious of his imperfection, yet his heart was complete toward God. Thus, he was confident that he would receive an answer in righteousness. Does this not encourage us? Even though we fall short of God's righteousness, we can be confident that he hears us if our hearts are complete toward him. (Ecclesiastes 7:20; 1 John 5:14) While persevering in prayer, we must be intent on "conquering the evil with the good" in these wicked days.—Romans 12:20, 21; James 4:7.

¹⁰ David had enemies, just as we do. Whether as a fugitive from Saul, forced to seek refuge in lonely, inaccessible places, or as a king harassed by enemies, David had

9. (a) Though David was a sinner, what do his words and actions reveal? (b) Why should we not give up in doing what is right?
10. Why did David have anxious periods?

his anxious periods. He described how this affected him: "The enemy has pursued my soul . . . He has caused me to dwell in dark places . . . And my spirit faints away within me; in the midst of me my heart shows itself numbed." (Psalm 143:3, 4) Have you had reason to feel similarly?

¹¹ Enemy pressure, trials because of severe economic hardship, serious illness, or other worrisome problems have led some of God's people to feel that their spirit would give out. On occasion their hearts too have been as if numb. It is as if individually they have cried: "Because you have made me see many distresses and calamities, may you revive me again . . . May you surround and comfort me." (Psalm 71:20, 21) How have they been helped?

How to Face Enemy Efforts

¹² Psalm 143:5 indicates what David did when beset with danger and great trials: "I have remembered days of long ago; I have meditated on all your activity; I willingly kept myself concerned with the work of your own hands." David called to mind God's dealings with His servants and how he himself had experienced deliverance. He meditated on what Jehovah had done for the sake of His great name. Yes, David kept himself concerned with God's works.

¹³ Have we not often recalled God's dealings with his people? Surely! This includes the record made by the 'great cloud of witnesses' in pre-Christian times. (Hebrews 11:32-38; 12:1) Anointed Christians in the first century were also encouraged to "keep on remembering the former days"

11. What anxious moments have God's modern-day servants faced?
12. How did King David cope with danger and trials?
13. When we face trials, how will our reflecting on ancient and modern examples of faithful servants help us to endure?

and what they had endured. (Hebrews 10:32-34) What about the experiences of God's servants in modern times, such as those recounted in *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom?** Accounts documented there and elsewhere enable us to recall how Jehovah has helped his people to endure bans, imprisonments, mob action, and concentration and slave-labor camps. There have been trials in war-torn lands, such as Burundi, Liberia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia. When opposition manifested itself, God's servants endured because of maintaining a strong relationship with Jehovah. His hand sustained those who made the doing of his will paramount in their lives.

¹⁴ However, you may respond that you have not experienced such brutal abuse, and you may feel that it is unlikely that you ever will. God's support of his people, though, has not always been in what some might view as dramatic circumstances. He has supported many "average" individuals in "normal" circumstances. Here is just one of many examples: Do you recognize the photograph above, and does it help you to recall God's dealings with his people? It appeared in *The Watchtower* of December 1, 1996. Did you read the account told by Penelope Makris? What a splendid example of Christian integrity! Can you call to mind what she endured from neighbors, how she

battled severe infirmities, and what efforts she put forth to stay in the full-time ministry? What about her rewarding experience in Mytilene? The point is, Do you see such examples as helps for all of us in setting priorities, putting the doing of God's will first in our lives?



¹⁵ It strengthens us to meditate on Jehovah's activities, as David did. In working out his purpose, Jehovah made provision for salvation through his Son's death, resurrection, and glorification. (1 Timothy 3:16) He has established his heavenly Kingdom, cleared the heavens of Satan and his demons, and restored true worship here on earth. (Revelation 12:7-12) He has built up a spiritual paradise and has blessed his people with increase. (Isaiah 35:1-10; 60:22) His people are now giving a final witness before the outbreak of the great tribulation. (Revelation 14:6, 7) Yes, we have much on which to meditate.

¹⁶ Keeping ourselves concerned with the work of God's hands rather than becoming preoccupied with human endeavors impresses upon us that Jehovah's applied power is irresistible. Those works, though, are not limited to the wonderful physical works of creation in the heavens and here upon the earth. (Job 37:14; Psalm 19:1; 104:24) His wonderful works include acts of deliverance for his people from enemy oppressors, as demonstrated in the experiences of his ancient chosen people.—Exodus 14:31; 15:6.

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14. (a) What is one example of God's sustaining a person in a situation that might be similar to ours? (b) What do you glean from that example?

15. What are some of Jehovah's doings on which we should meditate?

16. With what are we encouraged to be concerned, and what will this impress upon us?

Knowing the Way in Which to Walk

¹⁷ David prayed for aid lest life's moisture dry up in him: "I have spread out my hands to you; my soul is like an exhausted land to you. O hurry, answer me, O Jehovah. My spirit has come to an end. Do not conceal your face from me, or else I must become comparable with those going down into the pit." (Psalm 143:6, 7) David, a sinner, knew that God was aware of his situation. (Psalm 31:7) At times we too may feel that our spirituality has reached a low ebb. But the situation is not hopeless. Jehovah, who hears our prayers, may speed up our restoration by refreshing us through loving elders, articles in *The Watchtower*, or meeting parts that seem designed just for us.—Isaiah 32:1, 2.

¹⁸ Our trust in Jehovah moves us to entreat him: "Cause me to hear your loving-kindness, for in you I have put my trust. Make known to me the way in which I should walk." (Psalm 143:8) Did he fail Sister Makris, who was isolated on a Greek isle? So will he fail you as you make the doing of his will the paramount thing in your

17. How real was Jehovah to David, and how can we be reassured by this?

18, 19. (a) What should be our earnest entreaty to Jehovah? (b) Of what can we be certain?

What Is Your Answer?

- By applying Philippians 1:9, 10, how can we establish priorities?
- How did Jesus show what was paramount in his life?
- What can we learn from David's actions when he was under trial?
- In what way does Psalm 143:1-9 help us today?
- What should be paramount in our lives?

life? The Devil and his agents would like to hinder or completely stop our work of proclaiming God's Kingdom. Whether we serve in lands where true worship is generally allowed or we serve where it is suppressed, our united prayers harmonize with David's petition: "Deliver me from my enemies, O Jehovah. I have taken cover even with you." (Psalm 143:9) Our security against spiritual calamity lies in dwelling in the secret place of the Most High.
—Psalm 91:1.

¹⁹ Our conviction of what is paramount is solidly based. (Romans 12:1, 2) Resist, then, the world's efforts to impose upon you what it thinks is important in the human scheme of things. Continue to let every aspect of your life reflect what you know is paramount—the doing of God's will.—Matthew 6:10; 7:21.

²⁰ The first nine verses of Psalm 143 underline David's close personal relationship with Jehovah. When hemmed in by enemies, he freely entreated God for guidance. He poured out his heart, seeking help in the right way to walk. It is similar today with the remnant of spirit-anointed ones on earth and their companions. They consider their relationship with Jehovah to be precious as they entreat him for guidance. They keep foremost the doing of God's will, despite pressures from the Devil and the world.

²¹ Millions who are studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses need to recognize that the doing of God's will is paramount. We can help them to understand this when discussing chapter 13 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting*

20. (a) What have we learned about David at Psalm 143:1-9? (b) How do Christians today reflect David's spirit?

21. Why is it important for us to set a good example if we are to teach others what should be paramount in their lives?

Life, which stresses principles involved in being obedient to the Word.* Of course, they should see exemplified in us what we are teaching them. After a relatively short period of time, they too will come to know the way in which they should walk. As these millions personally perceive what should be of uppermost importance in their lives, many will be moved to take the steps of dedication and baptism. Thereafter, the con-

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gregation can help them to keep walking in the way of life.

²² Many readily acknowledge that God's will should be of utmost importance in their lives. How, though, does Jehovah progressively teach his servants to do his will? What benefits does this bring to them? These questions will be taken up, along with a discussion of a key verse, Psalm 143:10, in the following article.

22. What questions will be taken up in the following article?

TAUGHT TO DO JEHOVAH'S WILL

"Teach me to do your will, for you are my God."—PSALM 143:10.

EVERY day that a person is alive and active, he can be taught something worthwhile. That is true in your case, and it is true of others. But what happens at death? It is not possible to be taught anything or to learn in that condition. The Bible clearly says that the dead "are conscious of nothing at all." There is no knowledge in Sheol, the common grave of mankind. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) Does this mean that our being taught, accumulating knowledge, is in vain? That depends on what we are taught and on how we use that knowledge.

If we are taught only what is worldly, we have no lasting future. Happily, though, millions of people in all nations are being

1, 2. (a) When should we be taught, and with what realistic view? (b) Why is being taught by Jehovah so vital?

taught the divine will with a view to everlasting life. The basis for this hope lies in being taught by Jehovah, the Source of life-giving knowledge.—Psalm 94:9-12.

³ God's firstborn Son, as His first student, was taught to do his Father's will. (Proverbs 8:22-30; John 8:28) In turn, Jesus indicated that myriads of humans would be taught by his Father. What are the prospects for those of us who learn from God? Jesus said: "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by Jehovah.' Everyone that has heard from the Father and has learned comes to me. . . . Most truly I say to you, He that believes has everlasting life."—John 6:45-47.

3. (a) Why can it be said that Jesus was God's first student? (b) What assurance do we have that humans would be taught by Jehovah, and with what result?

⁴ Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 54:13, which was addressed to God's symbolic woman, heavenly Zion. That prophecy has particular application to her sons, the 144,000 spirit-begotten disciples of Jesus Christ. A remnant of those spiritual sons is active today, spearheading a global teaching program. As a result, millions of others who make up "a great crowd" also benefit from being taught by Jehovah. They have the unique prospect of learning without death interrupting the process. How so? Well, they are in line to survive the fast-approaching "great tribulation" and to enjoy everlasting life on a paradise earth.—Revelation 7:9, 10, 13-17.

Greater Emphasis on Doing God's Will

⁵ During 1997, in over 80,000 congregations worldwide, Jehovah's Witnesses will keep close in mind the opening words of Psalm 143:10: "Teach me to do your will." That will be the yeartext for 1997. Those words, prominently displayed in Kingdom Halls, will serve as a reminder that an outstanding place to receive divine education is at congregation meetings, where we can share in an ongoing program of instruction. When joining our brothers at meetings to be taught by our Grand Instructor, we can feel as the psalmist, who wrote: "I rejoiced when they were saying to me: 'To the house of Jehovah let us go.'"—Psalm 122:1; Isaiah 30:20.

⁶ Yes, we desire to be taught to do God's will rather than the will of our adversary

4. How are millions of people affected by divine teaching, and what prospects do they have?
5. (a) What is the yeartext for 1997? (b) How should we feel about attending Christian meetings?
6. In the words of David, what do we acknowledge?

the Devil or the will of imperfect humans. So, like David, we acknowledge the God whom we worship and serve: "For you are my God. Your spirit is good; may it lead me in the land of uprightness." (Psalm 143:10) Instead of wanting to mix with men of untruth, David preferred to be where Jehovah's worship was carried on. (Psalm 26:4-6) With God's spirit to direct his steps, David could tread in the tracks of righteousness.—Psalm 17:5; 23:3.

⁷ The Greater David, Jesus Christ, assured the apostles that the holy spirit would teach them all things and bring back to their minds all the things he had told them. (John 14:26) From Pentecost onward, Jehovah has progressively been revealing "the deep things of God" contained in his written Word. (1 Corinthians 2:10-13) This he has done through a visible channel that Jesus termed "the faithful and discreet slave." It provides spiritual food that is considered in the teaching program for congregations of God's people worldwide.—Matthew 24:45-47.

Taught Jehovah's Will at Our Meetings

⁸ Material in the weekly congregation Watchtower Study frequently deals with the application of Bible principles. This certainly helps us to cope with life's anxieties. In other studies profound spiritual truths or Bible prophecies are considered. How much we are taught during such studies! In many lands Kingdom Halls are filled to capacity for these meetings. Yet in a number of countries, meeting attendance has declined. Why, do you think? Might some be allowing secular work to interfere

7. How has God's spirit operated on the Christian congregation?
8. Why is sharing in the Watchtower Study so valuable?



with their assembling together regularly "to incite to love and fine works"? Or might many hours be spent in social activities or in watching television, making the schedule seem too tight to get to all the meetings? Recall the inspired injunction at Hebrews 10:23-25. Is not gathering together for divine instruction even more important now as we "behold the day drawing near"?

⁹ One of our foremost responsibilities is that of serving as God's ministers. The Service Meeting is designed to teach us how we can accomplish this effectively. We learn how to approach people, what to say, the way to react when there is a favorable re-

9. (a) How can the Service Meeting equip us for the ministry? (b) What should be our attitude about witnessing?

sponse, and even what to do when people reject our message. (Luke 10:1-11) As effective methods are discussed and demonstrated in this weekly meeting, we are better prepared to reach people not only when going from house to house but also when preaching on the streets, in parking lots, on public transportation, at airports, at businesses, or in schools. In line with our request, "Teach me to do your will," we will want to take advantage of every opportunity to do as our Master urged: "Let your light shine before men, that they may . . . give glory to your Father who is in the heavens."—Matthew 5:16.

¹⁰ At such congregation meetings, we are also taught to make disciples of others. Once

10. How can we truly help 'deserving ones'?



interest is found or literature is placed, our aim when making return visits is to start home Bible studies. In a sense, this is similar to the disciples' 'staying with deserving ones' so as to teach them the things that Jesus had commanded. (Matthew 10:11; 28:19, 20) Having excellent helps, such as the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, we really are well equipped to accomplish our ministry thoroughly. (2 Timothy 4:5) Each week as you attend the Service Meeting and Theocratic Ministry School, endeavor to grasp and then use helpful points that will recommend you as one of God's adequately qualified ministers, carrying out his will.—2 Corinthians 3:3, 5; 4:1, 2.

¹¹ It is God's will that we "keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) Ask yourself, 'How would I apply this principle if demands at my [or my mate's] secular job interfered with meeting attendance?' Many spiritually mature ones would take steps to speak to their employers about the matter. One full-time minister let her employer know that she needed to have time off each

11. How have some demonstrated faith in the words found at Matthew 6:33?

week in order to attend congregation meetings. He granted the request. But being curious about what takes place at the meetings, he asked to attend. There he heard an announcement concerning an upcoming district convention. As a result, the employer arranged to spend an entire day at the convention. What lesson do you draw from this example?

Taught Jehovah's Will by Godly Parents

¹² But congregation meetings and conventions are not the only provision for being taught to do the divine will. Godly parents are commanded to train, discipline, and bring up their children to praise Jehovah and do his will. (Psalm 148:12, 13; Proverbs 22:6, 15) Doing so requires that we take our "little ones" to meetings where they can 'listen and learn,' but what about teaching them from the holy writings at home? (Deuteronomy 31:12; 2 Timothy 3:15) Many

12. For children to be taught Jehovah's will, what should Christian parents do with patience and firmness?

families have conscientiously begun programs of regular family Bible study, only to allow these to fade or fall into neglect before long. Have you had such an experience? Will you conclude that the recommendation to have such a *regular* study is misdirected or that your family is so different that it just will not work in your case? Whatever the situation, you parents please review the fine articles "Our Rich Spiritual Heritage" and "The Rewards of Persistence" in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1995.

¹³ Families are encouraged to make a habit of considering the daily text from *Examining the Scriptures Daily*. Just reading the text and comments is good, but discussing the text and applying it is more beneficial. For example, if considering Ephesians 5:15-17, family members could reason on how to 'buy out opportune time' for personal study, to share in some form of the full-time ministry, and to care for other theocratic assignments. Yes, a family discussion of the daily text could lead one or many to "go on perceiving [more fully] what the will of Jehovah is."

¹⁴ Parents must be assiduous teachers of their children. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) But it is not simply a matter of lecturing or commanding their offspring. Father and mother also need to listen, in that way being better able to know what needs to be explained, clarified, illustrated, or repeated. In one Christian family, the parents stimulate open communication by encouraging their children to ask questions about things that they do not understand or that cause concern. They thus learned that a teenage son had difficulty comprehending that Je-

hovah does not have a beginning. The parents were able to use information from the Watch Tower Society's publications showing that time and space are accepted as endless. That served to illustrate the point, and it satisfied their son. So take time to answer clearly and from the Scriptures your children's questions, helping them to see that learning to do God's will can be very satisfying. What else are God's people—young and old—being taught today?

Taught to Love and to Fight

¹⁵ In harmony with Jesus' new command, we are "taught by God to love one another." (1 Thessalonians 4:9) When things are tranquil and going well, we may feel that we do love all our brothers. Yet what happens when personal differences arise or we become offended because of what another Christian says or does? At this point the genuineness of our love may be put to the test. (Compare 2 Corinthians 8:8.) What does the Bible teach us to do in such situations? One thing is to strive to show love in the fullest sense. (1 Peter 4:8) Rather than looking for our own interests, getting provoked over minor shortcomings, or keeping an account of an injury, we should work at letting love cover a multitude of sins. (1 Corinthians 13:5) We know this is God's will, for it is what his Word teaches.

¹⁶ While many would not link love and warfare, the latter is something else we are being taught, but a distinct type of warfare. David recognized his dependence on Jehovah to teach him how to carry on warfare, though in his time that included literal fighting against Israel's enemies. (1 Sam-

13. How can families benefit from considering the daily text?

14. What kind of teachers does Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 indicate parents should be, calling for what?

15. When might the genuineness of our brotherly love be tested?

16. (a) In what kind of warfare are Christians taught to engage? (b) How are we equipped?

uel 17:45-51; 19:8; 1 Kings 5:3; Psalm 144:1) What about our fight today? Our weapons are not fleshly. (2 Corinthians 10:4) Ours is a spiritual fight, for which we need to be equipped with spiritual armor. (Ephesians 6:10-13) Through his Word and his congregated people, Jehovah teaches us to wage a successful spiritual fight.

¹⁷ In deceptive, subtle ways, the Devil often uses elements of the world, apostates, and other opposers of the truth in an effort to divert us to side issues. (1 Timothy 6:3-5, 11; Titus 3:9-11) It is as if he sees that he has little chance of overcoming us by a direct, frontal attack, so he tries to trip us by getting us to express our pet peeves and foolish questionings, which are bereft of spiritual substance. As vigilant warriors, we should be just as alert to such dangers as we are to frontal assaults.—1 Timothy 1:3, 4.

¹⁸ We do not promote the desires of men or the will of the nations. Jehovah has taught us through Jesus' example that we must live no longer for ourselves; rather, we should be armed with the same mental dis-

17. (a) What tactics does the Devil use to divert us? (b) What should we wisely avoid?
18. What does living no longer for ourselves really involve?

How Would You Answer?

- Who today are being taught to do Jehovah's will?
- How should Psalm 143:10 affect us during 1997?
- How are we being taught to do Jehovah's will?
- What is required of Christian parents in teaching their children?

position that Christ Jesus had and live for God's will. (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15) In the past, we may have lived a very immoderate, profligate life, squandering precious time. Revelries, drinking matches, and immorality characterize this wicked world. Now that we are being taught to do God's will, are we not grateful to be separated from this corrupt world? So let us wage a hard fight spiritually to avoid getting involved with defiling worldly practices.—1 Peter 4:1-3.

Teaching Us to Benefit Ourselves

¹⁹ It is imperative to recognize that being taught to do Jehovah's will benefits us greatly. Understandably, we must do our part by paying close attention so as to learn and then follow the instructions that come to us through his Son as well as through his Word and congregated people. (Isaiah 48:17, 18; Hebrews 2:1) By our doing so, we will be fortified to stand firm in these calamitous times and weather the storms ahead. (Matthew 7:24-27) Even now, we will be pleasing God by doing his will and will be ensuring that our prayers are answered. (John 9:31; 1 John 3:22) And we will experience genuine happiness.—John 13:17.

²⁰ During the course of 1997, we will frequently have opportunity to read and consider the yeartext, Psalm 143:10: "Teach me to do your will." As we do this, let us use some of the occasions to reflect on the provisions that God has made for us to be taught, as set out above. And let us use such meditation on those words as a stimulus to act consistently with that entreaty, knowing that "he that does the will of God remains forever."—1 John 2:17.

19. Being taught Jehovah's will and then doing it will lead to what benefits?
20. On what would it be good to meditate as you see the yeartext throughout 1997?

"So Where Is Your Church?"

J EHOVAH'S WITNESSES in Mozambique are often asked this question. Frankly, until recently it has been a difficult question to answer. This is because Jehovah's Witnesses did not enjoy legal recognition in this country until 1991. Hence, it was not possible to have clearly identifiable and established places of worship.

However, that situation changed on February 19, 1994. On that hot, sunny day, the first two Kingdom Halls ever built in Mozambique were dedicated. A total of 602 came to the dedication of these fine meeting places in the port city of Beira, about halfway up the coast of Mozambique. They will serve the needs of the three congregations in that city.

The entire project, from laying the foundation to completing the buildings, took a year and two months of hard work. Often 30 or more volunteers from neighboring Zimbabwe came and worked shoulder to shoulder with the local Witnesses. Since not all of them could be accommodated in the missionary home in Beira, which served as the base of operations, some camped out around the home during weekends and on some occasions for weeks at a time.

The site of the Kingdom Hall for the Massamba and Munhava Congregations is located on the main road of Beira. "On a busy day, when the work went fast and the progress was

very noticeable," observed one missionary, "we saw near-accidents as drivers passing by stared at the Kingdom Hall, almost forgetting about their steering wheels." Many did stop to watch the work, and they were particularly impressed by the presence of different races working together as one.

A great deal of planning and organizing went into the work. Unlike many other projects



AFRICA

MOZAMBIQUE

Beira

Maputo



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in this part of the world, where materials and resources are scarce, work on the Kingdom Halls never came to a standstill for lack of supplies. On one occasion, 800 sacks of cement were needed, and the only place that could supply it did not have the necessary sacks for holding the cement. The brothers contacted the Watch Tower Society's branch office in the capital, Maputo; sacks were sent by air, taken to the cement factory, and filled. The work went on uninterrupted.

On another occasion, when roof trusses were being installed, the crew ran short of steel beams. Because of extreme scarcity, steel for the project had been imported from 370 miles away! A man who had been watching was approached by one of the crew and asked if he knew where they might be able to find the steel to complete the job. The man replied: "I have been standing here for over an hour, and it must not have been by coincidence. I cannot help but admire the work you are doing and the spirit of this project. I have just the steel you need, and it would be my pleasure to offer it to you as a gift." It turned out to be a most timely provision.

Many observers wondered what large construction firm was behind the project. The crew, of course, took great pleasure in telling them that these were Jehovah's Witnesses volunteering their services. What especially struck the observers? "You are a united people," said one. "Even though of different races, you work together as brothers." The result was that many came asking for Bible studies. It has also had an impact on the meetings. The average meeting attendance of the Manga Congregation, for example, is more than double the number of Witnesses.

The new Kingdom Halls have truly proved to be a great blessing for the local Witnesses. Most had previously met in primitive places with a grass roof or a few tin sheets overhead, in a

backyard, or in a small room of a private home. They often got wet when it rained; still they attended the meetings faithfully. For decades these were the only "Kingdom Halls" that Witnesses in Mozambique knew. Brother Caetano Gabriel, an elder in the Massamba Congregation, declared: "We are grateful to our brothers around the world who contributed toward the realization of this project." One young Witness recalled: "When we were in Carico ("reeducation camps" where Jehovah's Witnesses were interned for approximately 12 years), we used to say, 'We will persevere faithfully, and Jehovah will reward us.' The new Kingdom Hall is a reward from Jehovah." Their words express their profound gratitude and their determination to praise Jehovah.

Many youths who shared in the construction work were infused with the pioneer spirit and afterward took up the regular pioneer ministry. Young Isabel, a regular pioneer in the Manga Congregation, remarked as she looked at the impeccably clean Kingdom Hall the day before its dedication: "To me this is the most beautiful place in the city of Beira. It is the greatest pleasure for me to be here." Adão Costa, a missionary, explained that the local authorities had been most cooperative in allowing special importation procedures because they were aware of the Witnesses' honesty. Then he added: "Although we got very tired, it was a joy to see the fruits of all this work for the honor and glory of Jehovah."

Now, whenever a friendly resident of the city of Beira asks, "So where is your church?" the Witnesses direct him to one of the two new Kingdom Halls and respond with words such as, "It is on the International Road, Avenida Acordo de Lusaka, right across from the Fourth Squadron Police Station." Then, adding one correction, "Only it is not a church. It is a Kingdom Hall!"

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

An Exemplary Couple

GIVE my greetings to Prisca and Aquila my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who have risked their own necks for my soul, to whom not only I but also all the congregations of the nations render thanks.”—Romans 16:3, 4.

These words of the apostle Paul to the Christian congregation in Rome bespeak the great esteem and warm regard he had for this married couple. He made sure that he did not overlook them when writing to their congregation. But who were these two “fellow workers” of Paul, and why were they so dear to him and to the congregations? —2 Timothy 4:19.

Aquila was a Jew of the diaspora (the dispersed Jews) and a native of Pontus, a region in northern Asia Minor. He and his wife Priscilla (Prisca) had settled in Rome. There had been a sizable Jewish community in that city at least since Pompey's capture of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E., when a large number of prisoners were led to Rome as slaves. In fact, Roman inscriptions reveal the existence of a dozen or so synagogues in the ancient city. A number of Jews from Rome were present in Jerusalem at Pentecost 33 C.E., when they heard the good news. Perhaps it was by them that the Christian message first reached the capital of the Roman Empire.—Acts 2:10.

However, the Jews had been expelled from Rome in the year 49 or early 50 C.E. by order of Emperor Claudius. Hence, it was in the Greek city of Corinth that the apostle Paul met Aquila and Priscilla. When Paul arrived in Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla

kindly offered him both hospitality and work, for they shared a common trade—tentmaking.—Acts 18:2, 3.

Tentmakers

This was not easy work. Making tents involved cutting and stitching together pieces of stiff, rough material or leather. According to the historian Fernando Bea, it was “a job that required expertise and care” on the part of tentmakers who worked with “coarse, resistant fabrics, used in camping while traveling, providing shelter from the sun and the rain, or for packing goods in the holds of ships.”

This raises a question. Did not Paul say that he had been ‘educated at the feet of Gamaliel,’ thus paving the way for him to pursue a prestigious career in the years to come? (Acts 22:3) While this is true, Jews of the first century considered it honorable to teach a lad a trade even if he was to receive a higher education. Therefore it is likely that both Aquila and Paul had acquired their skill in tentmaking when they were young. That experience proved to be very useful later. But as Christians, they did not consider such secular work an end in itself. Paul explained that the work he did in Corinth along with Aquila and Priscilla was only a means to support his principal activity, that of declaring the good news without ‘imposing an expensive burden on anyone.’ —2 Thessalonians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 9:18; 2 Corinthians 11:7.

Evidently, Aquila and Priscilla were pleased to do all they could to facilitate Paul's missionary service. Who knows how



many times the three friends paused during their work to give an informal witness to clients or passersby! And although their work of tentmaking was humble and fatiguing, they were happy to do it, working even "night and day" in order to promote God's interests—just as many modern-day Christians maintain themselves with part-time or seasonal work in order to dedicate most of the remaining time to helping people to hear the good news.—1 Thessalonians 2:9; Matthew 24:14; 1 Timothy 6:6.

Examples of Hospitality

Paul likely used Aquila's house as a base for his missionary activities during the 18 months he stayed in Corinth. (Acts 18:3, 11) It is probable, then, that Aquila and Priscilla had the pleasure of also having Silas (Silvanus) and Timothy as guests on their arrival from Macedonia. (Acts 18:5) The two letters of Paul to the Thessalonians, which later became part of the Bible canon, may have been written while the apostle was staying with Aquila and Priscilla.

It is easy to imagine that at this time the home of Priscilla and Aquila was a real hive of theocratic activity. Probably it was frequented by many dear friends—Stephanas and his family, the first Christians in the province of Achaia, baptized by Paul him-

self; Titius Justus, who allowed Paul to use his house to deliver discourses; and Crispus, the presiding officer of the synagogue, who accepted the truth along with all his household. (Acts 18:7, 8; 1 Corinthians 1:16) Then there were Fortunatus and Achaicus; Gaius, in whose home the congregation meetings may have been held; Erastus, the city steward; Tertius, the secretary to whom Paul dictated his letter to the Romans; and Phoebe, a faithful sister of the nearby congregation of Cenchreae, who probably carried the letter from Corinth to Rome.—Romans 16:1, 22, 23; 1 Corinthians 16:17.

Modern-day servants of Jehovah who have had the opportunity to show hospitality to a traveling minister know how encouraging and memorable it can be. The upbuilding experiences related on such occasions can be a real source of spiritual refreshment for all. (Romans 1:11, 12) And, as did Aquila and Priscilla, those who open their homes for meetings, perhaps a Congregation Book Study, have the joy and satisfaction of being able to contribute in this way to the advancement of true worship.

So close was their friendship with Paul that Aquila and Priscilla left with him when he departed from Corinth in the spring of 52 C.E., accompanying him as far as Ephesus. (Acts 18:18-21) They stayed in that

city and laid the groundwork for the apostle's next visit. It was here that these gifted teachers of the good news took the eloquent Apollos "into their company" and had the joy of helping him to understand "the way of God more correctly." (Acts 18:24-26) When Paul did revisit Ephesus during his third missionary journey, sometime around the winter of 52/53 C.E., the field that had been cultivated by this dynamic couple was already ripe for harvest. For some three years, Paul preached and taught there about "The Way," while the Ephesian congregation held meetings in Aquila's home.—Acts 19:1-20, 26; 20:31; 1 Corinthians 16:8, 19.

Later, when they returned to Rome, these two friends of Paul continued to "follow the course of hospitality," making their home available for Christian meetings.—Romans 12:13; 16:3-5.

They 'Risked Their Necks' for Paul

Perhaps Paul also lodged with Aquila and Priscilla while he was in Ephesus. Was he staying with them at the time of the tumult of the silversmiths? According to the account at Acts 19:23-31, when the craftsmen who made shrines revolted against the preaching of the good news, the brothers had to restrain Paul from risking himself by going before the mob. Some Bible commentators have theorized that it may have been in just such a perilous circumstance that Paul felt 'uncertain even of his own life' and that Aquila and Priscilla intervened in some way, 'risking their own necks' for him.—2 Corinthians 1:8; Romans 16:3, 4.

When the "uproar had subsided," Paul wisely left the city. (Acts 20:1) No doubt Aquila and Priscilla also faced opposition and derision. Did such make them feel downhearted? On the contrary, Aquila and Priscilla courageously continued in their Christian efforts.

A Close Couple

After Claudius' rule had ended, Aquila and Priscilla returned to Rome. (Romans 16:3-15) However, the last time they are mentioned in the Bible, we find them back in Ephesus. (2 Timothy 4:19) Again, as in all other references in the Scriptures, this husband and wife are mentioned together. What a close and united couple! Paul could not think of that dear brother, Aquila, without recalling the faithful cooperation of his wife. And what a fine example for Christian couples today, for the loyal assistance of a devoted spouse allows a person to do much "in the work of the Lord" and, at times, even more than it might have been possible to do as a single person.—1 Corinthians 15:58.

Aquila and Priscilla served in several different congregations. Like them, many zealous modern-day Christians have made themselves available to move where the need is greater. They also experience the joy and satisfaction that comes from seeing Kingdom interests grow and from being able to cultivate warm and precious Christian friendships.

By their splendid example of Christian love, Aquila and Priscilla won the appreciation of Paul and others. But even more important, they established a fine reputation with Jehovah himself. The Scriptures assure us: "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name, in that you have ministered to the holy ones and continue ministering."—Hebrews 6:10.

We may not have the opportunity to expend ourselves in ways similar to what Aquila and Priscilla did, yet we can imitate their excellent example. Deep satisfaction will be ours as we devote our energy and life to sacred service, never forgetting "the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."—Hebrews 13:15, 16.

Do You Have a Godly View of Alcoholic Beverages?

ABOUT 20 years ago, archaeologists excavated an old mud-brick building near the town of Urmia, Iran. They found in it a ceramic jar that, according to scientists, is thousands of years old, dating back to when some very early human settlements were established. Recently, the latest technology was used in analyzing the jar. Scientists were surprised to find inside it the oldest chemical evidence of wine making.

The Bible too establishes clearly that from ancient times wine, beer, and other alcoholic beverages have been consumed. (Genesis 27:25; Ecclesiastes 9:7; Nahum 1:10) As with other foods, Jehovah gives us as individuals a choice—to drink alcoholic beverages or not. Jesus often drank wine with his meals. John the Baptizer abstained from alcohol.

—Matthew 11:18, 19.

The Bible forbids overindulgence in drinking. Drunkenness is a sin against God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) In harmony with this, Jehovah's Witnesses do not permit any who become unrepentant drunkards to remain in the Christian congregation. Those in the congregation who choose to drink alcoholic beverages must do so in moderation.

—Titus 2:2, 3.

An Ungodly View

Many people today do not have a godly view of alcoholic beverages. It is easy to see that Satan is promoting the misuse of this ancient product. For example, in some islands of the South Pacific, it is customary for men to gather to drink large amounts of a homemade fermented beverage. These



sessions may last several hours and are held frequently—many men indulge in the practice daily. Some consider it simply part of the culture. At times beer and spirits are consumed instead of—or in addition to—the local homemade beverage. Drunkenness often results.



In another Pacific land, the moderate consumption of alcohol by men is almost unheard of. As a general rule, when they drink they drink to get drunk. Typically, on payday a group of men will get together and purchase several cartons of beer, each containing 24 bottles. They stop drinking only when the beer runs out. As a result, public drunkenness is very common.

Fermented beverages, such as palm wine and other local brews, are traditionally used in African countries. Tradition in some communities dictates that alcohol must be offered when guests are entertained. The hospitable host customarily provides more than his visitor can consume. In one area the custom is to set 12 bottles of beer in front of each visitor.

Many Japanese companies organize bus trips for their employees. Large amounts of alcoholic beverages are brought along, and drunkenness is condoned. Some of these company outings last two or three days. According to the magazine *Asiaweek*, in Japan, "from rice farmers to rich politicians, the measure of a man has traditionally been the volume of liquor he can down." Similar trends are being observed in other Asian



countries. *Asiaweek* states that "South Koreans now swallow more spirits per person than do drinkers anywhere else in the world."

Binge drinking has become a widespread practice on college campuses in the United States. According to *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, "most binge drinkers do not consider themselves to be problem drinkers."* This should not be surprising because in many countries the media promote drinking as an



adventurous, fashionable, and sophisticated activity. Often this propaganda specifically targets the young.

In Britain, beer intake has doubled during a 20-year period, and the consumption of strong liquor has tripled. Drinkers are starting younger, and more women are drinking. Similar trends are observed in Eastern European and Latin-American countries. This is highlighted by correspondingly rising rates of alcoholism and alcohol-related traffic fatalities. Clearly, there is an unmistakable increase in alcohol abuse worldwide.

* "Binge drinking was defined as the consumption of five or more drinks in a row for men and four or more drinks in a row for women."—*The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

How Much Is Too Much?

The Bible's view of alcoholic beverages is balanced. On the one hand, the Scriptures say that wine is a gift from Jehovah God "that makes the heart of mortal man rejoice." (Psalm 104:1, 15) On the other hand, in condemning overindulgence the Bible uses the expressions "heavy drinking," "excesses with wine, revelries, drinking matches," "given to a lot of wine," and being "enslaved to a lot of wine." (Luke 21:34; 1 Peter 4:3; 1 Timothy 3:8; Titus 2:3) But how much is "a lot of wine"? How can a Christian determine what constitutes a godly view of alcoholic beverages?

It is not difficult to recognize drunkenness. Its consequences are described in the Bible with the words: "Who has woe? Who has uneasiness? Who has contentions? Who has concern? Who has wounds for no reason? Who has dullness of eyes? Those staying a long time with the wine, those coming in to search out mixed wine. . . . Your own eyes will see strange things, and your own heart will speak perverse things."—Proverbs 23:29-33.

Too much alcohol can cause confusion, hallucinations, unconsciousness, and other disorders of the mind and body. Under the influence of alcohol, a person may lose control of his behavior, causing harm to himself or others. Drunkards are known to engage in ridiculous, offensive, or immoral conduct.

Drinking to the point of drunkenness, with its above-mentioned consequences, is definitely too much drinking. However, a person can manifest a lack of moderation without displaying all the typical signs of drunkenness. Hence, the question of whether someone has drunk too much is often open to dispute. Where is the line between moderation and overindulgence?

Safeguard Your Thinking Abilities

The Bible does not set limits by providing percentages of blood-alcohol concentrations or some other measure. Alcohol tolerance varies from one person to another. Yet, Bible principles apply to all Christians and can help us to develop a godly view of alcoholic beverages.

The first commandment, Jesus said, is to "love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matthew 22:37, 38) Alcohol has a direct effect on the mind, and overindulgence will interfere with your obedience to this greatest of all commandments. It can seriously interfere with good judgment, the ability to solve problems, the exercise of self-restraint, and other important functions of the mind. The Scriptures admonish us: "Safeguard practical wisdom and thinking ability, and they will prove to be life to your soul and charm to your throat."—Proverbs 3:21, 22.

The apostle Paul entreats Christians: "Present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason." (Romans 12:1) Would a Christian be "acceptable to God" if he drinks alcohol to the point of relinquishing his "power of reason"? Usually, an immoderate drinker gradually builds up a tolerance to alcohol. He may feel that his heavy drinking is—for him—below the threshold of drunkenness. Yet, he may well be developing an unhealthy dependency on alcohol. Could such a person present his body as "a sacrifice living, holy"?

Any amount of alcohol that impairs your "practical wisdom and thinking ability" as a Christian is too much alcohol for you.

What Shapes Your View of Alcohol?

A Christian ought to assess whether his attitude toward drinking is being carried

Listen to Your Loved Ones

An immoderate drinker is often the last one to realize that he has a problem. Relatives, friends, and Christian elders should not hesitate to offer help to loved ones who lack moderation. On the other hand, if loved ones express discomfort over your alcohol-drinking habits, they likely have good reason for it. Consider what they are saying.—Proverbs 19:20; 27:6.



along by current trends or traditions. When it comes to alcoholic beverages, you would certainly not want to make your choices based on cultural trends or media propaganda. In assessing your own attitude, ask yourself, 'Is it influenced by what is acceptable in the community? Or is my drinking governed by Bible principles?' add wold—mind

Although Jehovah's Witnesses are not anticulture, they realize that Jehovah hates many practices that are widely accepted today. Some communities condone abortion, blood transfusions, homosexuality, or polygamy. Christians, however, act in accord with God's view of these things. Yes, a godly view will motivate a Christian to hate such practices regardless of whether they are culturally acceptable or not.—Psalm 97:10.

The Bible speaks of "the will of the nations," which includes "excesses with wine" and "drinking matches." The term "drinking matches" conveys the idea of gatherings that were arranged with the express purpose of consuming large quantities of alcohol. It seems that in Bible times some who were proud of their supposed ability to hold their liquor tried to outdrink others, or they tried to see who could drink the most. The apostle Peter refers to this kind of conduct as a "low sink of debauchery" in which repentant Christians no longer share.—1 Peter 4:3, 4.

Would it be reasonable for a Christian to adopt the view that as long as he did not get drunk, it really would not matter where, when, or how much he drank? We can ask, Is

that a godly view? The Bible says: "Whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory." (1 Corinthians 10:31) A group of men gathering to drink large amounts of alcohol in public might not all get drunk, but would their conduct bring glory to Jehovah? The Bible admonishes: "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.

Avoid Stumbling Others

Interestingly, often the very cultures that tolerate overindulgence frown upon it when a heavy drinker claims to be a man of God. In one small community in the South Pacific, an observer said: "I admire you people. You preach the truth. But the problem we see is that your men drink too much grog." Reportedly, the individuals did not get drunk, yet that detail was not so obvious to many in the community. Observers could easily conclude that like most other men who engage in drinking sessions, the Witnesses get drunk too. Could a Christian minister who engages in long drinking sessions maintain a good reputation and accomplish his public ministry with freeness of speech?—Acts 28:31.

In Our Next Issue

Why Should We All Praise God?

**The Greater Glory
of Jehovah's House**

Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked

A report from one European country indicates that at times some brothers and sisters arrive at the Kingdom Hall with a strong smell of alcohol on their breath. This has disturbed the consciences of others. The Bible admonishes: "It is well not to eat flesh or to drink wine or do anything over which your brother stumbles." (Romans 14:21) A godly view of alcoholic beverages will impel a mature Christian to be sensitive to the conscience of others, even if it means abstaining from alcohol under some circumstances.

Christians Are Unmistakably Different

Regrettably, this world has done much to offend Jehovah by misusing the good things he has given mankind, including alcoholic beverages. Each dedicated Christian should strive to avoid the prevalent ungodly views. Thus people will be able to "see the distinction between a righteous one and a wicked one, between one serving God and one who has not served him."—Malachi 3:18.

When it comes to alcoholic beverages, the "distinction" between Jehovah's Witnesses and the world ought to be unmistakable. Drinking alcoholic beverages is not central in the lives of genuine Christians. They do not experiment with the limits of their alcohol tolerance, coming dangerously close to drunkenness; nor do they allow alcoholic beverages to impair or in any way interfere with their serving God with their whole soul and with a clear mind.

As a group, Jehovah's Witnesses have a godly view of alcoholic beverages. What about you? Each of us can count on Jehovah's blessings as we follow the Bible's instruction "to repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires and to live with soundness of mind and righteousness and godly devotion amid this present system of things."—Titus 2:12.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you enjoyed reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*? If so, you will find it interesting to recall the following:

- What is the meaning of the Greek word *parousia* used at Matthew 24:3, 27, 37, 39?** Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* says: "PAROUSIA . . . denotes both an arrival and a consequent presence with." Hence, it is not just the moment of arrival but a presence extending from the arrival onward.—8/15, page 11.
- How were 'those days cut short' so that "flesh" could be saved in the first century, and how will it occur on a larger scale? (Matthew 24:22)** In 66 C.E., the Romans unexpectedly cut short their siege on Jerusalem, allowing Christian "flesh" to escape. Similarly, we expect that the coming attack on Babylon the Great will somehow be cut short. Thus anointed Christians and their companions will be saved from possible destruction.—8/15, pages 18-20.
- What should be our reaction if a person begins to partake of the Memorial emblems or ceases to do so?** There is no need for other Christians to be concerned. Jesus said: "I am the fine shepherd, and I know my sheep." Just as assuredly, Jehovah knows those whom he really has chosen as spiritual sons. (John 10:14; Romans 8:16, 17)—8/15, page 31.
- What was the main purpose of the Mosaic Law?** Primarily, it taught the Israelites of their need for the Messiah, who would redeem them from their sinful state. (Galatians 3:24) The Law also taught godly fear and obedience, and it helped Israel to keep separate from the corrupt practices of the surrounding nations. (Leviticus 18:24, 25)—9/1, page 9.
- What is the purpose of the new covenant? (Jeremiah 31:31-34)** It is to produce a nation of kings and priests to bless all mankind. (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 5:10)—9/1, pages 14, 15.
- Why should we practice the art of apologizing?** An apology can help to ease the pain caused by imperfection, and it can heal strained relationships. Each apology we make is a lesson in humility and trains us to become more sensitive to the feelings of others.—9/15, page 24.
- Is the global Deluge of Noah's day a historical fact?** Yes. Ancient accounts telling of a global flood can be found all around the world, from the Americas to Australia. The widespread presence of this theme adds support to the fact that a worldwide deluge did occur, as reported in the Bible. (Genesis 7:11-20)—9/15, page 25.
- What is involved in being hospitable? (Romans 12:13)** "Hospitality" is translated from a Greek word that is made up of two root words meaning "love" and "stranger." Hence, hospitality essentially means "love of strangers." But it involves more than love based on principle, shown out of a sense of duty. It is based on genuine fondness, affection, and friendship.—10/1, page 9.
- What is Paul's argument regarding marriage and singleness in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 7?** Marriage is legitimate and, under certain circumstances, advisable for some. Yet singleness is undeniably advantageous for the Christian man or woman who wants to serve Jehovah with minimum distraction.—10/15, page 13.
- How does an elder "provide for those who are his own"? (1 Timothy 5:8)** An elder should "provide for his own"—his wife as well as his children—materially, spiritually, and emotionally.—10/15, page 22.
- How does Jehovah supply comfort to his servants?** God's holy spirit acts as a "comforter." (John 14:16, footnote) Another way in which God provides comfort is through the Bible. (Romans 15:4) God knows our individual needs and can use us to be of comfort to one another, as Paul gained comfort through Titus' report about the Corinthians. (2 Corinthians 7:11-13)—11/1, pages 10, 12.
- What is implied by Paul's description of Jehovah as "the Father of tender mercies," found at 2 Corinthians 1:3?** The Greek noun translated "tender mercies" comes from a word used to express sorrow at the suffering of another. Thus Paul describes God's tender feelings for all of His faithful servants who are suffering tribulation.—11/1, page 13.
- What was accomplished by the Israelites' fasting on the annual Day of Atonement? (Leviticus 16:29-31; 23:27)** The observance of fasting moved the people of Israel to greater consciousness of their sinfulness and the need for redemption. By it they expressed sorrow for their sins and repentance before God.—11/15, page 5.
- What is implied in the injunction to young people: "Remember, now, your Grand Creator"? (Ecclesiastes 12:1)** One authority says that the Hebrew word translated "remember" often implies "the affection of the mind and the action which accompanies recollection." So heeding this injunction means more than just thinking about Jehovah. It involves action, doing what pleases him.—12/1, page 16.

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The Benefits of a Calm Heart

MODERN medical science has long known that uncontrolled anger has a detrimental effect on the human body. Over a hundred years ago, *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* said: "A man falls dead in a fit of rage, and it is said, perhaps, that he had a weak heart, which could not stand the strain imposed by his mental state. Nobody seems to think that this is but the culmination of a long series of such fits of madness, which have themselves caused the weakness in question."

The above words come as no surprise to students of God's Word, the Bible. Some 29 centuries before JAMA spoke out about the dangers of a bad temper, King Solomon was in-

spired to write: "A calm heart is the life of the fleshly organism." (Proverbs 14:30) These words still hold true today.

By maintaining a calm disposition, we are spared the many illnesses that often are stress-related, such as elevated blood pressure, headaches, and respiratory problems. In addition to improved health, however, our relations with others will benefit if we strive to "let anger alone and leave rage." (Psalm 37:8) People were naturally drawn to Jesus because of his mild temper and heartfelt concern for them. (Mark 6:31-34) Likewise, we will be a source of refreshment to others if we cultivate a calm heart.—Matthew 11:28-30.

