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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Who Is
Shaping
Your
Values?



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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The Quest for More

"If our wants are insatiable, there is simply no such thing as enough."—A Worldwatch Institute report.

WHAT do we want? Everything. When do we want it? Now." This slogan was popular among some college students during the 1960's. Today, these exact words may not be heard, but the basic tenet has remained. Indeed, the quest for more seems to be a hallmark of our era.

For many, the acquisition of wealth and possessions has become a priority. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter once said: "Human identity is no longer defined by what one does but by what one owns." Are there more important values than possessions? If so, what are they, and what benefits will they provide?



Benefit by Pursuing Spiritual Values

"A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver, neither any lover of wealth with income."—Ecclesiastes 5:10.

OVERWORK can lead to stress, and stress may bring on health problems, sometimes leading to death. In many lands, families are being torn apart by divorce. All too often, excessive concern with material things lies behind such tragedies. Rather than enjoying what he has, a person who is caught up in attaining possessions can find himself always wanting more, regardless of the cost to his well-being. A self-help book states: "Keeping up

with the Joneses is a national pastime, even if Mr. Jones is a workaholic on the verge of a heart attack at age forty-three."

The quest for more can become insatiable, robbing a person of any joy that he might otherwise experience. Our human weaknesses in this regard are often exploited by a powerful force—advertising! Television programs are crammed with commercials urging you to buy things that you probably do not need and that you may not

even be able to afford. All of this can lead to substantial harm.

Unrestrained self-indulgence can have a subtle yet devastating effect on us, both physically and morally. For example, wise King Solomon observed: "A calm heart is the life of the fleshly organism." (Proverbs 14:30) In contrast, overexertion, anxiety, and the pressures of accumulating material wealth can destroy our health and happiness. Relationships also suffer when material goals dominate our life. And when a person's family and social life deteriorate, so does the quality of his life in general.

Superiority of Spiritual Values

"Quit being fashioned after this system of things," admonished the apostle Paul centuries ago. (Romans 12:2) The world has a fondness for those who conform to its values. (John 15:19) The tendency is to appeal to your senses of sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing—yes, to adopt a materialistic life-style. The emphasis is on "the desire of the eyes" so that you and others will pursue material gain.—1 John 2:15-17.

But there are values that transcend money, prominence, and material wealth. Centuries ago, King Solomon accumulated all

that the world could offer in a material way. He built houses and had gardens, orchards, servants, livestock, male and female singers, along with much gold and silver. Solomon increased his assets far beyond those of all who had preceded him. To say that he was rich is an understatement. Solomon had virtually everything that could be desired. Yet, when he looked at his accomplishments, he said: "Everything was vanity and a striving after wind."—Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.

With the superior wisdom that he was privileged to gain, Solomon knew that greater fulfillment comes from the pursuit of spiritual values. He wrote: "The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man."—Ecclesiastes 12:13.

Of more value than gold or silver is the treasure that can be found in the pages of God's Word, the Bible. (Proverbs 16:16) Like jewels, profound truths are there for you to discover. Will you search and dig for them? (Proverbs 2:1-6) Our Creator, the Source of true values, urges you to do so, and he will help you. How?

Jehovah provides gems of truth through his Word, his spirit, and his organization.

*The world wants you to adopt
its materialistic life-style*



(Psalm 1:1-3; Isaiah 48:17, 18; Matthew 24:45-47; 1 Corinthians 2:10) Examining these rare gems of inestimable value gives you an opportunity to choose intelligently the best and most rewarding way of life. And that will not be hard because Jehovah, our Creator, knows what we need to be truly happy.

The Bible Promotes the Highest Values

The sound counsel, or advice, that is available in the Bible is both practical and unequaled. The moral standards it advocates are unsurpassed. Its counsel is always beneficial. It has stood the test of time. Examples of the Bible's sound advice are to work hard, to be honest, to use money wisely, and to avoid laziness.—Proverbs 6:6-8; 20:23; 31:16.

In line with that, Jesus said: "Stop storing up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal. Rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break in and steal."—Matthew 6:19, 20.

That timely admonition is as applicable today as it was 2,000 years ago. Rather than getting caught up in a quest for material wealth, we can benefit now by pursuing a superior way of life. The key is storing up spiritual treasures, which lead to a life of real happiness and contentment. How can we do so? By reading God's Word, the Bible, and by applying what it teaches.

Spiritual Values Bring Rewards

When properly applied, spiritual values benefit us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Just as the ozone layer high above the earth shields us from harmful rays of the sun, sound moral principles help protect us by exposing the dangerous effects of materialism. The Christian apostle Paul



*Of more value than gold or silver
is the treasure found in the Bible*

wrote: "Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains."—1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

The love of riches entices people to seek greater wealth, position, and power. Very often, devious and dishonest means are used to achieve these goals. The pursuit of material things can rob a person of time, strength, and abilities. It can even rob one of a good night's sleep. (Ecclesiastes 5:12) The quest for more certainly stifles spiritual progress. The greatest man who ever lived, Jesus Christ, clearly showed the better way: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) He knew that spiritual riches lead to permanent rewards and are vastly more important than transient material gain.—Luke 12:13-31.

Does It Really Work?

"My parents tried hard to convince me that spiritual values are impractical," Greg remembers. "Yet, I've gained tremendous peace of mind by pursuing spiritual goals because I'm free from the stress of competing for wealth."

Spiritual values also build better personal relationships. True friends are attracted to you because of who you are, not because of what you own. The Bible recommends: "Keep company with the wise and you will become wise." (Proverbs 13:20, *Today's English Version*) Moreover, a successful family is built on wisdom and love, not material possessions.—Ephesians 5:22–6:4.

We are not born with values. We must learn them from our peers or from a higher

source. That is why a Bible-based education can transform our whole mental outlook regarding material things. "I was helped to rethink my values, and I learned to be content with the necessities," says Don, a former banker.

Pursue Lasting Spiritual Riches

Spiritual values highlight long-range rewards, not short-term gratification. Paul wrote: "The things seen [material] are temporary, but the things unseen [spiritual] are everlasting." (2 Corinthians 4:18) It is true that material pursuits may gratify momentary desires, but greed has no future. Spiritual values are eternal.—Proverbs 11:4; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

The Bible condemns the materialistic focus that is so prominent at this time.

Use Your Money Wisely!

Identify your needs. Jesus taught us to pray: "Give us our bread for the day according to the day's requirement." (Luke 11:3) Do not let today's wants become tomorrow's needs. Remember that your life does not result from what you possess.—Luke 12:16–21.

Make a budget. Do not give in to impulse buying. The Bible states: "The plans of the diligent one surely make for advantage, but everyone that is hasty surely heads for want." (Proverbs 21:5) Jesus advised his listeners to count the cost before undertaking any financial project.—Luke 14:28–30.

Avoid unnecessary debt. Wherever possible, save for purchases instead of buying

on credit. The proverb puts it this way: "The borrower is servant to the man doing the lending." (Proverbs 22:7) By exercising self-restraint and staying within your budget, you can even successfully plan for major purchases.

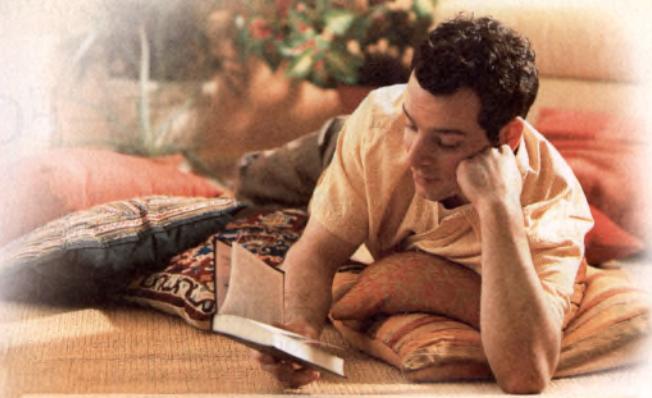
Avoid waste. Make what you already own last much longer by caring well for it, thus cutting down on waste. Jesus showed proper regard for conservation in connection with what he used.—John 6:10–13.

Keep first things first. A wise person will 'buy out time' to pursue more important goals.—Ephesians 5:15, 16.

It teaches us how to curb a selfish appetite by keeping our eye simple, focused on the more important things, spiritual riches. (Philippians 1:10) It exposes greed for what it is—self-idolatry. As we apply what we learn from God's Word, we realize greater happiness. Our thoughts turn from receiving to giving. What a powerful incentive to replace self-indulgence with spiritual values!

Admittedly, to a certain extent, money may serve as a protection. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) But the Bible realistically states: "Your money can be gone in a flash, as if it had grown wings and flown away like an eagle." (Proverbs 23:5, TEV) People have sacrificed a great deal on the altar of materialism—health, families, even a good conscience—with disastrous results. On the other hand, having spirituality satisfies our most important needs—the need for love, the need for purpose, and the need to worship the loving God, Jehovah. It also points the way to everlasting life in human perfection on a paradise earth—the hope that God holds out for us.

Soon mankind's dream of prosperity will be fully realized in God's new world. (Psalm 145:16) At that time the whole earth will be "filled with the knowledge of Jehovah." (Isaiah 11:9) Spiritual values will flourish. Materialism and its scars will be completely eradicated. (2 Peter 3:13) Then the things that make life infinitely more worth living—perfect health, satisfying work, wholesome leisure, warm family relationships, and lasting friendship with God—will bring mankind true happiness forever.



Learning From Experience —There Is a Better Way

Personal experience—both good and bad—can teach us valuable lessons. But is it true that experience is the best teacher, as the saying goes? No, there is a superior source of guidance. The psalmist identified it when he said in prayer: "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway."—Psalm 119:105.

Why is learning from divine instruction far better than learning from personal experience? For one thing, learning only from experience—trial and error—can be both costly and painful. It is also unnecessary. "O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments!" God said to the ancient Israelites. "Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea."—Isaiah 48:18.

One reason God's Word excels as a source of instruction is that it contains the oldest and most accurate account of human experience. You likely realize that painlessly learning from the successes and failures of others is preferable to repeating their mistakes. (1 Corinthians 10:6-11) More important, in the Bible, God provides us with superb laws and guiding principles that are unequaled in reliability. "The law of Jehovah is perfect... The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the *inexperienced* one wise." (Psalm 19:7) Surely, learning from the wisdom of our loving Creator is the best possible way.

PARADISE—FOR YOU?

"I know a man in union with Christ who . . . was caught away into paradise."

—2 CORINTHIANS 12:2-4.

PARADISE. Do you remember how you felt when you first heard about God's promise of an earthly paradise? You may recall learning that 'the eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, and the wilderness will burst out' in fruitful beauty. Or what of the prophecy of the wolf with the lamb and the kid with the leopard? Were you not thrilled to read of dead loved ones coming back to life with the prospect of remaining in that Paradise?—Isaiah 11:6; 35:5, 6; John 5:28, 29.

² Your hope is not baseless. You have reason to believe the Bible's promises about that Paradise. For example, you have confidence in Jesus' words to the impaled evildoer: "You will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) You trust the promise: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." You also trust the promise that God will wipe out our tears; death will be no more; grief, outcry, and pain will end. This means that an earthly paradise will exist again!—2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:4.

³ Yet another basis for this Paradise hope is something Christians around the globe are part of right now. What is that? God has produced a spiritual paradise and has brought his people into it. The term "spiritual paradise" may seem abstract, hard to grasp, but such a paradise was foretold, and it really does exist.

1. What Bible promises do many find appealing?
- 2, 3. (a) Why can it be said that your Bible-based hope is not baseless? (b) What added basis for hope do we have?

A Vision of Paradise

⁴ In this connection, note what the apostle Paul wrote: "I know a man in union with Christ who . . . was caught away as such to the third heaven. Yes, I know such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know, God knows—that he was caught away *into paradise* and heard unutterable words which it is not lawful for a man to speak." (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) That passage comes right after verses in which Paul defended his apostleship. Moreover, the Bible does not speak of any other person who had such an experience, and Paul is the one who tells us of it. So it was likely Paul who had this vision. In this supernatural experience, what "paradise" did he enter?—2 Corinthians 11:5, 23-31.

⁵ The context does not suggest that "the third heaven" refers to the atmosphere around our globe, nor to outer space or to any parallel universes, as postulated by astrophysicists. The Bible often uses the number three to represent emphasis, intensity, or added strength. (Ecclesiastes 4:12; Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 26:34, 75; Revelation 4:8) Thus, what Paul saw in vision was elevated or exalted. It was spiritual.

⁶ Earlier Bible prophecies offer us insight. After his ancient people proved unfaithful to him, God determined to let the Babylonians come against Judah and Jerusalem. That cul-

4. What vision does 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 mention, and who likely had it?
5. What did Paul not see, and hence of what sort was "paradise"?
6. What historical development offers insight into what Paul saw?



minated in devastation in 607 B.C.E., according to Bible chronology. Prophecy said that the land would lie desolate for 70 years; then God would allow repentant Jews to return and restore true worship. This occurred from 537 B.C.E. onward. (Deuteronomy 28:15, 62-68; 2 Kings 21:10-15; 24:12-16; 25:1-4; Jeremiah 29:10-14) What, though, of the land itself? During those 70 years, it became a place of wild vegetation, of parched areas, the habitation of jackals. (Jeremiah 4:26; 10:22) Still, there was this promise: "Jehovah will certainly comfort Zion. He will for certain comfort all her devastated places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert plain like the garden [or Paradise, *Septuagint*] of Jehovah."—Isaiah 51:3; footnote.

⁷ That happened after the 70 years. With God's blessing, conditions changed for the better. Picture this in your mind's eye: "The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron. Without fail it will blossom, and it will really be joyful with joyousness and with glad crying out. . . . The

7. What was to occur after the 70-year desolation?

lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness. For in the wilderness waters will have burst out, and torrents in the desert plain. And the heat-parched ground will have become as a reedy pool, and the thirsty ground as springs of water. In the abiding place of jackals, a resting-place for them, there will be green grass with reeds and papyrus plants."—Isaiah 35:1-7.

A People Restored and Transformed

⁸ What a transformation! From desolation to paradise. Yet, this and other reliable prophecies showed that there would also be a change in people, comparable to a desolate land becoming fruitful. Why can we say that? Well, Isaiah was focusing on "the very ones redeemed by Jehovah," who would return to their land "with a joyful cry" and attain to "exultation and rejoicing." (Isaiah 35:10) That applied, not to the literal soil, but to people. Furthermore, Isaiah elsewhere foretold about the people restored to Zion: "They must be called big trees of righteousness, the

8. How do we know that Isaiah chapter 35 focused on people?



The Plain of Sharon, a fruitful area in the Promised Land

planting of Jehovah . . . For as the earth itself brings forth its sprout, . . . Jehovah will cause the sprouting of righteousness and of praise in front of all the nations.” Isaiah also said of God’s people: “Jehovah will be bound to lead you constantly . . . , and he will invigorate your very bones; and you must become like a well-watered garden.” (Isaiah 58:11; 61:3, 11; Jeremiah 31:10-12) Hence, just as environmental conditions of the literal land would improve, there would be changes in the restored Jewish people.

⁹ This historic prototype helps us to understand what Paul saw in vision. It would involve the Christian congregation, which he termed “God’s field under cultivation” and which was to be fruitful. (1 Corinthians 3:9) When was that vision to be fulfilled? Paul called what he saw a ‘revelation,’ something future. He knew that after his death an extensive apostasy would develop. (2 Corinthians 12:1; Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 7) While apostates prevailed and seemed to overshadow them, true Christians could hardly be likened to a flourishing garden. Yet, the time would come for true worship to be elevated again. God’s people would be re-

stored so that ‘the righteous ones could shine as brightly as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.’ (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) That actually came to pass a few years after God’s Kingdom was established in heaven. And with the passing of the decades, it becomes very evident that God’s people enjoy a spiritual paradise, which Paul foresaw in that vision.

¹⁰ Granted, we know that individually we are imperfect, so it does not surprise us that problems occasionally arise, even as they did among Christians in Paul’s day. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Philippians 4:2, 3; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-14) However, think of the spiritual paradise that we now enjoy. Compared with the sick condition that we once were in, we have been healed spiritually. And contrast our once-famished state with our present well-fed spiritual state. Rather than struggling as in an arid spiritual land, God’s people have his approval and a downpour of blessings. (Isaiah 35:1, 7) Rather than being blinded in dungeonlike spiritual darkness, we see the light of freedom and of God’s favor. Many who were as good as deaf to Bible prophecies have come to hear with un-

9. What “paradise” did Paul see, and when was the fulfillment?

10, 11. Why can we say that we are in a spiritual paradise despite our being imperfect?

derstanding what the Scriptures say. (Isaiah 35:5) For example, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses around the globe have studied Daniel's prophecy, verse by verse. Then they considered in depth each chapter of the Bible book of Isaiah. Does not that refreshing spiritual food give evidence of our spiritual paradise?

¹¹ Think, too, of the changes in traits as sincere ones of all backgrounds have striven to understand and apply God's Word. Basically, they have worked to put away animalistic traits that used to characterize them. Perhaps you have done that with significant results, and so have your spiritual brothers and sisters. (Colossians 3:8-14) Hence, as you associate with a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, you are with people who have become more peaceable and pleasant. No, they are not yet perfect, but they could hardly be described as ferocious lions or rapacious wild beasts. (Isaiah 35:9) What does this peaceful spiritual fellowship indicate? Clearly, we enjoy a spiritual condition that we rightly call a spiritual paradise. And our spiritual paradise foreshadows an earthly paradise that we will enjoy if we remain loyal to God.

¹² Still, there is something that we must not overlook. God told the Israelites: "You must keep the whole commandment that I am commanding you today, in order that you may grow strong and may indeed enter in and take possession of the land." (Deuteronomy 11:8) At Leviticus 20:22, 24, that same land is mentioned: "You people must keep all my statutes and all my judicial decisions and do them, that the land to which I am bringing you to dwell in it may not vomit you out. Hence I said to you: 'You, for your part, will take possession of their ground, and I, for my part, shall give it to you to take

12, 13. What must we do to remain in our spiritual paradise?

possession of it, a land flowing with milk and honey.'" Yes, possession of the Promised Land depended on a good relationship with Jehovah God. It was because the Israelites failed to obey him that God allowed the Babylonians to conquer them and remove them from their place of dwelling.

¹³ We may be pleased with much about our spiritual paradise. The environment is pleasing to the eyes, soothing to the nerves. We have peace with Christians who have worked to turn from animalistic traits. They are striving to be kind and helpful. Still, remaining in our spiritual paradise requires more than having a good relationship with these people. It requires that we have a good relationship with Jehovah and do his will. (Micah 6:8) We came into this spiritual paradise voluntarily, but we could drift right out—or be put out—if we do not work to preserve our relationship with God.

¹⁴ An important factor that will help us is that we continue to be fortified by the Word of God. Note the figurative language at Psalm 1:1-3: "Happy is the man that has not walked in the counsel of the wicked ones . . . But his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night. And he will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed." Additionally, the Bible-based publications of the faithful and discreet slave class provide spiritual food in the spiritual paradise.—Matthew 24:45-47.

Reinforcing Your View of Paradise

¹⁵ Consider another foregleam of Paradise. After Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40

14. What will be an aid to our staying in the spiritual paradise?

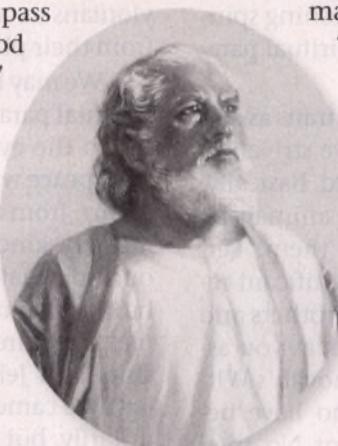
15. Why was Moses not able to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, but what did he see?

years, Moses led them to the Plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River. Because of a past failing on Moses' part, Jehovah determined that Moses would not lead Israel across the Jordan. (Numbers 20:7-12; 27:12, 13)

Moses implored God: "Let me pass over, please, and see the good land that is across the Jordan." Even if he would not enter it, after ascending Mount Pisgah and seeing various parts of that land, Moses must have realized that it was a "good land." What do you think that land was like?
—Deuteronomy 3:25-27.

¹⁶ If you base your view on what much of that region has been like recently, you might imagine an arid land of sand, rocky deserts, and parching heat. However, there is reason to believe that overall the region was quite different in Biblical times. In the journal *Scientific American*, water-and-soil expert Dr. Walter C. Lowdermilk explained that the land in this region has been "damaged by a millennium of abuse." This

^{16, 17. (a)} How did the Promised Land in ancient times differ from the land in more recent times? (b) Why can we believe that the Promised Land was once like a paradise?



*Moses realized
that it was a
"good land"*

agronomist wrote: "The 'desert' that took over the once-flourishing land was the work of man, not of nature." In fact, his studies indicated that "this land was once a pastoral paradise." It becomes evident that human abuse has damaged what was a pastoral paradise.*

¹⁷ Reflecting on what you have read in the Bible, you may see how logical that conclusion is. Recall what Jehovah assured the people through Moses: "The land to which you are crossing to take possession of it is a land of mountains and valley plains. Of the rain of the heavens it drinks water; a land that Jehovah your God is caring for."—Deuteronomy 11:8-12.

¹⁸ The Promised Land's verdant beauty and fruitfulness was such that merely mentioning certain locales brought to mind paradisalike conditions. That is clear from the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 35, which had an initial fulfillment when the Israelites returned from Babylon. Isaiah foretold: "Without fail it will blossom, and it will really be joyful with joyousness and with glad crying out. The glory of Lebanon itself must be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and of Sharon. There will be those who will see the glory of Jehovah,

* Denis Baly in *The Geography of the Bible* says: "The nature of the vegetation pattern must have undergone very great changes since Biblical times." The cause? "Man had need of wood both for fuel and for building and therefore . . . he started to cut down the trees and thus to expose the land to the onslaughts of the weather. The result of this interference in the environment was that the climate . . . was gradually turned into the most important factor in its destruction."

^{18.} How must Isaiah 35:2 have given exiled Israelites an idea of what the Promised Land would be like?

Do You Recall?

- What "paradise" did the apostle Paul see in vision?
- Concerning Isaiah chapter 35, what was its initial fulfillment, and how is it connected to what Paul saw in vision?
- How can we strengthen our appreciation of our spiritual paradise and our hope for an earthly paradise?

the splendor of our God." (Isaiah 35:2) The references to Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon must have evoked a satisfying and lovely image to the Israelites.

¹⁹ Consider Sharon, a maritime plain between the hills of Samaria and the Great Sea, or the Mediterranean. (See photo on page 10.) It was noted for its beauty and productivity. Being well watered, it was fine for grazing, but it had forests of oak trees in the northern sections. (1 Chronicles 27:29; Song of Solomon 2:1, footnote; Isaiah 65:10) Thus Isaiah 35:2 was foretelling a restoration and a land blossoming with splendor, becoming

19, 20. (a) Describe the area of ancient Sharon. (b) What is one way to strengthen our hope for Paradise?

like a paradise. That prophecy was also pointing to a delightful spiritual paradise, in line with what Paul later saw in vision. Finally, this prophecy, along with others, strengthens our hope for an earthly paradise for mankind.

²⁰ As we reside in our spiritual paradise, we can strengthen our appreciation of it and our hope for Paradise on earth. How? By deepening our understanding of what we read in the Bible. Bible descriptions and prophecies often mention specific locations. Would you like to get a better grasp of where these were and what their relationship was with other geographic references? In the next article, we will consider how you can do that with benefit.

"GO ABOUT IN THE LAND"

"Go about in the land through its length and through its breadth."

—GENESIS 13:17.

DO YOU enjoy traveling the countryside, maybe taking a weekend automobile trip? Others prefer to travel by bicycle to get exercise and to have a more leisurely view. Still others choose hiking as a way to get familiar with and savor an area. Such excursions are usually of limited duration. But imagine how Abraham must have felt after God told him: "Get up, go about in the land through its length and through its breadth, because to you I am going to give it!"—Genesis 13:17.

² Consider the context of those words. With his wife and others, Abraham had so

1. What interesting direction did God give to Abraham?
2. After leaving Egypt, where did Abraham go?

journed in Egypt. Genesis chapter 13 tells us that they left Egypt and moved their flocks to "the Negeb." Next Abraham "made his way from encampment to encampment out of the Negeb and to Bethel." When a problem arose between his herders and those of his nephew Lot and it became apparent that the two would have to find separate pasture grounds, Abraham generously gave Lot first choice. Lot chose the "District of the Jordan," a lush valley "like the garden of Jehovah," and in time resided in Sodom. God said to Abraham: "Raise your eyes, please, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward." Likely from an elevated location by Bethel, Abraham could see other parts of the

land. Yet, more was to come. God invited him to “go about in the land” and get familiar with its nature and regions.

³ To whatever extent Abraham did that before reaching Hebron, he certainly was more familiar with the Promised Land than most of us. Think of the places mentioned in this account—Negeb, Bethel, the District of the Jordan, Sodom, and Hebron. Do you struggle to form a mental image of where such areas were? For many this is a challenge because few of Jehovah’s people have visited the places they read about in the Bible, traveling the length and breadth of the land. Still, we have reason to be keenly interested in knowing about Bible locations. Why?

3. Why might it be challenging to visualize Abraham’s travels?

⁴ God’s Word comments: “The heart of the understanding one acquires knowledge, and the ear of wise ones seeks to find knowledge.” (Proverbs 18:15) There are many subjects about which one might gain knowledge, yet accurate knowledge related to Jehovah God and his dealings is of key importance. Certainly, what we read in the Bible is central to that. (2 Timothy 3:16) Note, though, that understanding is involved. That is the ability to see into a matter, to discern or grasp the connections between its parts and the whole. This is true of facts about places mentioned in the Bible. For instance, most of us know where Egypt is, but to what extent

4, 5. (a) How does Proverbs 18:15 relate to knowledge and understanding of Bible lands? (b) What does Zephaniah chapter 2 illustrate?



“See the Good Land”

At conventions in 2003 and 2004, Jehovah’s Witnesses happily received the brochure *“See the Good Land.”* This new publication, available in about 80 languages, is filled with full-color maps and charts that illustrate different areas of the Biblical world, particularly the Promised Land during various periods.

The accompanying article refers to specific maps by means of page numbers in bold type, such as [15]. If you have this new brochure, spend some time to get familiar with distinctive features that can help you to increase your knowledge and understanding of God’s Word.

(1) Many maps include a legend or box that sets out keys to special symbols or

markings on the map [18]. (2) Most maps include a scale in miles and kilometers that will enable you to grasp the size or distances involved [26]. (3) Usually an arrow points north, allowing you to get oriented [19]. (4) Often the maps are colored to indicate the general elevations [12]. (5) Around its edges, a map may have letters/numbers so that you can visualize a grid, which you can use to locate cities or names [23]. (6) On the two-page index of place names [34-5], you can see the page number in bold type, often followed by the grid location, such as E2. After you use these features a few times, you may be amazed what a key they are to expanding your knowledge and deepening your understanding of the Bible.

*Abraham traversed
the land*

do we understand the comment that Abraham went out of Egypt “to the Negeb,” later to Bethel, then to Hebron? Do you understand the relationship of those places?

⁵ Or you may have followed a Bible-reading schedule that included Zephaniah chapter 2. There you read the names of cities, peoples, and lands. Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Sodom, and Nineveh as well as Canaan, Moab, Ammon, and Assyria are all mentioned in that one chapter. How successful were you in fixing in mind those places where real people lived, people involved in the fulfillment of divine prophecy?

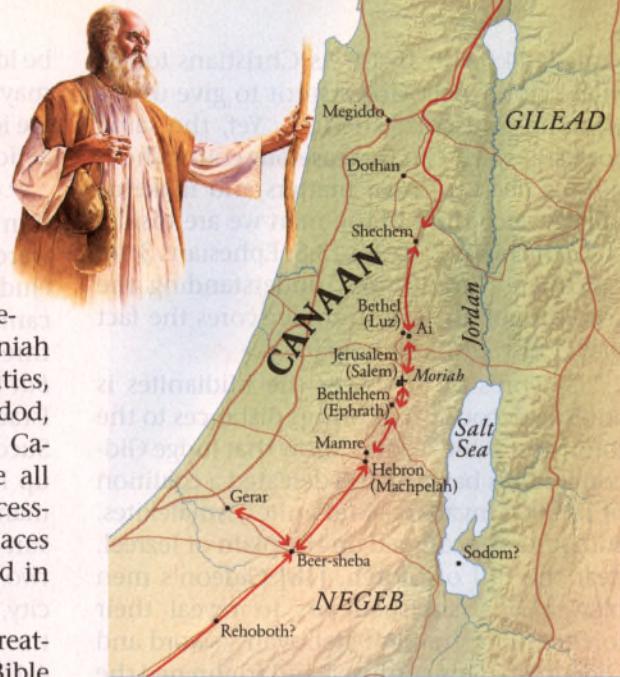
⁶ Many students of God’s Word have greatly benefited from consulting maps of Bible lands. They do this, not because of a mere fascination with maps, but because they realize that by using maps, they can add to their knowledge of God’s Word. Maps can also help them increase their understanding, seeing how facts they already know relate to other information. As we consider some examples, you probably will also deepen your appreciation for Jehovah and gain greater insight into accounts in his Word.—See box on page 14.

Distance Makes a Difference

⁷ At Judges 16:2, you can read about Judge Samson’s being in Gaza. The name Gaza appears often in modern news reports, so you may have a general idea of where Samson was, in Philistine territory near the Medi-

6. Why have some Christians come to appreciate maps? (See box.)

7, 8. (a) What amazing thing did Samson do involving Gaza? (b) What information can add significance to Samson’s feat? (c) How can knowledge and understanding of this account involving Samson help us?



terranean Coast. [11] Now note Judges 16:3: “Samson kept lying till midnight and then rose at midnight and grabbed hold of the doors of the city gate and the two side posts and pulled them out along with the bar and put them upon his shoulders and went carrying them up to the top of the mountain that is in front of Hebron.”

⁸ Undoubtedly, the gates and side posts of a stronghold like Gaza were large and heavy. Imagine trying to carry them! Samson did, but *where* did he carry them, and what sort of trip did he have to make? Well, Gaza is on the coast at about sea level. [15] However, Hebron is to the east at an altitude of 3,000 feet—a real climb! We cannot fix the exact location of “the mountain that is in front of Hebron,” but the city is some 37 miles from Gaza—uphill at that! Knowing the distance involved makes Samson’s feat take on new dimensions, does it not? And recall why Samson could perform such deeds—“Jehovah’s spirit became operative upon him.”

(Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14) As Christians today, we do not expect God's spirit to give us exceptional muscular strength. Yet, the same powerful spirit can increase our comprehension of deep spiritual matters and make us mighty according to the man we are inside. (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 13:8; Ephesians 3:16; Colossians 1:9, 10) Yes, understanding the account about Samson underscores the fact that God's spirit can help us.

⁹ Gideon's victory over the Midianites is another account that brings distances to the fore. Most Bible readers know that Judge Gideon and his band of 300 defeated a coalition of 135,000 invaders—Midianites, Amalekites, and others encamped on the plain of Jezreel, near the hill of Moreh. [18] Gideon's men blew horns, smashed jars to reveal their torches, and shouted: "Jehovah's sword and Gideon's!" This confused and frightened the enemies, so that they began striking down one another. (Judges 6:33; 7:1-22) Was that the whole event, one quick act in the dark of night? Read on in Judges chapters 7 and 8. You will see that Gideon pressed the attack. Of the many places mentioned, some cannot

9, 10. (a) What was included in Gideon's victory over the Midianites? (b) How can our knowledge of the geography involved help to make this account more meaningful?

be identified today with known sites, so they may not appear on Bible maps. Still, enough are identified, so that we can follow Gideon's actions.

¹⁰ Gideon chased the remnant of the coalition forces past Beth-shittah and then southward to Abel-meholah, near the Jordan. (Judges 7:22-25) The account says: "Gideon came to the Jordan, crossing it, he and the three hundred men that were with him, *tired but keeping up the pursuit.*" Once across, the Israelites pursued the enemies southward to Succoth and Penuel, near the Jabbock, then up hills to Joggbehah (close to modern Amman, Jordan). That was some 50 miles of pursuit and fighting. Gideon captured and slew two Midianite kings; then he returned to his city, Ophrah, near the place where the fighting started. (Judges 8: 4-12, 21-27) Clearly, Gideon's feat was more than a few minutes of blowing horns, waving torches, and shouting. And think how it adds impact to the comment about men of faith: "Time will fail me if I go on to relate about Gideon [and others who] from a weak state were made powerful, became valiant in war." (Hebrews 11:32-34)

Mt. Hermon

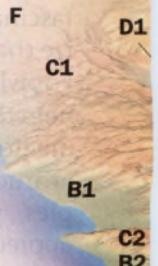


CHART OF NATURAL REGIONS

A. Coast of Great Sea

B. Plains West of Jordan

1. Plain of Asher
2. Coastal Strip of Dor
3. Pasture Grounds of Sharon
4. Plain of Philistia
5. Central East-West Valley
 - a. Plain of Megiddo
 - b. Low Plain of Jezreel

C. Mountains West of Jordan

1. Hills of Galilee
2. Hills of Carmel
3. Hills of Samaria
4. Shephelah (low hills)
5. Hill Country of Judah
6. Wilderness of Judah
7. Negeb
8. Wilderness of Paran

D. Arabah (Rift Valley)

1. Hula Basin
2. Area of Sea of Galilee
3. Jordan Valley
4. Salt Sea (Dead Sea)
5. Arabah (south of Salt Sea)

E. Mountains/Tablelands East of Jordan

1. Bashan
2. Gilead
3. Ammon and Moab
4. Mountain Plateau of Edom

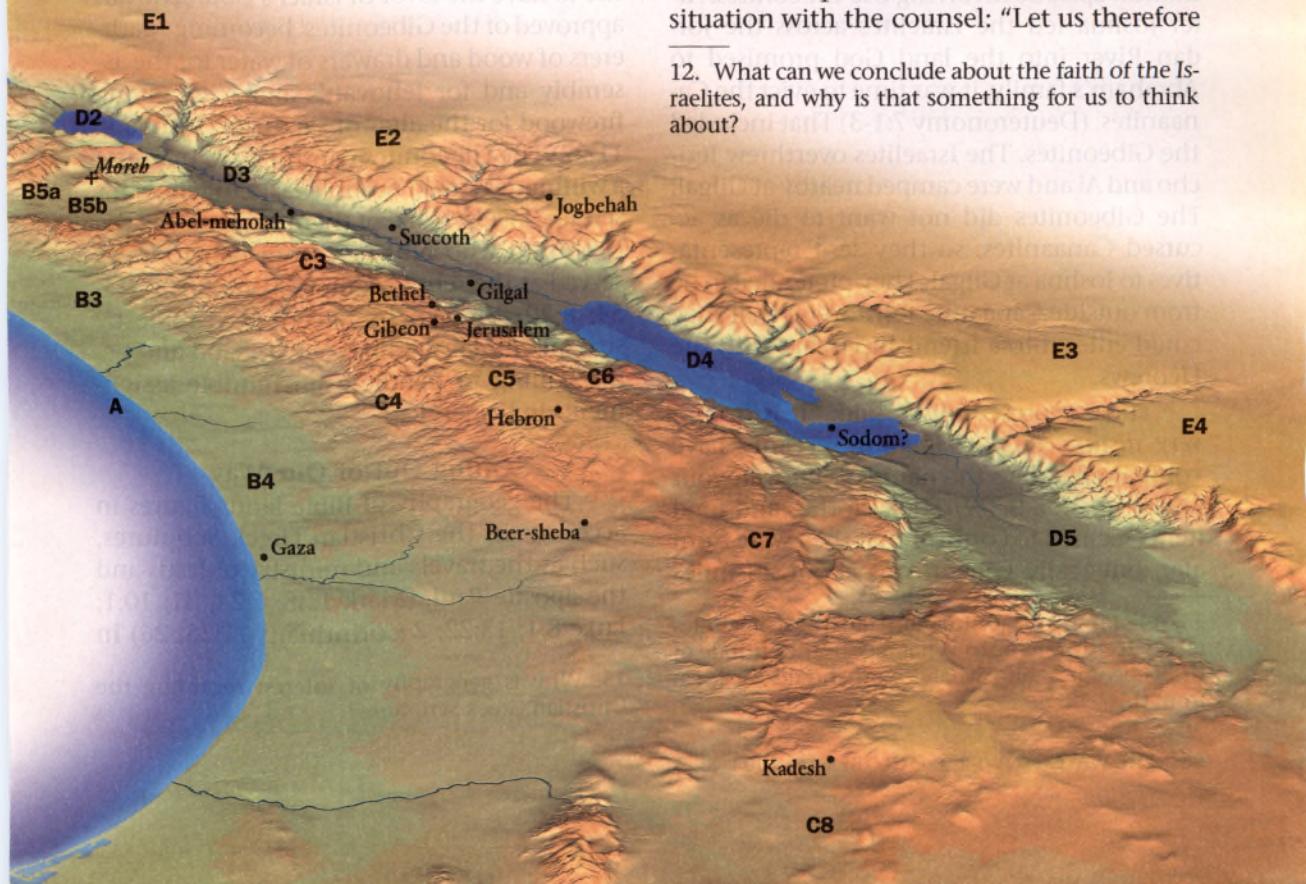
F. Mountains of Lebanon

Christians too may tire physically, but is it not vital that we keep up in doing God's will?
—2 Corinthians 4:1, 16; Galatians 6:9.

How Do People Think and React?

¹¹ Some might turn to Bible maps to locate places, but do you think that maps could offer insight into people's thinking? Take as an example the Israelites who moved from Mount Sinai toward the Promised Land. Making some stops along the way, they finally reached Kadesh (or, Kadesh-barnea). [9] Deuteronomy 1:2 presents this as an 11-day trip, a distance of some 170 miles. From there Moses sent 12 spies into the Promised Land. (Numbers 10:12, 33; 11:34, 35; 12:16; 13:1-3, 25, 26) The spies went north through the Negeb, likely passed Beer-sheba, then Hebron, and reached the northern limits of

11. What travel was involved before and after the Israelites reached Kadesh?



the Promised Land. (Numbers 13:21-24) Because they accepted the negative report of ten spies, the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. (Numbers 14:1-34) What does this reveal about their faith and willingness to trust in Jehovah?—Deuteronomy 1:19-33; Psalm 78:22, 32-43; Jude 5.

¹² Reflect on this from a geographic standpoint. If the Israelites had exercised faith and followed Joshua and Caleb's advice, would they have had far to go to reach the Promised Land? Kadesh was about ten miles from Beer-lahai-roi, where Isaac and Rebekah had resided. [7] It was under 60 miles to Beer-sheba, cited as a southern edge of the Promised Land. (Genesis 24:62; 25:11; 2 Samuel 3:10) Having traveled from Egypt to Mount Sinai and then 170 miles to Kadesh, they were as if on the doorstep of the Promised Land. In our case, we are on the threshold of the promised earthly Paradise. What is the lesson for us? The apostle Paul tied in the Israelites' situation with the counsel: "Let us therefore

12. What can we conclude about the faith of the Israelites, and why is that something for us to think about?



do our utmost to enter into that rest, for fear anyone should fall in the same pattern of disobedience.”—Hebrews 3:16–4:11.

¹³ A different attitude—one of trusting in God to carry out his will—is evident from the Biblical episode involving the Gibeonites. After Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River into the land God promised to Abraham’s family, it was time to evict the Canaanites. (Deuteronomy 7:1-3) That included the Gibeonites. The Israelites overthrew Jericho and Ai and were camped nearby at Gilgal. The Gibeonites did not want to die as accursed Canaanites, so they sent representatives to Joshua at Gilgal. They pretended to be from outside Canaanite territory so that they could enter into a friendship treaty with the Hebrews.

¹⁴ Those representatives said: “It is from a very distant land that your servants have come in regard to the name of Jehovah your God.” (Joshua 9:3-9) Their clothes and food items seemed to confirm that they were from afar, but really Gibeon was about 20 miles

13, 14. (a) In what situation did the Gibeonites take a decisive step? (b) What reveals the attitude of the Gibeonites, and what lesson should we learn from this?

from Gilgal. [19] Convinced, Joshua and his chieftains made a treaty of friendship with Gibeon and nearby cities linked with Gibeon. Was the Gibeonite ruse just a means to avoid execution? On the contrary, it reflected a desire to have the favor of Israel’s God. Jehovah approved of the Gibeonites’ becoming “gatherers of wood and drawers of water for the assembly and for Jehovah’s altar,” supplying firewood for the altar of sacrifice. (Joshua 9: 11-27) The Gibeonites continued to manifest a willingness to do humble tasks in Jehovah’s service. Likely, some of them were among the Nethinim who returned from Babylon and served at the rebuilt temple. (Ezra 2:1, 2, 43-54; 8:20) We can imitate their attitude by striving to maintain peace with God and being willing to handle even humble assignments in his service.

Going Out of Our Way

¹⁵ The geography of Bible lands figures in accounts in the Christian Greek Scriptures, such as the travels and ministry of Jesus and the apostle Paul. (Mark 1:38; 7:24, 31; 10:1; Luke 8:1; 13:22; 2 Corinthians 11:25, 26) In

15. Why is geography of interest regarding the Christian Greek Scriptures?

the following accounts, try to imagine the travels involved.

¹⁶ On his second missionary trip (purple line on map), Paul arrived in Philippi, now in Greece. [33] He witnessed there, was imprisoned and then released, and moved on to Thessalonica. (Acts 16:6-17:1) When Jews instigated a riot, Thessalonian brothers urged Paul to go to Beroea, some 40 miles away. Paul had a successful ministry in Beroea, but Jews came and aroused the populace. Hence, "the brothers immediately sent Paul off to go as far as the sea," and "those conducting Paul brought him as far as Athens." (Acts 17:5-15) Apparently, some new converts were willing to walk 25 miles to the Aegean Sea, pay passage on a ship, and sail about 300 miles. Such a trip could be risky, but the brothers accepted those risks and thus extended their contact with this traveling representative of God.

¹⁷ On his third trip (green line on map), Paul arrived at the port of Miletus. He sent for the older men of the Ephesus congregation, some 30 miles away. Imagine those elders dropping other activities to go to Paul. They likely were excitedly talking about the coming meeting as they walked. After meeting with Paul and hearing him pray, "quite a bit of weeping broke out among them all, and they fell upon Paul's neck and tenderly kissed him." Then "they proceeded to conduct him to the boat" to go on to Jerusalem. (Acts 20:14-38) They would have had much to think and speak about on their trip back to Ephesus. Are you not impressed by the appreciation they showed in walking that distance to be with a traveling minister who could inform and encourage them? Do you see in this something that you can apply in your life and thinking?

16. How did Christians in Beroea show appreciation for Paul?
17. What can we better appreciate once we understand the distance between Miletus and Ephesus?

Learn of That Land and What Lies Ahead

¹⁸ The foregoing examples show the value of becoming familiar with the land that God gave to the Israelites and that is central to many Bible accounts. (And we can expand our vista to include learning about surrounding lands that figure in Bible accounts.) As we add to our knowledge and understanding of the Promised Land in particular, we can bear in mind a fundamental requirement for the Israelites to enter and enjoy the land of "milk and honey." That was to fear Jehovah and keep his commandments.—Deuteronomy 6:1, 2; 27:3.

¹⁹ Similarly today, we need to do our part, fearing Jehovah and sticking to his ways. By doing so, we will contribute toward enhancing and beautifying the spiritual paradise that now exists in the worldwide Christian congregation. We will grow increasingly knowledgeable about its features and blessings. And we know that there is more to come. Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan into a fruitful, satisfying land. Now we have good reason to look forward with confidence to the physical Paradise, the good land that lies ahead of us.

18. What can we be determined to do as to Bible locations?

19. What two paradises merit our ongoing attention?

Do You Recall?

- Why should we desire to increase our knowledge and understanding concerning Bible lands?
- Which geographic detail considered in this article has been particularly enlightening to you?
- What lesson was driven home to you as you learned more about the geography involved in some incident?

YOUTHS Let your parents help you guard your heart!

WHAT do you think is the most difficult challenge facing a ship's captain? Is it crossing a vast ocean safely? Not usually. Most shipwrecks occur near the shore, not in the open sea. In fact, docking a ship can even be more hazardous than landing an airplane. Why?

Before a captain can safely berth his ship, he has to avoid all the dangers that a particular port may pose. He needs to take into account underwater currents while steering clear of other ships. He must also skirt any sandbanks, rocks, or wrecks hidden underneath the water. And to make matters worse, this may be his first visit to the harbor.

To help overcome these problems, a wise captain may engage the services of a pilot who knows the local waters intimately. The pilot stands at the captain's side on the bridge and gives expert direction. Together they consider the hazards and steer the ship through any narrow channels to the port.

The invaluable expertise of the pilot illustrates the priceless help available to Christian youths who have to chart a course through the difficult waters of life. What is this help? Why do teenagers need it?

Let us continue the illustration of the ship. If you are an adolescent, you are somewhat like the captain of a ship in that you must



eventually take responsibility for your life. And your parents have a role similar to that of a ship's pilot as they try to guide you through some of the most difficult situations you will ever have to face in life. During the teenage years, however, you may find it hard to accept the advice your parents give you. Why is that?

The problem often lies with the heart. Your figurative heart may impel you to desire what is forbidden or to protest at any apparent denial of freedom. "The inclination of the heart of man," the Bible says, "is bad from his youth up." (Genesis 8:21) Jehovah makes clear that you have a real challenge ahead of you. "Deceitful is the heart above all things, and dangerously wayward," he warns. (Jeremiah 17:9, Rotherham) In addition to harboring wrong desires, the heart can deceive a youth into thinking that he knows better than his parents, even though they have much more experience. There are

good reasons, however, for you to seek your parents' help when navigating the difficult teenage years.

Why Obey Your Parents?

Above all, Jehovah, the Originator of the family, tells you that you should listen to your parents' direction. (Ephesians 3:15) Since God has appointed your parents to take care of you, he gives you this counsel: "Children, the right thing for you to do is to obey your parents as those whom the Lord has set over you." (Ephesians 6: 1-3, *Phillips*; Psalm 78:5) While you may now be in your teenage years, your parents still have the responsibility to guide you, and you have the obligation to take notice. When the apostle Paul wrote that children should obey their parents, he used a Greek word that can apply to children of any age. As recorded at Matthew 23:37, for example, Jesus referred to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as her "children," even though the majority were adults.

Many faithful men of old continued to obey their parents long after they had become adults. Jacob, although a grown man, understood that he should obey his father's command to avoid marrying a woman who was not a worshiper of Jehovah. (Genesis 28: 1, 2) Doubtless, Jacob had also noticed that his brother's decision to marry pagan Canaanite women had caused his parents considerable heartache.—Genesis 27:46.

Apart from their God-given duty to guide you, your Christian parents are likely the most qualified to act as your advisers. That is primarily because they know you so well and have no doubt shown their selfless love for you over many years. Like the ship's pilot, they speak from experience. They themselves have experienced "the desires incidental to youth." And as true Christians, they

have personally seen the value of following Bible principles.—2 Timothy 2:22.

With such experienced help at your side, you are aided in handling even the most difficult of situations successfully. Take, for example, your relationship with the opposite sex. How can Christian parents guide you in this sensitive matter?

Attraction to the Opposite Sex

Pilots advise ship captains to give sandbanks that stretch beneath the waters a wide berth. Sandbanks are soft but also treacherous, since they constantly shift position. Your parents will likewise want you to keep your distance from situations that might ensnare you emotionally. Parents know, for example, that feelings toward the opposite sex go deep and can be difficult to define. But once aroused, these feelings can cause you to run aground.

The example of Dinah illustrates a risk of steering too close to danger. Perhaps curiosity and a desire to have a good time moved Dinah to seek companionship with Canaanite girls, whose morals were undoubtedly lax. What at first seemed to be innocent fun soon led to a tragic experience—she was raped by "the most honorable" young man in town.—Genesis 34:1, 2, 19.

Such dangers are compounded by the sexually oriented times in which we live. (Hosea 5:4) Most youths may give the impression that having fun with the opposite sex is the most exciting thing possible. Your heart may race at the thought of being alone with

The influence of other youths can push you off course spiritually

someone whom you find physically attractive. But loving parents will try to protect you from association with youths who do not respect God's standards.

Laura admits that curiosity can blind teenagers to danger. "When the girls in my class tell me that they have danced into the night with some great boys, they make it sound like a never-to-be-forgotten experience. I realize that they often exaggerate, but I still feel curious and think that perhaps I'm missing out on a lot of fun. Although I know that my parents are right not to let me go to such places, I still feel the temptation."

A ship has no brakes, so it takes a long time to stop. Parents know that passion behaves similarly. The book of Proverbs likens a man moved by unrestrained passion to a bull being led to the slaughter. (Proverbs 7:21-23) You do not want to allow such a thing to happen to you, leading you to emotional and spiritual shipwreck. Your parents may recognize when your heart has begun to mislead you in this area, and they may give you counsel accordingly. Will you have the wisdom

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Who Is the Right Leader for Today?

Do You Know the Happiness That Comes From Giving?

What Jehovah's Humility Means for Us



to listen to them and thus avert calamity?
—Proverbs 1:8; 27:12.

You also need your parents' support when you have to cope with peer pressure. How can they help you?

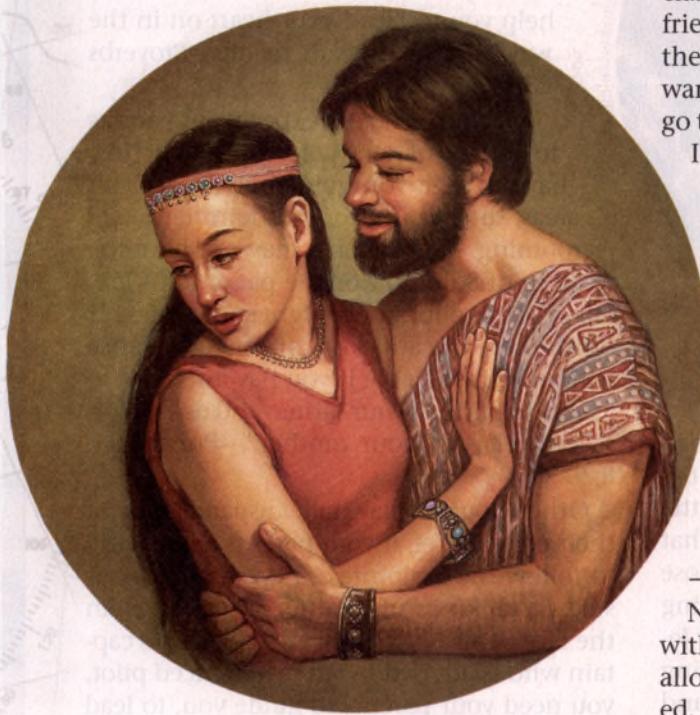
The Persuasive Power of Your Peers

A strong tide or current can drive a ship off course. To counteract this force, the ship has to be steered in another direction. In a similar way, the persuasive influence of other youths can push you off course spiritually unless you take countermeasures.

As the experience of Dinah illustrates, "if you make friends with stupid people, you will be ruined." (Proverbs 13:20, *Today's English Version*) Remember that in Biblical usage, the "stupid" one is somebody who does not know Jehovah or who chooses not to walk in his ways.

It may not be easy, however, to reject the viewpoints or practices of your classmates.

Maria Jose explains: "I wanted other youths to accept me. Since I didn't want them to think that I was different, I copied them as closely as possible." Without realizing it, you may be affected by your peers—in your choice of music, in what you want to wear, or



Remember the experience of Dinah

even in how you speak. Perhaps you feel comfortable with youths of your own age. That is natural, but it leaves you susceptible to their considerable influence, which may be destructive.—Proverbs 1:10-16.

Caroline recalls the difficulty she faced a few years ago: "From the age of 13, most of the girls around me had boyfriends, and for several years I was under constant pressure to follow their example. My mother, however, steered me through this difficult time. She spent hours listening to me, reasoning with me, and helping me to see the need to post-

pone such relationships until I was more mature."

Like Caroline's mother, your parents may feel obligated to warn you about peer pressure or even to restrict certain activities or friendships. Nathan remembers several clashes with his parents on such issues. "My friends often invited me to go out with them," he explains, "but my parents didn't want me to hang around in large groups or go to large unsupervised parties. At the time, I couldn't understand why other parents were more permissive than mine."

Later, however, Nathan did understand. "I know that in my case 'foolishness was tied up with the heart of a boy,'" he admits. "This foolishness seems to surface easily when boys hang around in groups. One starts something bad, another goes a step further, and a third takes it beyond that. Soon all the others are urged to join in. Even young ones who profess to serve Jehovah can fall into this trap."

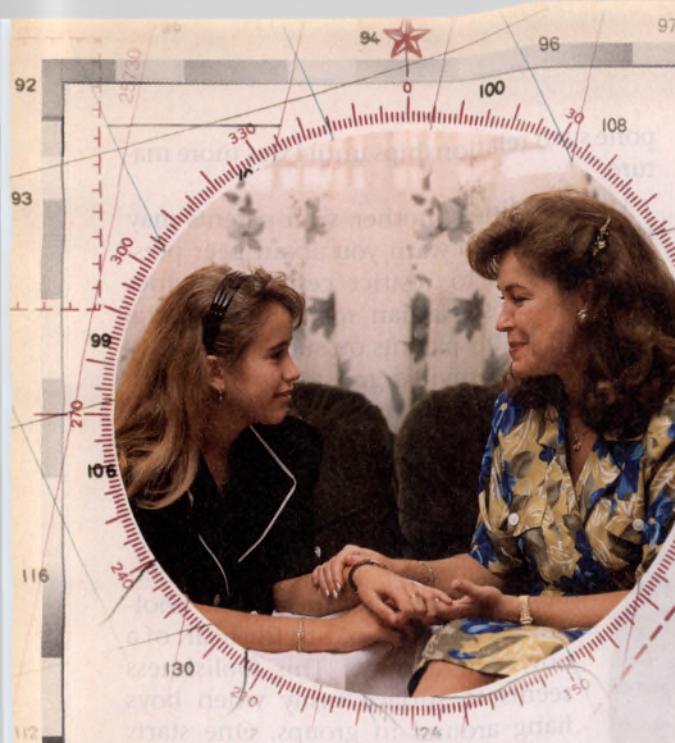
—Proverbs 22:15.

Nathan and Maria Jose both had a battle with their hearts when their parents did not allow them to do things their peers suggested. They listened, though, and afterward they were glad that they did. The proverb says: "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise ones, that you may apply your very heart to my knowledge."—Proverbs 22:17.

Worthy of Honor

A ship that lists is hard to maneuver, and if it lists too much, it can easily capsize. Because of our imperfect nature, all of us lean toward the selfish and the forbidden. Despite these tendencies, young ones can still reach port, as it were, if they carefully follow their parents' guidance.

For example, your parents can help you reject the idea that there is a middle road



As a ship's captain seeks the advice of an experienced pilot, young people should seek their parents' guidance

learning a computer program, but they know much more than you do about the wayward heart. And they want to help you to "lead your heart on in the way" that can result in life.—Proverbs 23:19.

Of course, do not expect your parents to judge matters perfectly when they have to give you guidelines in difficult areas, such as music, entertainment, and grooming. Your parents may not have the wisdom of Solomon or the patience of Job. Like a ship's pilot, they might sometimes err on the side of caution. Still, their guidance will prove invaluable if you pay attention to "the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother."—Proverbs 1:8, 9.

Other youths may talk disparagingly of their parents. Yet, if your parents are striving to follow the Scriptures, they stand at your side, in all kinds of weather, at all times, in the face of all adversities. Like the ship's captain who is advised by an experienced pilot, you need your parents to guide you, to lead you in the way of wisdom. The rewards can be incalculable.

"When wisdom enters into your heart and knowledge itself becomes pleasant to your very soul, thinking ability itself will keep guard over you, discernment itself will safeguard you, to deliver you from the bad way, from the man speaking perverse things,

from those leaving the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness . . . For the upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it."—Proverbs 2:10-13, 21.

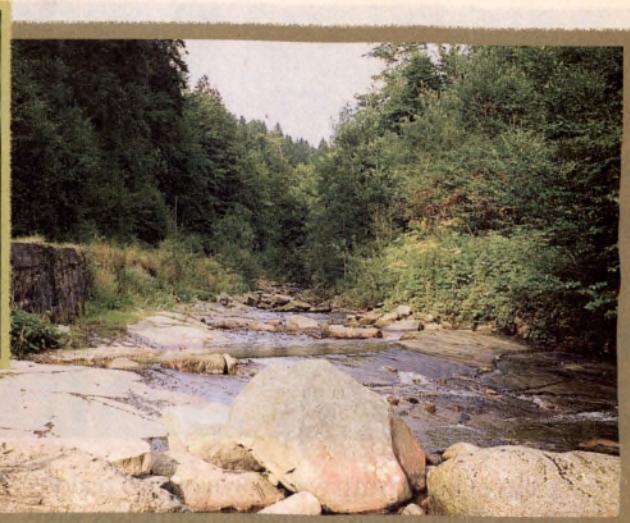
between the narrow one to life and the broad one to destruction. (Matthew 7:13, 14) It is unrealistic to think that you can enjoy a little of what is wrong but not go all the way, that you can "taste" without swallowing. Those who try to follow such a course are "limping upon two different opinions"—serving Jehovah to a certain extent but also loving the world and the things in the world—and can easily capsize spiritually. (1 Kings 18:21; 1 John 2:15) Why does that happen? Because of our sinful tendencies.

Our imperfect desires get stronger if we give in to them. Our 'treacherous heart' will not be satisfied with just a morsel. It will demand more. (Jeremiah 17:9) Once we start drifting spiritually, the world will exercise greater and greater influence on us. (Hebrews 2:1) You may not notice that you are listing spiritually, but likely your Christian parents will. True, they may not be as quick as you are at





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LOYAL AND STEADFAST Then and Now

In the southern part of Poland, near its border with Slovakia and the Czech Republic, there is a small town called Wisła. Though you may never have heard of Wisła, it has a history that true Christians will likely find fascinating. It is a history marked by integrity and by zeal for Jehovah's worship. How so?

WISŁA is situated in a beautiful mountainous region, where nature puts on a spectacular display. Swift-flowing creeks and two streams merge with the Vistula River, which winds through forested mountains and valleys. The friendly local people and a unique local climate make Wisła a popular medical center, a summer holiday spot, and a winter resort.

It seems that the first settlement with this name was established in the 1590's. A saw-mill was erected, and soon the mountain glades had settlers, who raised sheep and cattle and cultivated the land. But these humble people were caught in a whirlwind of religious change. The region was deeply

affected by the religious reforms initiated by Martin Luther, Lutheranism becoming "the State religion in 1545," according to researcher Andrzej Otczyk. Yet, the Thirty Years' War and the Counter-Reformation that followed dramatically changed the situation. "In 1654 all churches were taken away from the Protestants, their services were banned, and Bibles and other religious books were confiscated," Otczyk continues. Yet, the majority of the local population remained Lutheran.

First Seeds of Bible Truth

Happily, a more important religious reformation was in store. In 1928 the very first



Emilia Krzok was sent with her children Helena, Emilia, and Jan to a temporary camp in Bohemia



When he refused military service, Paweł Szalbot was sent to work in a mine

seeds of Bible truth were sown by two zealous Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. The next year, Jan Gomola arrived in Wiśla with a phonograph, on which he played recorded Scriptural talks. Then he moved on to a nearby valley where he found an attentive listener—Andrzej Raszka, a short, stocky highlander with a receptive heart. Raszka immediately took out his Bible to verify what was stated in the phonograph discourses. Then he exclaimed: "My brother, at last I have found the truth! I have been looking for answers since I was in the trenches during World War I!"

Overflowing with enthusiasm, Raszka took Gomola to meet his friends Jerzy and Andrzej Pilch, who eagerly responded to the Kingdom message. Andrzej Tyrna, who had learned Bible truth in France, helped these men to deepen their knowledge of God's message. Soon they were baptized. To assist the little group of Bible Students in Wiśla, brothers from neighboring towns visited during the mid-1930's. The results were amazing.

There was an impressive influx of newly interested ones. Local Lutheran families were in the habit of reading the Bible in their homes. So once they saw convincing Scriptural arguments regarding the hellfire doctrine and the Trinity, many could distinguish truth from falsehood. Many families chose

to break free from false religious teachings. Thus, the congregation in Wiśla grew, and by 1939 it numbered some 140. Surprisingly, though, most of the adults in that congregation were not baptized. "This did not mean that these unbaptized publishers were not able to take their stand for Jehovah," says Helena, one of those early Witnesses. She adds: "In the tests of faith that they soon encountered, they proved their integrity."

What about the children? They saw that their parents had found the truth. Franciszek Branc relates: "When my dad realized that he had found the truth, he began to inculcate it in me and my brother. We were eight and ten years old respectively. Dad would ask us simple questions, such as: 'Who is God, and what is his name? What do you know about Jesus Christ?' We had to write our answers down and support them with Bible verses." Another Witness says: "Because my parents willingly responded to the Kingdom message and left the Lutheran Church in 1940, I suffered opposition and beatings at school. I am grateful to my parents for implanting Bible principles in me. That was critical in helping me survive those hard times."

Faith Under Test

When World War II broke out and the Nazis occupied the area, they were determined to exterminate Jehovah's Witnesses. At first, adults—especially fathers—were encouraged to sign a German nationality list to get certain privileges. The Witnesses refused to align themselves with the Nazis. Many brothers and interested ones of military age faced a dilemma: They could join the army, or they could maintain strict neutrality but be severely punished. "To refuse military service meant being sent to a concentration camp, typically Auschwitz," explains Andrzej Szalbot, whom the Gestapo arrested in 1943. "I had not yet been baptized, but I knew of the reassurance given by Jesus, at Matthew 10:28, 29. I knew that if I died because of my faith in Jehovah, he would be able to bring me back to life."

Early in 1942, the Nazis arrested 17 brothers from Wisła. Within three months, 15 of them died in Auschwitz. What effect did this have on the Witnesses remaining in Wisła? Rather than causing them to abandon their faith, this encouraged them to stick to Jehovah uncompromisingly! During the next six months, the number of publishers in Wisła doubled. Soon more arrests followed. Altogether, 83 brothers, interested ones, and children were affected by Hitler's crushing force. Fifty-three of them were sent to concentration camps (mainly Auschwitz) or to forced labor camps at mines and quarries in Poland, Germany, and Bohemia.

Loyal and Steadfast

In Auschwitz, the Nazis tried to entice the Witnesses with the prospect of immediate freedom. An SS guard told one brother: "If you will just sign a paper renouncing the Bible Students, we will set you free, and you can go home." That offer was repeated many times, yet the brother did not compromise



When brothers were sent to and perished in Auschwitz, the work did not stop growing in Wisła

his allegiance to Jehovah. As a result, he suffered beatings, mockings, and slave labor, both in Auschwitz and in Mittelbau-Dora, in Germany. Just before liberation, this brother narrowly escaped death during the bombardment of the camp where he was being held.

Pawel Szalbot, a Witness who died recently, once recalled: "During interrogations the Gestapo would ask me over and over again why I refused to join the German army and to hail Hitler." After explaining the Biblical basis for his Christian neutrality, he was sentenced to work in an armaments factory. "Obviously, I could not conscientiously accept this kind of work, so they sent me to work in a mine." Still, he remained faithful.

Those who were not imprisoned—women and children—sent food packages to those in Auschwitz. "In the summer we picked cranberries in the woods and then exchanged them for wheat," says a brother who was a youth then. "The sisters baked rolls and soaked them in fat. Then we sent the rolls in small amounts to imprisoned fellow believers."



Pawel Pilch and Jan Polok were taken to a youth camp in Lodz

In all, 53 adult Witnesses from Wisła were sent to concentration camps and to do forced labor. Thirty-eight of them died.

A Younger Generation Arises

Children of Jehovah's Witnesses were also affected by the repressive measures of the Nazis. Some were sent with their mothers to temporary camps in Bohemia. Others were taken from their parents and sent to the infamous children's camp in Lodz.

"In the first transport to Lodz," recall three of them, "the Germans took ten of us, aged five to nine. We encouraged one another by praying and by discussing Bible topics. It was not easy to endure." In 1945 all of those children returned home. They were alive but emaciated and traumatized. Still, nothing was able to break their integrity.

What Came Then?

As World War II drew to a close, the Witnesses from Wisła were still strong in faith and ready to resume their preaching activity with zeal and determination. Groups of brothers visited people living as far as 25 miles from Wisła, preaching and distributing Bible literature. "Soon there were three active congregations in our town," says Jan Krzok. However, religious freedom did not last long.

The Communist government, which replaced the Nazis, banned the activity of Jeho-

vah's Witnesses in Poland in 1950. So the local brothers had to be resourceful in their ministry. Sometimes they visited people in their homes on the pretext of buying livestock or grain. Christian meetings were usually held at night in small groups. Nevertheless, security agents managed to arrest many of Jehovah's worshipers, accusing them of working for a foreign intelligence service—a completely baseless charge. Certain officers sarcastically threatened Paweł Pilch: "Hitler did not break you, but we will." Yet, he remained loyal to Jehovah, being imprisoned for five years. When a few younger Witnesses refused to sign a socialist political document, they were expelled from school or fired from their jobs.

Jehovah Continued With Them

The year 1989 brought a changed political climate, and Jehovah's Witnesses were legally recognized in Poland. Steadfast worshipers of Jehovah in Wisła sped up their activity, as reflected in the number of pioneers, or full-time ministers. Some 100 brothers and sisters from this area have taken up the pioneer service. It is little wonder, then, that the town has been nicknamed the Pioneer Factory.

The Bible says about God's support of his servants in the past: "Had it not been that Jehovah proved to be for us when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us up even alive." (Psalm 124:2, 3) In our time, despite widespread apathy and immoral worldly trends among the general population, Jehovah's worshipers in Wisła strive to maintain their integrity and are richly rewarded. Successive generations of Witnesses in that area can testify to the truth of the apostle Paul's statement: "If God is for us, who will be against us?"—Romans 8:31.

Questions From Readers

When Jesus instructed his followers “to lend without interest, not hoping for anything back,” did he mean that they should not ask back even the principal?

Jesus' words recorded at Luke 6:35 are best understood against the background of the Mosaic Law. God there commanded Israelites to make interest-free loans to fellow Israelites who had become financially destitute and were in need of help. (Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:35-37; Matthew 5:42) These loans were not for a commercial purpose, a business undertaking. Rather, such interest-free loans were to relieve poverty or misfortune. After all, it would be most unloving to profit from a neighbor's economic reverses. Still, the one making a loan was entitled to get back the principal, a pledge (security on the loan) sometimes being taken.—Deuteronomy 15:7, 8.

While upholding the Law, Jesus gave it an even broader application, saying that the one extending aid should not hope “for anything back.” Like the Israelites, Christians sometimes experience economic reverses or other circumstances that may leave them in poverty, even destitute. If a Christian brother in such a dire situation seeks financial aid, would it not be kind to render assistance? Indeed, genuine love would move a fellow Christian to want to help a brother who through no fault of his own gets into serious financial difficulty. (Proverbs 3:27) It may be possible to make a gift to such a needy brother, even though the amount may be less than one might provide as a loan.—Psalm 37:21.

In the first century C.E., the apostle Paul

and Barnabas were commissioned to carry donations from Christians in Asia Minor to their brothers in Judea because of a famine. (Acts 11:28-30) Likewise today, when disaster strikes, Christians often send gifts to their needy brothers. In doing so, they also give a fine witness to others. (Matthew 5:16) Of course, the attitude and situation of the one seeking assistance comes into the picture. Why is he in need? Paul's words are noteworthy: “If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat.”—2 Thessalonians 3:10.

If a brother requesting a loan is not in dire need but wants only temporary assistance to get back on his feet after some financial reverse, it might seem fitting to grant him an interest-free loan. Under such circumstances, making a loan with a view to full repayment would not be going contrary to Jesus' words found at Luke 6:35. An agreement should be set out in writing, and the recipient of the loan should make every effort to repay it according to the terms agreed upon. Indeed, Christian love should impel the borrower to repay the loan just as it moved the giver to make it.

The one considering making a loan (or giving a gift) would also need to look at his own family situation. For instance, would he compromise his ability to care for the needs of his family members, a Scriptural priority? (2 Corinthians 8:12; 1 Timothy 5:8) Still, Christians look for opportunities to show love for one another, expressing that love in practical ways that are in harmony with Bible principles.—James 1:27; 1 John 3:18; 4:7-11.

WHO IS "THE TRUE GOD AND LIFE EVERLASTING"?

JEHOVAH, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the true God. He is the Creator, the one giving eternal life to those who love him. That is how many who read and believe the Bible would answer the question posed in the above title. Indeed, Jesus himself said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, *the only true God*, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

Yet, many churchgoers give the expression a different meaning. The words in the title come from 1 John 5:20, which says, in part: "We are in union with the true one, by means of his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and life everlasting."

Believers in the Trinity doctrine hold that the demonstrative pronoun "this" (*hou'tos*) refers to its immediate antecedent, Jesus Christ. They assert that Jesus is "the true God and life everlasting." This interpretation, however, is in conflict with the rest of the Scriptures. And many authoritative scholars do not accept this Trinitarian view. Cambridge University scholar B. F. Westcott wrote: "The most natural reference [of the pronoun *hou'tos*] is to the subject not locally nearest but dominant in the mind of the apostle." Thus, the apostle John had in mind Jesus' Father. German theologian Erich Haupt wrote: "It has to be determined whether the [*hou'tos*] of the next proposition refers to the locally and immediately preceding subject . . . or to the more distant antecedent God. . . . A testimony to the one true God seems more in harmony with the

final warning against idols than a demonstration of the divinity of Christ."

Even *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, published by Rome's Pontifical Biblical Institute, states: "[*Hou'tos*]: as a climax to [verses] 18-20 the ref[erence] is almost certainly to God the real, the true, [in] opp[osition to] paganism (v. 21)."

Often *hou'tos*, generally translated "this" or "this one," does not refer to the immediately preceding subject of a phrase. Other scriptures illustrate the point. At 2 John 7, the same apostle and penman of the first letter wrote: "Many deceivers have gone forth into the world, persons not confessing Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This [*hou'tos*] is the deceiver and the antichrist." Here the pronoun cannot refer to the closest antecedent—Jesus. Obviously, "this" refers to those who denied Jesus. They collectively are "the deceiver and the antichrist."

In his Gospel, the apostle John wrote: "Andrew the brother of Simon Peter was one of the two that heard what John said and followed Jesus. First *this one* [*hou'tos*] found his own brother, Simon." (John 1:40, 41) It is evident that "this one" refers, not to the last person mentioned, but to Andrew. At 1 John 2:22, the apostle uses the same pronoun in a similar way.

Luke makes similar use of the pronoun, as seen at Acts 4:10, 11: "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you impaled but whom God raised up from the dead, by this one does this man stand here sound in front of you. *This* [*hou'tos*] is 'the stone that



was treated by you builders as of no account that has become the head of the corner.’” The pronoun “this” clearly does not refer to the man who was healed, though he is the one mentioned just before *hou'tos*. Certainly, “this” in verse 11 refers to Jesus Christ the Nazarene, who is the “cornerstone” on which the Christian congregation is founded.—Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-8.

Acts 7:18, 19 also illustrates the point: “There rose a different king over Egypt, who did not know of Joseph. *This one* [*hou'tos*] used statecraft against our race.” “This one” who oppressed the Jews was, not Joseph, but Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

Such passages confirm the observation made by Greek scholar Daniel Wallace, who says that for Greek demonstratives, “what might be the nearest antecedent contextually might not be the nearest antecedent in the author’s mind.”

“The True One”

As the apostle John wrote, “the true One” is Jehovah, the Father of Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, the Creator. The apostle Paul acknowledged: “There is actually to us one God the Father, out of whom all things

are.” (1 Corinthians 8:6; Isaiah 42:8) Another reason that Jehovah is “the true one” referred to at 1 John 5:20 is that he is the Source of truth. The psalmist called Jehovah “the God of truth” because He is faithful in all He does and cannot lie. (Psalm 31:5; Exodus 34:6; Titus 1:2) Referring to his heavenly Father, the Son said: “Your word is truth.” And regarding his own teaching, Jesus stated: “What I teach is not mine, but belongs to him that sent me.”—John 7:16; 17:17.

Jehovah is also “life everlasting.” He is the Source of life, the One giving it as an undeserved gift through Christ. (Psalm 36:9; Romans 6:23) Significantly, the apostle Paul said that God is “the *rewarder* of those earnestly seeking him.” (Hebrews 11:6) God rewarded his Son by raising him from the dead, and the Father will give the reward of everlasting life to those who serve Him with all their heart.—Acts 26:23; 2 Corinthians 1:9.

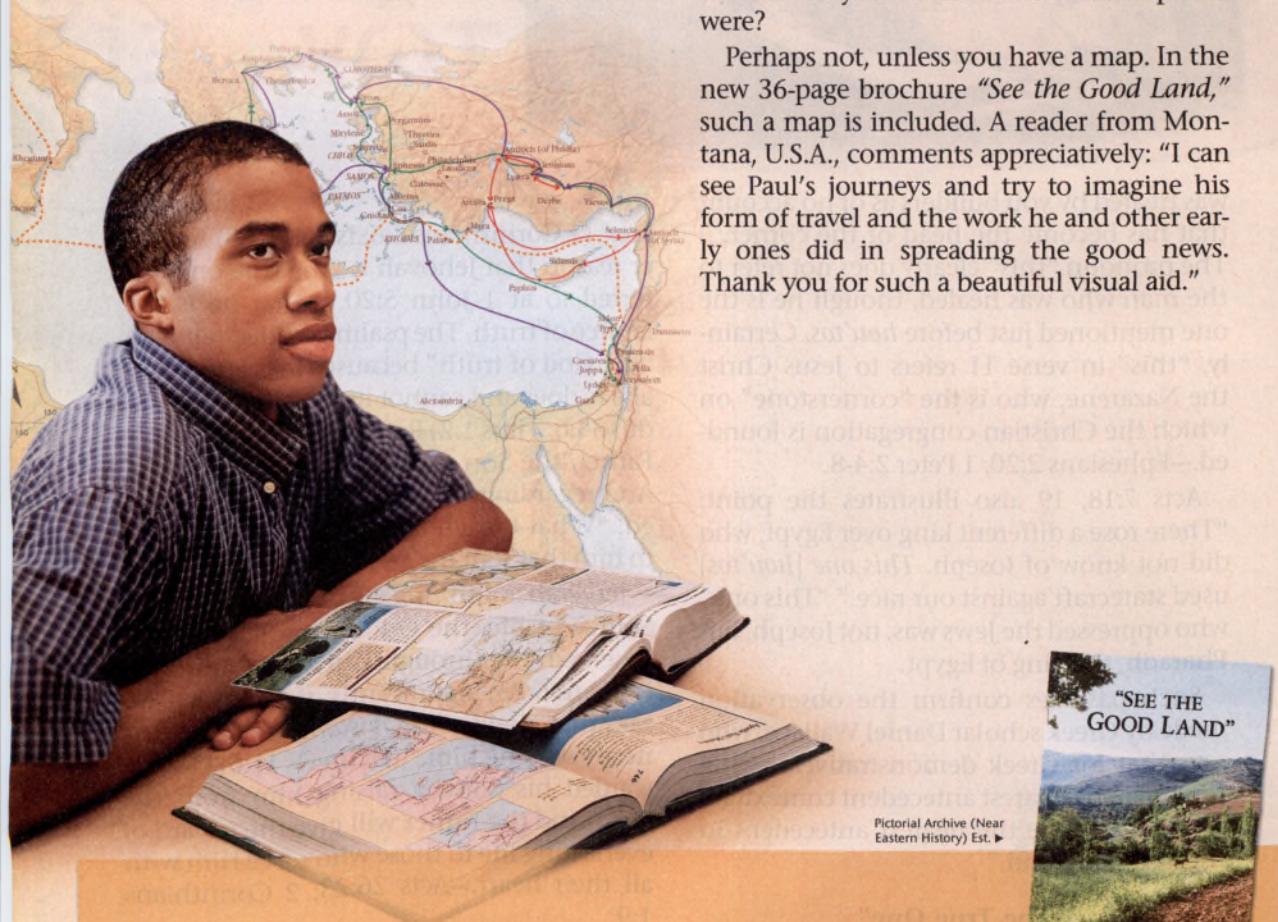
Hence, what conclusion should we come to? That Jehovah, and no one else, is “the true God and life everlasting.” He alone is worthy to receive exclusive worship from those whom he created.—Revelation 4:11.

Can You Visualize What You Read?

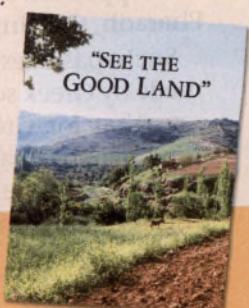
TO VISUALIZE events, you will find it helpful to be familiar with places you read about. For example, consider the missionary trips of the apostle Paul, related in the Bible book of Acts. On his first mis-

sionary tour, he started from Antioch, where Jesus' followers were first called Christians. From there he traveled to such places as Salamis, Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Can you visualize where these places were?

Perhaps not, unless you have a map. In the new 36-page brochure "See the Good Land," such a map is included. A reader from Montana, U.S.A., comments appreciatively: "I can see Paul's journeys and try to imagine his form of travel and the work he and other early ones did in spreading the good news. Thank you for such a beautiful visual aid."



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missionary tour. He traveled from the city of Antioch in modern-day Turkey through the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. These cities are located in the southern part of the country, near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

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