

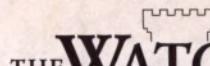
THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

APRIL 1, 2001



The Kingdom
Good News
**IS IT FOR
YOU?**



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

April 1, 2001

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

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 The Kingdom Good News—What Is It?
- 5 Kingdom Blessings Can Be Yours
- 8 Kingdom Proclaimers Report
- 9 "The Word of Jehovah Went On Growing"
- 14 True Christianity Prevails!
- 20 Do You Feel Misunderstood?
- 24 We Were a Team
- 30 Obedience—An Important Childhood Lesson?
- 32 An Event You Should Not Miss

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

MAY 7-13:

"The Word of Jehovah Went On Growing."

Page 9. Songs to be used: 130, 26.

MAY 14-20:

True Christianity Prevails!

Page 14. Songs to be used: 129, 162.

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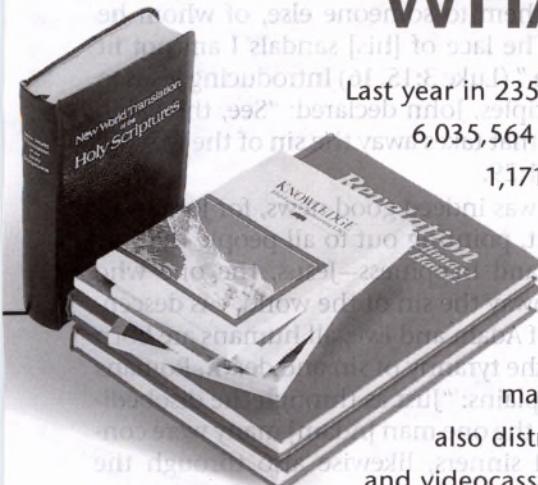
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The Kingdom Good News WHAT IS IT?



Last year in 235 lands around the world,
6,035,564 people, young and old, spent

1,171,270,425 hours talking to others

about it. In addition to conveying it

by word of mouth, they placed in

the hands of the public more than 700 million—“assu-

700 million pieces of printed

material to advertise and explain it. They

also distributed thousands of audiocassettes

and videocassettes to propagate it. What is “it”?

IT IS the good news of God's Kingdom. Truly, never before in human history has “this good news of the kingdom” been preached on the scale that we see today.
—Matthew 24:14.

Those doing this worldwide preaching and teaching work are all volunteers. From a secular point of view, they may appear to be ill-qualified for the task. What, then, accounts for their courage and their success? The power of the Kingdom good news is a major factor, for it is news about blessings that will come to mankind. These are blessings that all people yearn for—happiness, freedom from economic hardship, good government, peace and security, and something else that most dare not even consider—everlasting life! This is indeed good news to people who are searching for the meaning and purpose of life. Yes, all these blessings and more can be yours if you respond and react favorably to the proclamation of the Kingdom good news.

What Is the Kingdom?

What, though, is the Kingdom being declared as good news? It is the Kingdom that millions have been taught to pray for in these familiar words: “Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.”—Matthew 6:9, 10.

It is the Kingdom spoken of by the Hebrew prophet Daniel over 25 centuries ago when he wrote: “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite.”—Daniel 2:44.

Thus, the good news is about the Kingdom, or government, by God that will eliminate all wickedness and then rule over all the earth in peace. It will bring to reality the Creator's original purpose for mankind and for the earth.—Genesis 1:28.

"The Kingdom of the Heavens Has Drawn Near"

Nearly 2,000 years ago, the good news was first declared publicly by a dedicated man whose appearance and manner commanded much attention. That man was John the Baptizer, son of Jewish priest Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth. John wore a garment of camel hair, with a leather girdle around his loins, in the manner of the prophet Elijah, who foreshadowed him. But it was his message that attracted the attention of many. "Repent," he proclaimed, "for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near."—Matthew 3:1-6.

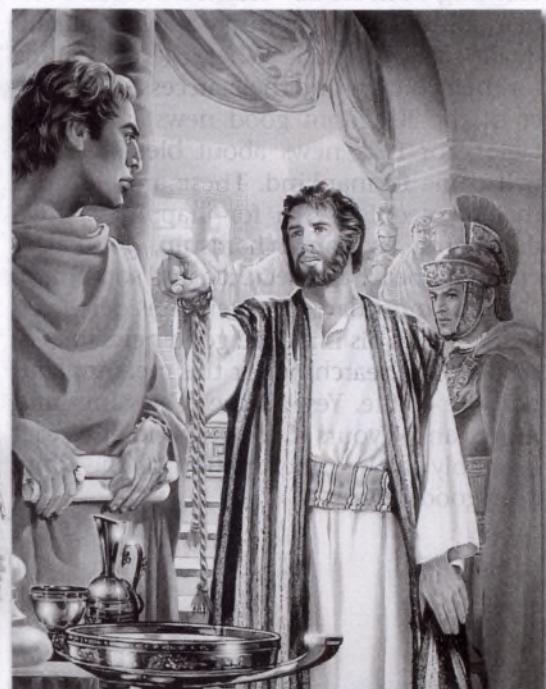
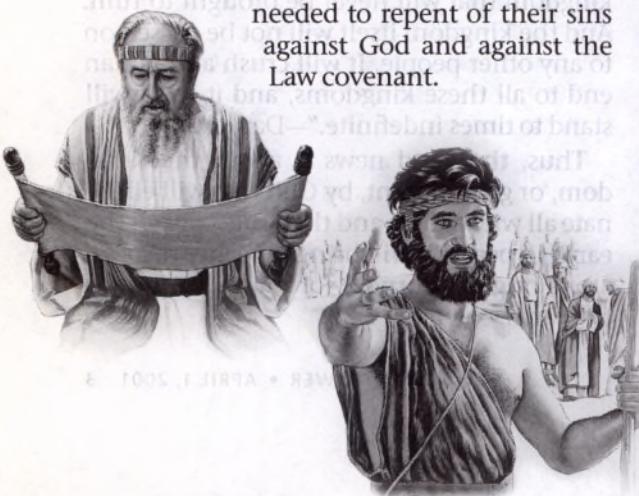
John's listeners were Jews, who professed to be worshipers of the true God, Jehovah. As a nation, they had received the Law covenant through Moses about 1,500 years earlier. Still standing in Jerusalem was the magnificent temple, where sacrifices were offered in accord with the Law. The Jews felt sure that their worship was right in God's eyes.

Listening to John, however, some people began to realize that their religion was not what they had thought it was. Greek culture and philosophy had infiltrated Jewish religious teachings. The law received from God through Moses was now adulterated, even invalidated, by man-made beliefs and traditions. (Matthew 15:6) Misguided by their hardhearted and merciless religious leaders,

most no longer worshiped God acceptably. (James 1:27) They needed to repent of their sins against God and against the Law covenant.

At that time, many Jews were expecting the appearance of the promised Messiah, or Christ, and some were wondering about John: "May he perhaps be the Christ?" John, however, denied that he was and instead directed them to someone else, of whom he said: "The lace of [his] sandals I am not fit to untie." (Luke 3:15, 16) Introducing Jesus to his disciples, John declared: "See, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!"—John 1:29.

That was indeed good news, for John was, in effect, pointing out to all people the way to life and happiness—Jesus, the one who "takes away the sin of the world." As descendants of Adam and Eve, all humans are born under the tyranny of sin and death. Romans 5:19 explains: "Just as through the disobedience of the one man [Adam] many were constituted sinners, likewise also through the obedience of the one person [Jesus] many will be constituted righteous." Jesus, like a sacrificial lamb, was to 'take sin away' and bring about a reversal of the sad state of human affairs. "The wages sin pays is death," the Bible explains, "but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord."—Romans 6:23.



As a perfect man—in fact, the greatest man who ever lived—Jesus took up preaching the good news. The Bible account at Mark 1:14, 15 tells us: “Now after John was put under arrest Jesus went into Galilee, preaching the good news of God and saying: ‘The appointed time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Be repentant, you people, and have faith in the good news.’”

Those who responded to Jesus’ message and exercised faith in the good news were highly blessed. John 1:12 says: “As many as did receive [Jesus], to them he gave author-

ity to become God’s children, because they were exercising faith in his name.” Being children, or sons, of God, they were in line to receive the reward of everlasting life. —1 John 2:25.

But the privilege of receiving Kingdom blessings was not limited to people in the first century. As mentioned earlier, the good news of God’s Kingdom is being proclaimed and taught in all the inhabited earth today. So Kingdom blessings are still available. What must you do to receive such blessings? The following article will explain.

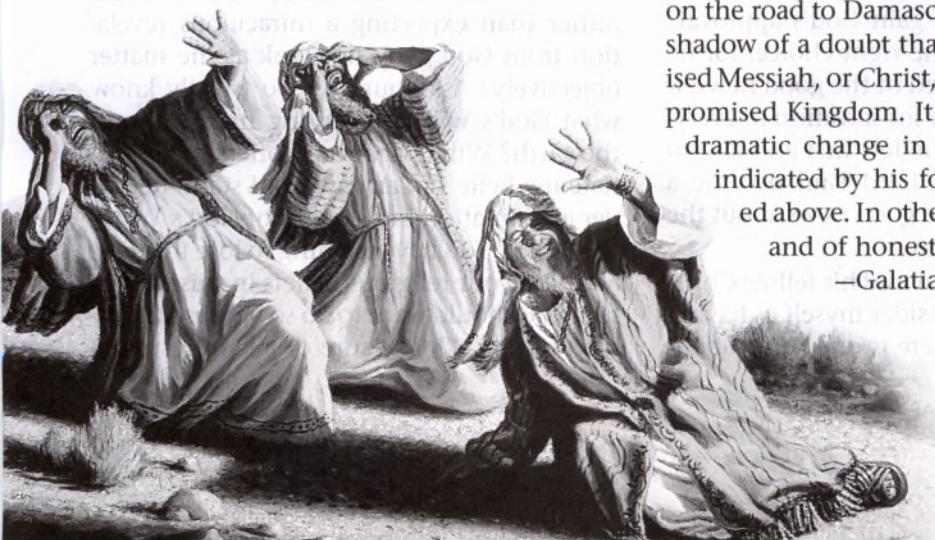
Kingdom Blessings Can Be Yours

THE Christian apostle Paul was fluent in certain major languages of his day. He had received the equivalent of a university education today. He enjoyed all the advantages and rights of a Roman citizen. (Acts 21:37-40; 22:3, 28) These credentials could have enabled him to become rich and famous. Yet, he said: “What things were gains to me, these I have consid-

ered loss on account of the Christ . . . and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:7, 8) Why did Paul make such a statement?

Formerly known as Saul of Tarsus and as a persecutor of those “who belonged to The Way,” Paul became a believer after being given a vision of the resurrected and glorified Jesus. (Acts 9:1-19) For Paul, this experience on the road to Damascus proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus was the promised Messiah, or Christ, the future ruler of the promised Kingdom. It also brought about a dramatic change in Paul’s life course, as indicated by his forceful statement noted above. In other words, being sincere and of honest heart, Paul repented.

—Galatians 1:13-16.



In the Bible, the verb “repent” is often translated from a Greek word that literally means “afterknowing,” as opposed to “foreknowing.” Thus, repentance involves a change in one’s mind, attitude, or purpose, a rejection of one’s former ways as unsatisfactory. (Acts 3:19; Revelation 2:5) In Paul’s case, he did not let that momentous event on the road to Damascus remain simply an emotional or even a so-called spiritual experience. For him it was an awakening to the fact that his former way of life, in ignorance of Christ, was futile. He realized, too, that in order to benefit from his newly found knowledge about the Christ, he must do something to rectify his life course.—Romans 2:4; Ephesians 4:24.

A Change That Brought Blessings

Previously, Paul’s knowledge of God came largely from the sect of the Pharisees, of which he was a member. Their beliefs included much human philosophy and tradition. Because of religious prejudices, Paul’s zeal and efforts were misdirected. Though he thought he was serving God, he was actually fighting against him.—Philippians 3:5, 6.

After receiving accurate knowledge about the Christ and his role in God’s purpose, Paul could see that he was faced with a choice: Should he remain a Pharisee and continue to enjoy position and esteem, or should he change his life course and start to do whatever was necessary to gain God’s approval? Happily, Paul made the right choice, for he said: “I am not ashamed of the good news; it is, in fact, God’s power for salvation to everyone having faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16) Paul became a zealous preacher of the good news about the Christ and the Kingdom.

Many years later, Paul told his fellow Christians: “I do not yet consider myself as having laid hold on it; but there is one thing about

it: Forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead, I am pursuing down toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God by means of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13, 14) Paul benefited from the good news because he willingly abandoned what had been steering him away from God and he wholeheartedly pursued goals that were in line with God’s purpose.

What Would You Do?

Perhaps you have only recently heard the Kingdom good news. Does the hope of living forever in a perfect paradise appeal to you? It well should, for all of us have an inborn desire to live and to enjoy life in peace and security. The Bible says that God has put “time indefinite” in our heart. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) So it is natural for us to hope for the time when people can live forever in peace and happiness. And that is what the Kingdom good news offers.

To make that hope a reality, however, you need to investigate and find out what the good news is about. The apostle Paul admonished: “Prove to [yourself] the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:2) So, like Paul, after gaining knowledge and understanding, you must make a choice.

On the other hand, you may already have certain beliefs concerning your future. Remember that Saul had his ideas about God’s will before he became the apostle Paul. But rather than expecting a miraculous revelation from God, why not look at the matter objectively? Ask yourself: ‘Do I really know what God’s will is regarding mankind and the earth? What proof can I offer to substantiate my beliefs? Can my proof stand up under examination in the light of God’s Word, the Bible?’ You have nothing to lose from examining your religious beliefs in this way. In fact, you should want to do so because the Bible urges us: “Make sure of all things; hold

fast to what is fine." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) After all, is it not God's approval that really matters?—John 17:3; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

Religious leaders may promise us an eternal future. But unless that promise is based on the teachings of the Bible, it will not help us to gain the blessings of God's Kingdom. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus forcefully warned: "Not everyone saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will."—Matthew 7:21.

Notice Jesus' emphasis on doing the will of his Father as the criterion for receiving the blessings of God's Kingdom. In other words, what may have the appearance of godliness is not necessarily approved by God. In fact, Jesus went on to say: "Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?' And yet then I will confess to them: I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness." (Matthew 7:22, 23) Clearly, the important thing is that we make sure that we accurately understand what the good news of the Kingdom really is and then act in harmony with it.—Matthew 7:24, 25.

Help Is Available

For more than 100 years, Jehovah's Witnesses have been preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. By means of the printed page and by word of mouth, they are helping people around the world to gain an accurate knowledge of what the Kingdom is,

what blessings it will bring, and what one must do to gain such blessings.

We encourage you to respond to the message being preached by Jehovah's Witnesses. By accepting and acting on the good news, you can receive grand blessings not only now but also in the future when God's Kingdom rules the entire earth.—1 Timothy 4:8.

Act now, for the blessings of God's Kingdom are at hand!

By means of the printed page and word of mouth, Jehovah's Witnesses preach the good news of God's Kingdom



"Toda Escritura inspirada de Dios y provechosa"

PERSPICACIA
NELLO STUDIO
DELLE SCRITTURE



JEUX OLYMPIQUE
Où sont les idées?



深海
その秘密が
いま
明かされる



India—A “Unity in Diversity”

“UNITY in Diversity” is a popular slogan used to describe national integration in India. Achieving unity in this vast country of great diversity in culture, language, religion, ethnic roots, dress, and food is no small task. However, such unity is seen at the administration office of Jehovah’s Witnesses in India, even though the volunteers who live and work there come from many states and union territories and speak a number of different languages.

- Meet Rajrani—a young woman from the Punjab, in the extreme northwest of India. When Rajrani was in school, one of her classmates began to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. This young girl tried to interest Rajrani in the Bible. Since the classmate’s English was limited and *The Watchtower* was not available in Punjabi at that time, she also enlisted Rajrani’s help in translating the contents of the magazine for her. What Rajrani read in *The Watchtower* began to influence her so deeply that despite her parents’ opposition, she progressed to the point of dedicating her life to Jehovah God. Serving at India Bethel today, she does the very same thing that opened her eyes to the truth. She translates Christian publications into Punjabi!

- Consider also Bijoe, who comes from another part of India—the southwestern state of Kerala. Bijoe was expelled from high school for taking a neutral stand during nationalistic ceremonies. Following an extended court case that ended with a landmark victory for pure worship, Bijoe went back to school.* He also went on to college. However, the immoral atmosphere there bothered his conscience, so he quit in

* See *The Watchtower*, November 1, 1987, page 21.

his first term. Now after ten years in Bethel, he feels that he has benefited more from being a member of the diverse but united Bethel family than he would have by pursuing higher education.

- Norma and Lily are both over 70 years of age and have been widows for many years. Each has completed more than 40 years in full-time service. Lily has been working in the branch for some 20 years as a translator of the Tamil language. Norma came to Bethel 13 years ago after she lost her husband. Besides being fine examples of diligent and conscientious workers, they are a unifying influence on the entire Bethel family. They love to entertain visitors, and they enjoy the company of younger members of the family, sharing the joys of long years of Christian living. And the young ones reciprocate by inviting them to their rooms for association and giving a helping hand when needed. Fine examples indeed!

Having overcome differences that cause strife and disharmony in many places, these volunteers happily work together to serve others as members of the united Bethel family in India.

—Psalm 133:1.



"THE WORD OF JEHOVAH WENT ON GROWING"

"He is sending his saying to the earth; with speed his word runs."—PSALM 147:15.

ONE of the most astounding prophecies in the Bible is found at Acts 1:8. Shortly before he ascended to heaven, Jesus told his faithful followers: "You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me . . . to the most distant part of the earth." What an enormous undertaking this would prove to be!

² To proclaim God's word throughout the earth must have seemed a daunting assignment to that handful of disciples who received it. Consider what was involved. They would have to help the people to understand the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Bearing witness to Jesus also required sharing his powerful teachings with others and explaining his role in Jehovah's purpose. Furthermore, the work included making disciples of people and then baptizing them. And this was to be done worldwide!—Matthew 28:19, 20.

³ Nevertheless, Jesus assured his followers that holy spirit would be with them in carrying out the work that he had given to them. Thus, despite the magnitude of the assignment and the relentless and violent efforts of opposers to silence them, the early disciples of Jesus successfully did what he had directed.

1, 2. What assignment did Jesus give to his disciples, and what did it involve?

3. Of what did Jesus assure his followers, and how did they respond to the work given to them?



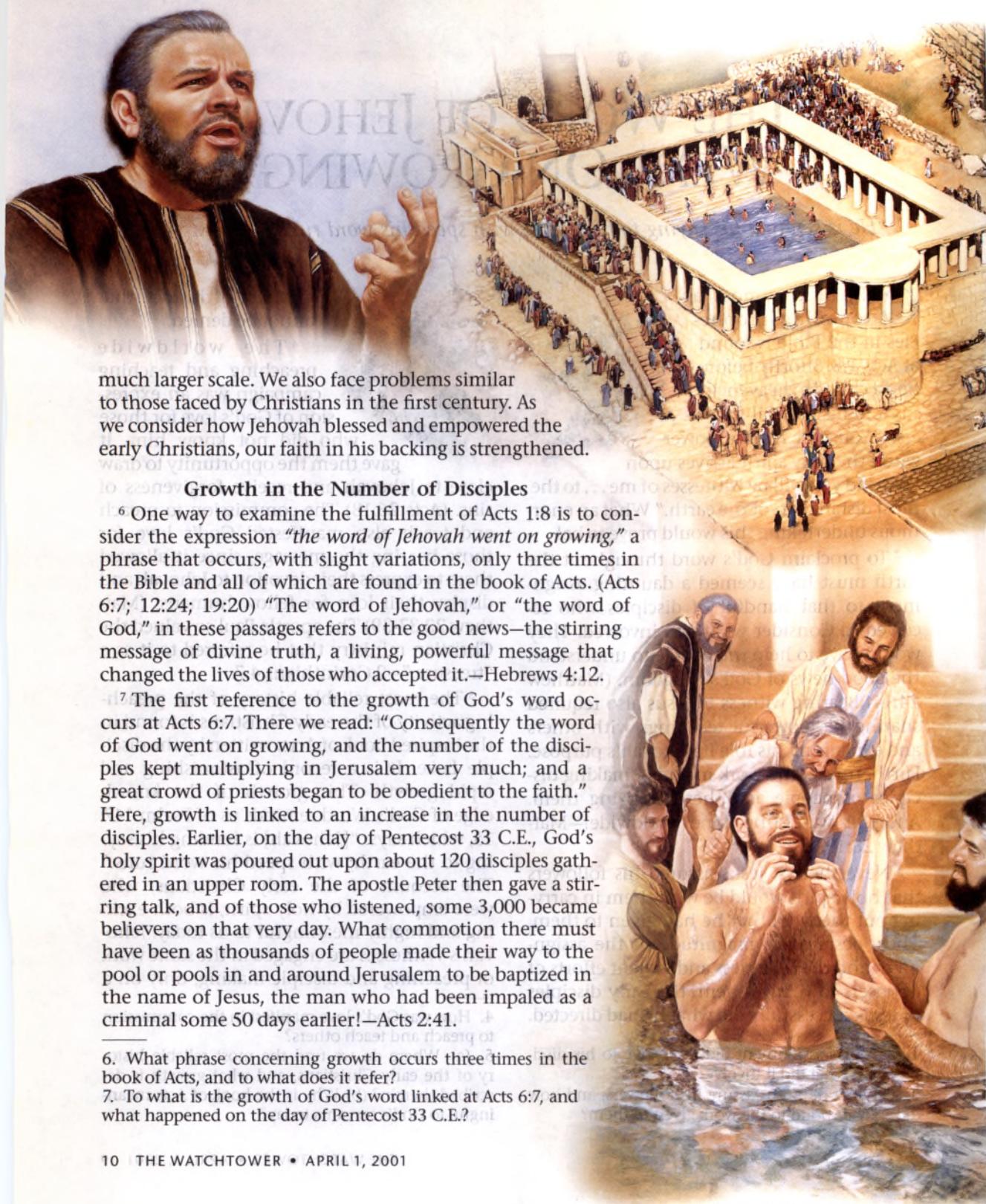
It is a fact of history that cannot be denied.

⁴ The worldwide preaching and teaching campaign was an expression of God's love for those who did not know him. It gave them the opportunity to draw close to Jehovah and receive forgiveness of sins. (Acts 26:18) The commission to preach and teach also manifested God's love for those bearing the message, since it allowed them to express their devotion to Jehovah and display their love for fellow humans. (Matthew 22:37-39) The apostle Paul so valued the Christian ministry that he referred to it as a "treasure."—2 Corinthians 4:7.

⁵ The most reliable history of the preaching activity of the early Christians is found in the inspired book of Acts, written by the disciple Luke. It is a record of astonishing and rapid growth. This growth of the knowledge of God's Word reminds us of Psalm 147:15, which says: "[Jehovah] is sending his saying to the earth; with speed his word runs." The account of the early Christians, who were empowered by holy spirit, is both exciting and highly meaningful to us today. Jehovah's Witnesses are engaged in the same work of preaching and disciple making, only on a

4. How was God's love manifest in the commission to preach and teach others?

5. (a) Where do we find the most reliable history of the early Christians, and what growth is described therein? (b) Why is the book of Acts meaningful to God's servants today?



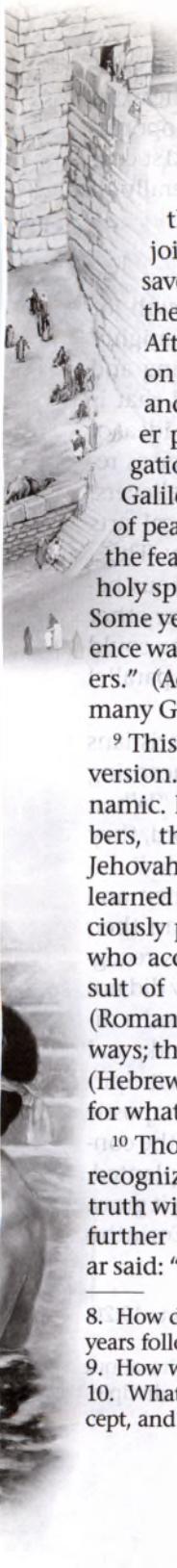
much larger scale. We also face problems similar to those faced by Christians in the first century. As we consider how Jehovah blessed and empowered the early Christians, our faith in his backing is strengthened.

Growth in the Number of Disciples

⁶ One way to examine the fulfillment of Acts 1:8 is to consider the expression "*the word of Jehovah went on growing*," a phrase that occurs, with slight variations, only three times in the Bible and all of which are found in the book of Acts. (Acts 6:7; 12:24; 19:20) "The word of Jehovah," or "the word of God," in these passages refers to the good news—the stirring message of divine truth, a living, powerful message that changed the lives of those who accepted it.—Hebrews 4:12.

⁷ The first reference to the growth of God's word occurs at Acts 6:7. There we read: "Consequently the word of God went on growing, and the number of the disciples kept multiplying in Jerusalem very much; and a great crowd of priests began to be obedient to the faith." Here, growth is linked to an increase in the number of disciples. Earlier, on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., God's holy spirit was poured out upon about 120 disciples gathered in an upper room. The apostle Peter then gave a stirring talk, and of those who listened, some 3,000 became believers on that very day. What commotion there must have been as thousands of people made their way to the pool or pools in and around Jerusalem to be baptized in the name of Jesus, the man who had been impaled as a criminal some 50 days earlier!—Acts 2:41.

6. What phrase concerning growth occurs three times in the book of Acts, and to what does it refer?
7. To what is the growth of God's word linked at Acts 6:7, and what happened on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E.?



⁸ That, of course, was only the beginning. The continued efforts by Jewish religious leaders to crush the preaching activity were in vain. To the frustration of those leaders, "Jehovah continued to join to [the disciples] daily those being saved." (Acts 2:47) Soon, "the number of the men became about five thousand." After that, "believers in the Lord kept on being added, multitudes both of men and of women." (Acts 4:4; 5:14) Of a later period, we read: "Indeed, the congregation throughout the whole of Judea and Galilee and Samaria entered into a period of peace, being built up; and as it walked in the fear of Jehovah and in the comfort of the holy spirit it kept on multiplying." (Acts 9:31) Some years later, possibly about 58 C.E., reference was made to "many thousands of believers." (Acts 21:20) By then, there were also many Gentile believers.

⁹ This numerical growth was largely by conversion. The religion was new—but it was dynamic. Far from being passive church members, the disciples were fully devoted to Jehovah and his Word, having sometimes learned the truth from those who were viciously persecuted. (Acts 16:23, 26-33) Those who accepted Christianity did so as the result of a reasoned, conscientious decision. (Romans 12:1) They were educated in God's ways; the truth was in their minds and hearts. (Hebrews 8:10, 11) They were willing to die for what they believed in.—Acts 7:51-60.

¹⁰ Those who embraced Christian teaching recognized their responsibility to share the truth with others. This directly contributed to further numerical growth. One Bible scholar said: "Communicating the faith was not re-

8. How did the number of disciples increase in the years following Pentecost 33 C.E.?

9. How would you describe the early Christians?

10. What responsibility did the early Christians accept, and what parallel do we find today?

garded as the preserve of the very zealous or of the officially designated evangelist. Evangelism was the prerogative and the duty of every Church member. . . . The spontaneous outreach of the total Christian community gave immense impetus to the movement from the very outset." He further wrote: "Evangelism was the very life blood of the early Christians." The same is true of genuine Christians today.

Geographical Growth

¹¹ A second reference to the growth of God's word is found at Acts 12:24: "The word of Jehovah went on growing and spreading." Here the phrase is linked to geographical growth. Despite governmental opposition, the work continued to prosper. The holy spirit was first poured out in Jerusalem, and from there the word spread quickly. Persecution in Jerusalem scattered the disciples to regions throughout Judea and Samaria. The result? "Those who had been scattered went through the land declaring the good news of the word." (Acts 8:1, 4) Philip was directed to witness to a man who, after being baptized, took the message to Ethiopia. (Acts 8:26-28, 38, 39) Quickly the truth took root in Lydda, the Plain of Sharon, and Joppa. (Acts 9:35, 42) Later, the apostle Paul traveled thousands of miles on sea and land, establishing congregations throughout many Mediterranean countries. The apostle Peter went to Babylon. (1 Peter 5:13) Within 30 years after the outpouring of the holy spirit at Pentecost, Paul wrote that the good news had been "preached in all creation that is under heaven," possibly referring to the then-known earth.—Colossians 1:23.

¹² Even opposers of Christianity acknowledged that the word of God had taken root throughout the Roman Empire. For example,

11. What type of growth is described at Acts 12:24, and how did this take place?

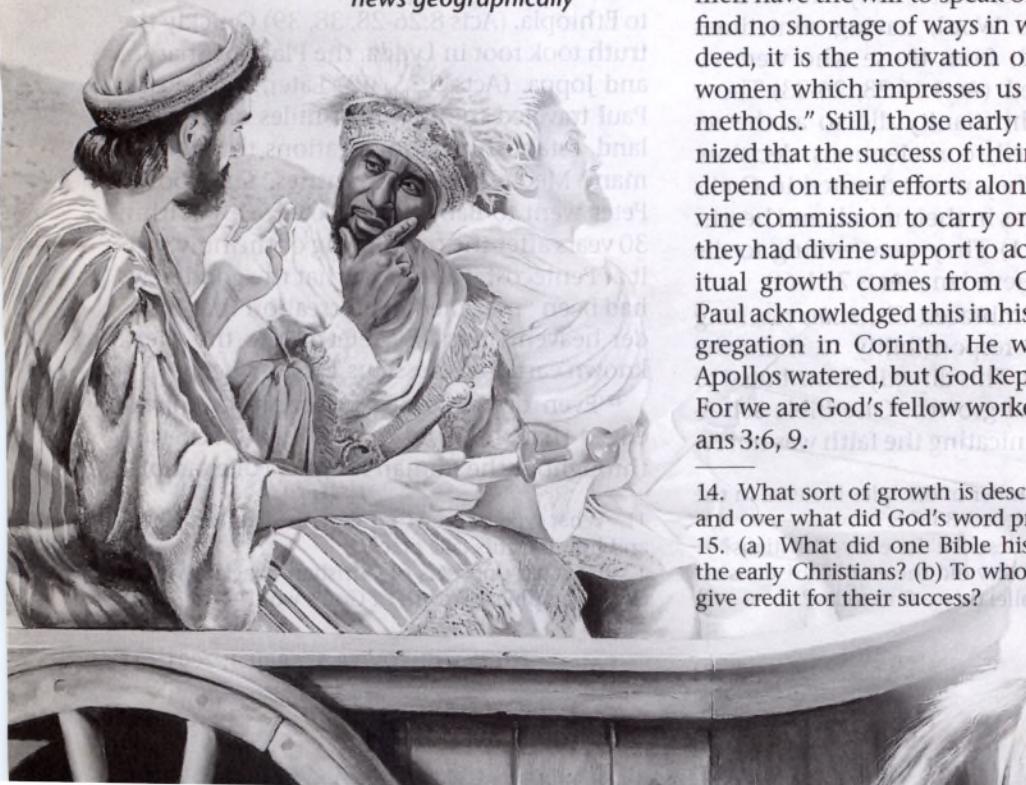
12. How did opposers of Christianity acknowledge the geographical growth of God's word?

Acts 17:6 relates that in Thessalonica, northern Greece, opposers cried out: "These men that have overturned the inhabited earth are present here also." Further, at the beginning of the second century, Pliny the Younger wrote to Roman Emperor Trajan from Bithynia concerning Christianity. He complained: "[It] is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighboring villages and country."

¹³ This geographical growth was an expression of Jehovah's deep love for redeemable humankind. When Peter observed the holy spirit manifesting itself in the Gentile Cornelius, he said: "For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) Yes, the

13. In what way did geographical growth reflect God's love for humankind?

Philip preached to the Ethiopian, spreading the good news geographically



good news was and is a message for all peoples, and the geographical growth of the word of God gave peoples everywhere an opportunity to respond to God's love. In this 21st century, the word of God has spread to literally all parts of the earth.

Growth That Prevailed

¹⁴ The third reference to the growth of God's word occurs at Acts 19:20: "In a mighty way the word of Jehovah kept growing and prevailing." The original Greek word that is translated "prevailing" conveys the idea of "exerting strength." The preceding verses relate that many in Ephesus became believers, and a number who practiced magical arts burned their books before everybody. Thus, God's word prevailed over false religious beliefs. The good news also prevailed over other obstacles, such as persecution. Nothing could stop it. In this we again find a striking parallel to true Christianity in our time.

¹⁵ The apostles and other early Christians proclaimed God's word with zeal. Concerning them, one Bible historian observed: "When men have the will to speak of their Lord, they find no shortage of ways in which to do it. Indeed, it is the motivation of these men and women which impresses us more than their methods." Still, those early Christians recognized that the success of their ministry did not depend on their efforts alone. They had a divine commission to carry on their work, and they had divine support to accomplish it. Spiritual growth comes from God. The apostle Paul acknowledged this in his letter to the congregation in Corinth. He wrote: "I planted, Apollos watered, but God kept making it grow. For we are God's fellow workers."—1 Corinthians 3:6, 9.

14. What sort of growth is described at Acts 19:20, and over what did God's word prevail?

15. (a) What did one Bible historian write about the early Christians? (b) To whom did the disciples give credit for their success?

Holy Spirit at Work

¹⁶ Recall that Jesus assured his disciples that holy spirit would play a role in the growth of God's word and that holy spirit would empower the disciples in their preaching activity. (Acts 1:8) How did this happen? Not long after the spirit was poured out upon the disciples at Pentecost, Peter and John were summoned to speak to the Jewish Sanhedrin, the highest court in the land, whose judges bore responsibility for the execution of Jesus Christ. Would the apostles tremble with fear before such an imposing and hostile assembly? Not at all! Holy spirit empowered Peter and John to speak with such boldness that their opponents were filled with wonder, and "they began to recognize about them that they used to be with Jesus." (Acts 4:8, 13) Holy spirit also caused Stephen to witness boldly to the Sanhedrin. (Acts 6:12; 7:55, 56) Earlier, the holy spirit had moved the disciples to preach with boldness. Luke reports: "When they had made supplication, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were one and all filled with the holy spirit and were speaking the word of God with boldness."—Acts 4:31.

¹⁷ Through his powerful holy spirit, Jeho-

16. What shows that the holy spirit empowered the disciples to speak with boldness?
17. In what other ways did the holy spirit assist the disciples in their ministry?

Do You Recall?

- How did the early disciples grow numerically?
- In what way did the word of God spread geographically?
- How did the word of God prevail in the first century?
- What role did holy spirit play in the growth of God's word?



Holy spirit directed the apostles and older men in Jerusalem

vah, along with the resurrected Jesus, directed the preaching activity. (John 14:28; 15:26) When the spirit was poured out on Cornelius, his relatives, and his intimate friends, the apostle Peter recognized that uncircumcised Gentiles could qualify to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. (Acts 10:24, 44-48) Later, the spirit played a key role in appointing Barnabas and Saul (the apostle Paul) for missionary activity and in directing where they should and should not go. (Acts 13:2, 4; 16: 6, 7) It directed the decision-making process of the apostles and older men in Jerusalem. (Acts 15:23, 28, 29) Holy spirit also guided the appointment of overseers in the Christian congregation.—Acts 20:28.

¹⁸ In addition, holy spirit manifested itself in Christians themselves, producing godly qualities, such as love. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Love moved the disciples to share with one another. For example, following Pentecost of 33 C.E., a common fund was established to meet the physical needs of the disciples in Jerusalem. The Bible account says: "There was not one in need among them; for all those who were possessors of fields or houses would sell them and bring the values of the things sold and they would deposit them at the feet of the apostles. In turn distribution would be made to each one, just as he would have the need." (Acts 4:34, 35) This love extended not merely to fellow believers but also to others, both by sharing the good news and by other acts of kindness. (Acts 28:8, 9) Jesus

18. How did the early Christians express love?

said that self-sacrificing love would identify his followers. (John 13:34, 35) Surely the vital quality of love drew people to God and contributed to growth in the first century just as it does today.—Matthew 5:14, 16.

¹⁹ In all, the expression “holy spirit” occurs 41 times in the book of Acts. Clearly, genu-

19. (a) In what three ways did the word of Jehovah grow in the first century? (b) What will we examine in the next article?

ine Christian growth in the first century was closely linked to the power and guidance of the holy spirit. The number of disciples increased, the word of God spread over a wide area, and it prevailed over religions and philosophies of that era. This first-century growth finds its parallel in the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses today. In the next article, we will examine the equally dramatic growth of God’s word in modern times.

TRUE CHRISTIANITY PREVAILS!

“In a mighty way the word of Jehovah kept growing and prevailing.”—ACTS 19:20.

FIRED with the power of holy spirit, the early Christians proclaimed God’s word with a zeal that could not be dampened. One historian wrote: “Christianity had spread with remarkable rapidity over the Roman world. By the year 100 probably every province that bordered the Mediterranean had a Christian community within it.”

²⁰ Satan the Devil could not silence the early Christians. Instead, he countered the impact of the good news by another means—apostasy. Jesus had foretold this development in his parable of the wheat and the weeds. (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) The apostle Peter had also warned that false teachers would arise within the congregation, bringing in destructive sects. (2 Peter 2:1-3) Similarly, the apostle Paul had specifically warned that apostasy would precede the day of Jehovah.—2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.

1. Describe the growth of Christianity during the first century.
2. How did Satan attempt to counter the good news, and how had this been foretold?

³ Following the death of the apostles, the good news came to be overshadowed by pagan teachings and philosophies. As foretold, false teachers distorted and polluted the pure message of truth. Gradually, true

Christianity was eclipsed by a counterfeit called Christendom. A clergy class arose that tried to keep the Bible out of the hands of the common people. Though the numbers of those who called themselves Christians increased, their worship was not pure. Christendom grew geographically and became a powerful institution and a dominant force in Western culture, but it had neither God’s blessing nor his spirit.

⁴ However, Satan’s scheme to thwart Jehovah’s purpose was doomed to failure. During even the darkest days of apostasy, true Christianity was still alive among some. Men who copied the Bible took pains to do so accu-

3. What occurred following the death of the apostles?
4. Why was Satan’s scheme to thwart God’s purpose unsuccessful?

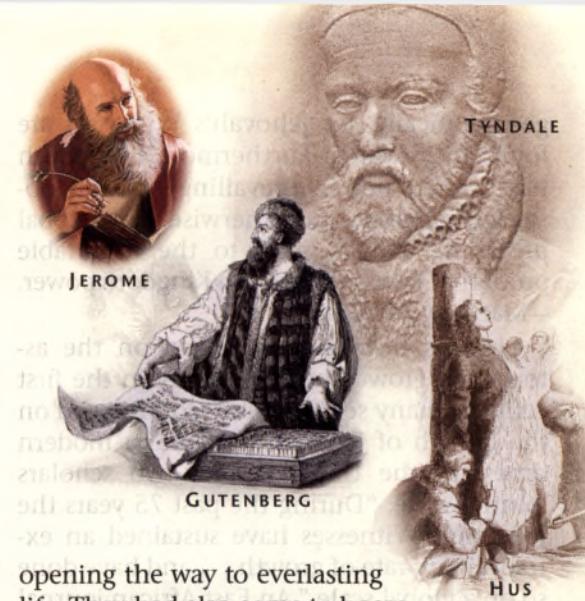
rately. Thus, the Bible itself remained intact, though its message was perverted by many who professed to have the authority to teach it. Over the centuries such scholars as Jerome and Tyndale bravely translated and distributed God's Word. Millions of people were exposed to the Bible and to a form of Christianity, counterfeit though it was.

5 Eventually, as foretold in the book of Daniel, 'the true knowledge became abundant.' This has occurred in "the time of the end"—the time in which we are now living. (Daniel 12:4) Holy spirit has led lovers of truth worldwide to an accurate knowledge of the true God and his purpose. Even after centuries of apostate teaching, God's word prevails! Today, the good news is being proclaimed everywhere, pointing people to the hope of a delightful new world. (Psalm 37:11) Let us now examine this modern-day growth of God's word.

Growth of the Word Today

6 In the late 19th century, Bible truth galvanized a small group of Bible Students, known today as Jehovah's Witnesses. By 1914 the Bible had come alive to them. They understood wonderful truths concerning God's purpose. They were deeply moved by Jehovah's love in sending his Son to the earth, thus

5. What did the prophet Daniel foretell regarding "true knowledge"?
6. What truths did the Bible Students understand by the year 1914?



Cutenberg and Hus. From the book *The Story of Liberty*, 1878

opening the way to everlasting life. They had also come to know and appreciate God's name and personality. Further, they realized that "the times of the Gentiles" had already ended, signaling that the time was near for God's Kingdom government to bring about blessings for mankind. (Luke 21:24, King James Version) What glorious good news! These dynamic truths were to be shared with everyone, everywhere. Lives were at stake!

7 Jehovah blessed that handful of spirit-anointed Christians. Today, the number who embrace true Christianity has surpassed six million. The word of God has also spread

7. How has Bible truth prevailed in modern times?

**Bible Students
proclaiming the good
news in the 1920's**

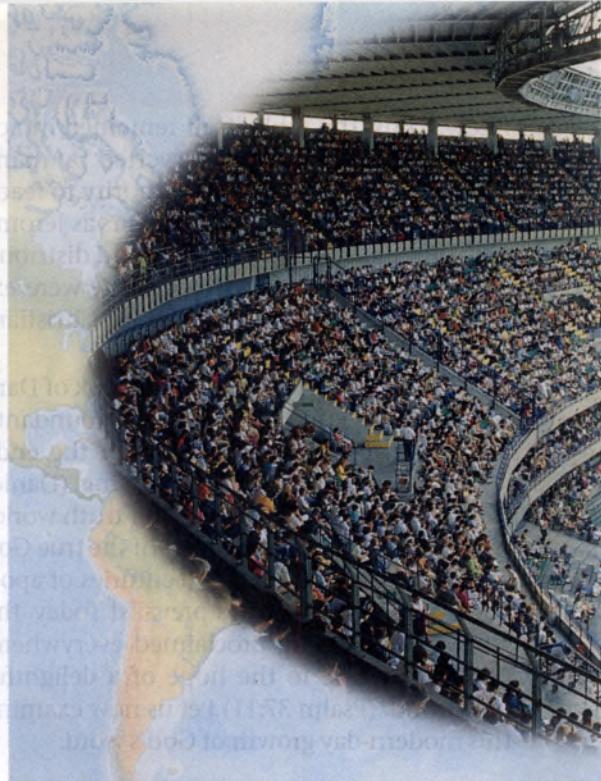
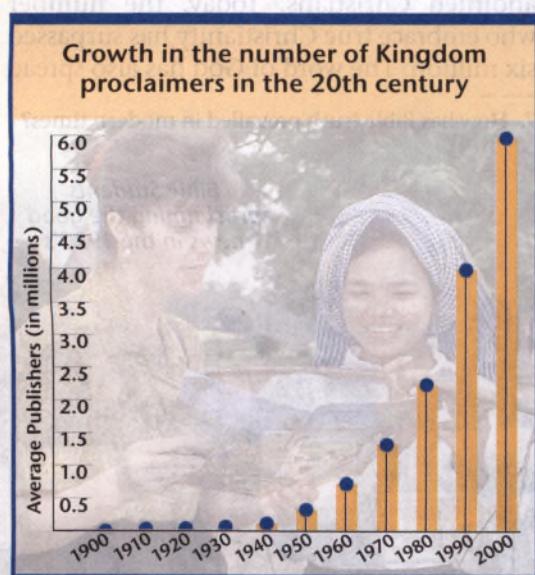


geographically, for Jehovah's Witnesses are found in 235 lands. Furthermore, Bible truth has exerted power, prevailing over all obstacles, religious and otherwise. This global preaching activity adds to the irrefutable proof that Jesus is present in Kingdom power.

—Matthew 24:3, 14.

⁸ Just as historians remarked on the astounding growth of Christianity in the first century, many scholars have commented on the growth of Jehovah's people in modern times. In the United States, two scholars jointly wrote: "During the past 75 years the Jehovah's Witnesses have sustained an extraordinary rate of growth . . . and have done so on a global scale." An East African journal refers to the Witnesses as "one of the world's fastest growing and highly respected religions known internationally for its total adherence to biblical teachings." And a conservative Catholic journal, published in Europe, refers to "the overwhelming growth of Jehovah's Witnesses." What has contributed to this growth?

8. What have some said about the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses?



Holy Spirit at Work Today

⁹ A primary reason that God's word prevails today is that Jehovah's spirit is powerfully at work, just as it was in the first century. Jesus said: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him." (John 6:44) These words suggest that God gently attracts those who are rightly disposed, making an appeal to hearts. By means of the preaching activity of his Witnesses, Jehovah is drawing out for his service "the desirable things of all the nations"—the meek, sheeplike people of the earth.—Haggai 2:6, 7.

¹⁰ Not only has holy spirit empowered God's people to carry the word of God to the most distant part of the earth; it has moved people

9. (a) What is a primary reason why God's word prevails today? (b) How does Jehovah draw people to him?

10. What sorts of people have responded to the word of God?



***Around the world
people are responding
to the good news***

of all sorts to respond to the good news. Truly, those who have embraced God's word have come from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation." (Revelation 5:9; 7:9, 10) They are to be found among rich and poor, the highly educated and the illiterate. Some have accepted the word under conditions of war and harsh persecution, while others have done so during times of peace and prosperity. Under every type of government, in all cultures, from concentration camps to palaces, men and women have responded favorably to the good news.

¹¹ Despite the amazing diversity of God's people, they dwell in unity with one another. (Psalm 133:1-3) This adds to the evidence that holy spirit is at work in the lives of those serving God. His spirit is a powerful force for good that enables his servants to display love, joy,

11. How does holy spirit operate in the lives of God's people, and what distinction is evident?

peace, kindness, and other appealing qualities. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Today, we clearly discern what the prophet Malachi foretold long ago: "You people will . . . 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.

God's Word Prevails in Zealous Workers

¹² Jehovah's Witnesses today are not passive churchgoers. They take an active part in the evangelizing work. Like the early Christians, they present themselves willingly to do God's will, seeking to help others learn about Jehovah's Kingdom promises. They are God's fellow workers who, in harmony with his holy spirit, gather others to Jehovah's service. In doing so, they reflect Jehovah's mercy and love to unbelieving humankind. And they do so despite encountering apathy, ridicule, and persecution. Jesus prepared his followers for mixed reactions to the good news. He said: "A slave is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you

12. How do Jehovah's Witnesses feel about the evangelizing work, and what reaction to their preaching activity do they expect?

also; if they have observed my word, they will observe yours also.”—John 15:20.

¹³ We cannot fail to be impressed by the similarity between Jehovah's Witnesses today and those who embraced true Christianity in the first century. Equally striking is the contrast between Jehovah's Witnesses and Christendom today. After writing about the evangelistic zeal of the early Christians, one scholar laments: “Unless there is a transformation of contemporary church life so that once again the task of evangelism is something which is seen as incumbent on every baptized Christian, and is backed up by a quality of living which outshines the best that unbelief can muster, we are unlikely to make much headway.” The very features that Christendom lacks abound among Jehovah's Witnesses! Theirs is a living faith, a genuine faith, and a faith that is based on Bible truth that they feel impelled to share with all who will listen. —1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

¹⁴ Jesus took his ministry very seriously, making it his primary concern. He said to Pilate: “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.” (John 18:37) God's people feel as Jesus did. With Bible truth in their heart, they endeavor to find ways to share it with as many as possible. Some of these ways reflect remarkable ingenuity.

¹⁵ In one South American country, the Witnesses traveled down a tributary of the Amazon River to reach people with the truth. However, when civil strife erupted in 1995, civilian traffic along the river was prohibited. Determined to keep supplying interested ones with Bible publications, the Witnesses decided to float the message downstream. They

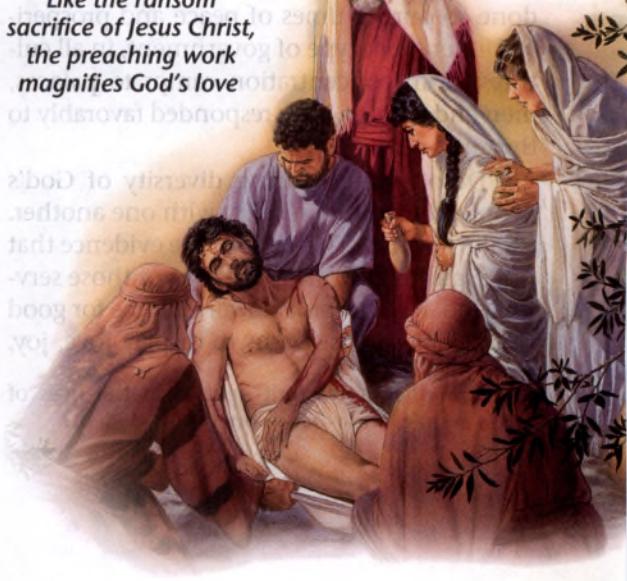
13. What features lacking in Christendom abound among Jehovah's Witnesses?
14. How did Jesus regard his ministry, and what attitude do his disciples display today?
15. How have some shown ingenuity in preaching the good news?

wrote letters and placed them with copies of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines inside empty plastic bottles. They then threw the bottles into the river. This continued for four and a half years until the river was again opened to civilians. All along the river, people thanked the Witnesses for the literature. One lady who had been a Bible student embraced them with tears in her eyes and said: “I thought I would never see you again. However, when I began receiving the literature in the bottles, I knew that you had not forgotten me!” Others who lived along the river said that they had read the magazines repeatedly. Many settlements had a “post office”—an eddy where floating objects collected temporarily. It was there that interested ones checked frequently for any “mail” from upstream.

¹⁶ The preaching of the good news is directed and backed by Jehovah God and his powerful angels. (Revelation 14:6) By just making ourselves available, unexpected opportunities to make disciples sometimes arise. In Nairobi, Kenya, two Christian women in field service had finished working the houses assigned to

16. How does making ourselves available sometimes open the way to disciple making?

*Like the ransom
sacrifice of Jesus Christ,
the preaching work
magnifies God's love*



them. A young woman suddenly approached them and excitedly said: "I've been praying to meet someone like you." She implored the Witnesses to come to her home immediately for a discussion, and a Bible study was started with her that very day. Why did the woman approach the two Christians with such urgency? About two weeks earlier, she had lost her baby in death. So when she saw a youngster carrying the tract "What Hope for Dead Loved Ones?" she wanted it desperately and asked the boy to give it to her. He refused, but pointed to the Witnesses who had given him the tract. Soon the woman was making fine spiritual progress and was better able to cope with the painful loss of her child.

God's Love Must Prevail

¹⁷ The growth of God's word in all the earth is closely linked to the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Like the ransom, the preaching work is an expression of Jehovah's love for people everywhere. The apostle John was inspired to write: "God loved the world [of mankind] so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

¹⁸ Think about the love Jehovah showed in providing the ransom. For aeons, God had enjoyed a close relationship with his cherished, only-begotten Son, "the beginning of the creation by God." (Revelation 3:14) Jesus loves his Father deeply, and Jehovah loved his Son "before the founding of the world." (John 14:31; 17:24) Jehovah allowed this beloved Son to undergo death so that humans might receive everlasting life. What an awe-inspiring expression of love for humankind!

¹⁹ John 3:17 states: "God sent forth his Son into the world, not for him to judge the world, but for the world to be saved through him." Thus, Jehovah sent his Son on a loving mis-

17-19. What love has Jehovah shown to humankind by means of the ransom?

sion of salvation, not one of judgment or condemnation. This harmonizes with Peter's words: "[Jehovah] does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentence."—2 Peter 3:9.

²⁰ Having provided the legal basis for salvation at great cost to himself, Jehovah wants as many as possible to take advantage of it. The apostle Paul wrote: "'Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.' However, how will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? How, in turn, will they put faith in him of whom they have not heard? How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach?"—Romans 10:13, 14.

²¹ What a wonderful privilege it is to share in this global preaching and teaching work! It is not an easy work, yet how Jehovah rejoices when he observes his people faithfully living the truth and sharing the good news with others! So whatever your circumstances are, let God's spirit and the love in your heart motivate you to share in this work. And remember that what we see being accomplished worldwide gives convincing evidence that Jehovah God will soon fulfill his promise to usher in the glorious "new heavens and a new earth" in which "righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:13.

20. In what way is salvation related to the preaching of the good news?
21. How should we feel about the opportunity to share in the preaching work?

Do You Recall?

- Why could apostasy not silence the preachers of the good news?
- How has the word of God prevailed in our day?
- In what ways is God's spirit at work today?
- How is the ransom linked to the preaching of the good news?

Do You Feel Misunderstood?

ANTONIO felt perturbed. Suddenly and inexplicably, his good friend Leonardo had become cool toward him.* On different occasions Antonio's greetings had not been acknowledged, and when in each other's company, there now seemed to be a wall between them. Antonio began to fear that he must have done or said something that his friend had misunderstood. But what?

Misunderstandings are common. Many are minor and are easily rectified. Others can be most frustrating, especially when wrong impressions persist despite all efforts to banish them. Why do misunderstandings occur? How do they affect the individuals involved? What can you do if others misunderstand something you do? Does it really matter what others think about you anyway?

An Inescapable Reality

Since other people cannot read our thoughts and intentions, sooner or later someone is going to misinterpret our words or actions. Potential for misunderstandings abounds. At times, we simply fail to express our thoughts with the desired clarity and precision. Background noise and other distractions may make it hard for others to devote their full attention to us.

Certain ways and manners too are open to misinterpretation. A timid person, for in-

stance, may wrongly be judged to be cool, aloof, or proud. Past personal experiences may result in emotional rather than rational reactions to certain situations. Cultural and linguistic differences mean that comprehension cannot be taken for granted. Add to this inaccurate reporting and gossip, and it should not surprise us that meanings attributed to things said or done sometimes differ from what was originally intended. All of this, of course, offers scant comfort to those who sense that their intentions have been misconstrued.

For example, Anna had made an innocent remark about the popularity of an absent friend. The remark was repeated out of con-



* Some substitute names are used in this article.

text, and then, to Anna's surprise and dismay, that friend angrily accused her before several onlookers of being jealous of the attentions the friend had received from a certain male associate. Anna's remark had been completely misinterpreted, and all of her efforts to assure her friend that she intended no harm proved fruitless. That situation caused a great deal of pain, and much time passed before Anna could completely rectify the misunderstanding.

How others evaluate you often depends on their perception of your intentions. So it is natural to feel bad when people interpret your motive incorrectly. You might be indignant, feeling that there is no reason why anyone should misunderstand you. To you, such evaluations are biased, critical, or completely wrong, and they can hurt deeply—particularly if you value the opinion of those making the unjust assessments.

Though you might be annoyed at the way people judge you, it is nonetheless appropriate to respect the opinion of others. It is not Christian to disregard what others think, and never would we want our words or actions to have a damaging effect on other people. (Matthew 7:12; 1 Corinthians 8:12) So on occasion you might need to make an effort to rectify someone's misguided opinion about you. Excessive concern for approval, however, is counterproductive, leading to loss of self-respect or a feeling of rejection. After all, your true value does not depend on what others think.

On the other hand, you may recognize that the criticism against you is well-founded. That, too, can hurt, but if you willingly and honestly acknowledge your own imperfections, such experiences can be positive, spurring you to make the needed changes.

Negative Consequences

Misunderstandings may or may not lead to serious results. If you hear a man talking loudly in a restaurant, for instance, you might conclude that he is either an extrovert or a show-off. You might be wrong. The person he is talking to could have a hearing problem. Or perhaps a salesclerk seems unpleasant, but maybe she is not feeling well. Although such misunderstandings lead to negative impressions, they will likely produce no serious or lasting consequences. Sometimes, though, misunderstandings can provoke disaster. Consider two episodes in the history of ancient Israel.

When Nahash, king of Ammon, died, David sent messengers to console his son Hanun, who had begun to rule in his father's place. However, the messengers' visit was misinterpreted as a hostile spying out of Ammonite territory, moving Hanun first to humiliate the messengers and then to make war on Israel. As a result, at least 47,000 people died—all because of a misunderstanding of good intentions.—1 Chronicles 19:1-19.

Earlier in Israel's history, another misunderstanding was resolved quite differently. The tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built a conspicuous altar by the Jordan River. The rest of Israel saw this

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Give Attention to God's
Wonderful Works

How to Cope With Negative Feelings

You Can Succeed
Regardless of Your Upbringing

as an act of unfaithfulness, a rebellion against Jehovah. They therefore congregated for military action. Before doing anything drastic, these other Israelites sent messengers to express indignation at the perceived act of infidelity. It was well that they did, for the builders of the altar replied that they had no intention of turning from pure worship. On the contrary, the altar was to serve as a monument of their faithfulness to Jehovah. This misunderstanding could have caused a bloodbath, but wisdom averted such dire consequences.—Joshua 22:10-34.

Clarify Matters in a Spirit of Love

To compare these accounts is instructive. Obviously, clarifying the issue is the wise thing to do. In the episode last discussed, who knows how many lives were spared simply because the two sides *talked*? In most cases, lives will not be at stake if you fail to grasp someone else's real intentions, but friendships might be. So if you feel that someone has acted improperly toward you, are you sure that you understand things the way they really are, or are you misinterpreting them? What were the other person's motives? Ask him. Do you feel misunderstood? Talk about it. Do not allow pride to get in the way.

Jesus offered excellent incentive to resolving misunderstandings: "If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift." (Matthew 5: 23, 24) So the proper thing to do is to approach the person in private, without involving others. It is not going to help if the offending party hears your complaint from somebody else first. (Proverbs 17:9) Your goal should be to make peace in a spirit of love. Calmly define the problem in clear, simple,

nonaccusatory words. Explain how the situation makes you feel. Then listen objectively to the other point of view. Do not be hasty about imputing motives. Be willing to grant the other person the benefit of the doubt. Remember, love "believes all things."—1 Corinthians 13:7.

Of course, even when misunderstandings are cleared up, there may still be hurt feelings or enduring negative consequences. What can be done? Where necessary, sincere apologies are certainly in order, along with any other action that can reasonably be taken toward setting matters straight. In all such situations, the injured party would do well to follow the inspired counsel: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also. But, besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union."—Colossians 3: 13, 14; 1 Peter 4:8.

As long as we are imperfect, there will be misunderstandings and hurt feelings. Anyone can make a mistake or speak in a way that sounds insensitive or unkind. The Bible points out: "We all stumble many times. If anyone does not stumble in word, this one is a perfect man, able to bridle also his whole body." (James 3:2) Since Jehovah God is well aware of this, he has provided us with these instructions: "Do not hurry yourself in your spirit to become offended, for the taking of offense is what rests in the bosom of the stupid ones. Also, do not give your heart to all the words that people may speak, that you may not hear your servant calling down evil upon you. For your own heart well knows even many times that you, even you, have called down evil upon others."—Ecclesiastes 7:9, 21, 22.

"Jehovah Is Making an Estimate of Hearts"

What if it appears to be impossible to correct someone's bad impression of you? Do not despair. Go on cultivating and manifesting Christian qualities as best you can. Ask Jehovah to help you to improve where you need to. Your true value as a person ultimately is not determined by other people. Only Jehovah can make an accurate "estimate of hearts." (Proverbs 21:2) Even Jesus was held of little account and was despised by men, but that did not affect the way Jehovah viewed him. (Isaiah 53:3) Although some may misjudge you, you can "pour out your heart" to Jehovah, confident that he understands you, "for not the way man sees is the way God sees, because mere man sees what appears to the eyes; but as for Jehovah, he sees what the heart is." (Psalm 62:8; 1 Samuel 16:7) If you persist in doing what is fine, those who have formed a bad impression of you may, in time, realize their error and



**Clarifying matters
in a spirit of love
and forgiveness can
lead to happy results**

change their opinion.—Galatians 6:9; 2 Timothy 2:15.

Do you remember Antonio, mentioned at the beginning of the article? He mustered up the courage to follow Scriptural advice, and he spoke with his friend Leonardo, asking what he had done to upset him. The result? Leonardo was flabbergasted. He replied that Antonio had done nothing at all to upset him and assured him that he had not meant to act any differently toward him. If he had seemed cool, maybe he was just lost in thought. Leonardo apologized that he had unwittingly hurt his friend's feelings and thanked him for bringing the matter to his attention. He added that in the future, he would be more careful so as not to give the same impression to others. All tension simply vanished, and the two friends proved to be just as close as ever.

It is never pleasant to feel misunderstood. However, if you take all possible steps to clarify matters and apply the Scriptural principles of love and forgiveness, in all likelihood, you too will attain the same good results.





WE WERE A TEAM

AS TOLD BY
MELBA BARRY

On July 2, 1999, my husband and I were at a large gathering of Jehovah's Witnesses, as we had been thousands of times in our 57 years of marriage.

Lloyd was delivering the final address at the district convention in Hawaii that Friday. Suddenly, he collapsed. Despite all efforts to revive him, he died.*

HOW precious are those Christian brothers and sisters in Hawaii who rallied around me and helped me cope with this tragedy! Lloyd had touched the lives of many of them, as well as of many others around the world.

In the nearly two years since his death, I have thought about our precious years together—many in a foreign missionary assignment as well as at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. I have also reminisced on my early life in Syd-

ney, Australia, and the challenges Lloyd and I faced in order to get married during the early part of World War II. First, though, let me tell you how I became a Witness and how I met Lloyd back in 1939.

How I Became a Witness

James and Henrietta Jones were my loving and caring parents. I was only 14 when I finished school in 1932. The world was then in the middle of the Great Depression. I began working to help the family, which included my two younger sisters. Within a few years, I had a well-paying job with several young women working under me.

* See *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1999, pages 16 and 17.

Meanwhile, in 1935, Mother accepted Bible literature from one of Jehovah's Witnesses and was soon convinced that she had found the truth. The rest of us thought she was going crazy. One day, however, I saw the booklet entitled *Where Are the Dead?* and was intrigued by the title. So I secretly read the booklet. That did it! Right away I began going with Mother to a midweek meeting called the Model Study. The booklet entitled *Model Study*—eventually there were three of them—contained questions and answers as well as scriptures to support the answers.

About that time, in April of 1938, Joseph F. Rutherford, a representative from the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses, visited Sydney. His public talk was the first I attended. It was supposed to have been held at the Sydney Town Hall, but opposers succeeded in having our use of the site canceled. Instead, the talk was given at the much larger Sydney Sports Ground. Because of the added publicity provided by the opposition, some 10,000 were in attendance, an amazing number considering that there were only 1,300 Witnesses in Australia at the time.

Shortly afterward, I shared in the field ministry for the first time—and without any training. When our group arrived at our preaching territory, the one taking the lead said to me, "That is your house over there." I was so nervous that when the lady answered the door, I asked, "Could you tell me the time, please?" She went inside, checked the time, and came back out and told me. That was it. I went back to the car.

However, I did not give up, and soon I was regularly sharing the Kingdom message with others. (Matthew 24:14) In March 1939, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by being baptized in the bathtub of our next-door neighbor, Dorothy Hutchings. Because there were no brothers available,

soon after my baptism, I was given congregational responsibilities ordinarily reserved for Christian men.

We generally held our meetings in private homes, but at times we rented a hall for public talks. A handsome young brother from Bethel, our branch office, came to our little congregation to give a talk. Unbeknownst to me, he had another reason for coming—to look me over. Yes, that was how I met Lloyd.

*With mother
in 1956*



Meeting Lloyd's Family

Soon I had the desire to serve Jehovah full-time. However, when I applied to pioneer (engage in the full-time preaching work), I was asked if I would like to serve at Bethel. So in September 1939, the month World War II began, I became a member of the Bethel family in Strathfield, a suburb of Sydney.

In December 1939, I traveled to New Zealand for a convention. Since Lloyd was from New Zealand, he was going there too. We traveled on the same ship, and we got to know each other better. Lloyd made sure that I met his mum and dad and sisters at the convention in Wellington and later at their home in Christchurch.

Banning of Our Work

On Saturday, January 18, 1941, the Commonwealth authorities drove up to the branch office in some half-dozen black limousines to seize the property. Since I was working in the small guardhouse at the entryway to Bethel, I was the first to see them. Some 18 hours earlier, we had been notified of the ban, so almost all the literature and



With Lloyd and a group of Japanese publishers in the early 1950's

files had been cleared from the branch. The following week, five members of the Bethel family, including Lloyd, were put in prison.

I knew that what the brothers in prison needed most was spiritual food. To help out Lloyd, I decided to write him "love letters." I began in the fashion expected of such a letter, but then copied entire *Watchtower* articles and signed off as his sweetheart. After four and a half months, Lloyd was released.

Marriage and Continued Service

In 1940, Lloyd's mother visited Australia, and Lloyd told her that we were thinking of marriage. She advised him against it because the end of the system of things seemed imminent. (Matthew 24:3-14) He also mentioned his intentions to his buddies, but each time, they talked him out of getting married. Finally, one day in February 1942, Lloyd quietly took me—along with four Witnesses who had been sworn to secrecy—to the registry office, and we got married. There was no

With my first Bible student in Japan, Miyo Takagi, in the early 1950's and in 1999



provision then in Australia for Jehovah's Witnesses to perform marriages.

Although we were not allowed to continue our Bethel service as a married couple, we were asked if we would like to go into the special pioneer work. We happily accepted an assignment to a country town by the name of Wagga Wagga. Our preaching work was still under ban, and we had no financial assistance, so we really had to throw our burden on Jehovah.—Psalm 55:22.

We rode a tandem bicycle into the rurals, met some nice people, and had long talks with them. Not many accepted a Bible study. However, one storekeeper appreciated the work we were doing so much that he provided us with fruits and vegetables each week. After we had spent six months in Wagga Wagga, we were invited back to Bethel.

The Bethel family had vacated the Strathfield office in May 1942 and had relocated

into private homes. They moved from home to home every couple of weeks or so to avoid detection. When Lloyd and I returned to Bethel in August, we joined them at one of these locations. Our assignment during the day was to work in one of the underground printeries that had been established. Finally, in June 1943, the ban on our work was lifted.

Preparation for Foreign Service

In April 1947 we were given preliminary applications to attend the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, located in South Lansing, New York, U.S.A. In the meantime, we were assigned to visit congregations in Australia to strengthen them spiritually. After a few months, we received our invitation to attend the 11th class of Gilead. We had three weeks to put our affairs in order and to pack our belongings. We left family and friends in December 1947 and headed for New York with 15 others from Australia who were invited to the same class.

Our few months at Gilead School flew by, and we received a missionary assignment to Japan. Since it took time to get our papers ready to go to Japan, Lloyd was once again assigned as a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses. The congregations that we were assigned to visit stretched from the city of Los Angeles down to the Mexican border. We had no car, so each week the Witnesses lovingly transported us from one congregation to the next. The area covered by that vast circuit now makes up parts of three English and three Spanish *districts*, each district being made up of about ten circuits!

Suddenly, it was October 1949, and we were on our way to Japan on a converted troopship. One end of the ship was set aside for men and the other for women and children. Just one day before we were to arrive in Yokohama, we encountered a typhoon. Evi-

dently it cleared the air, for when the sun rose the next day, October 31, we could see Mount Fuji in all her glory. What a grand welcome to our new assignment!

Working With the Japanese

As we got close to the docks, we saw hundreds of black-haired people. 'What a noisy bunch!' we thought as we heard a tremendous clattering noise. Everyone wore wooden clogs that clattered on the wooden wharves. After a night in Yokohama, we caught the train to our missionary assignment in Kobe. There Don Haslett, a Gilead classmate who had arrived in Japan a few months earlier, had rented a missionary home. It was a beautiful, big, Western-style, two-story house—totally bare!

To provide padding on which to sleep, we cut the tall grass in the yard and put it on the floor. Thus began our missionary life, with nothing but what we had in our luggage. We obtained small charcoal burners, called *hibachi*, to provide heat and to cook on. One night, Lloyd found two fellow missionaries, Percy and Ilma Iszlaub, unconscious. He was able to revive them by opening the windows to let in some fresh, cold air. I too once passed out while cooking on the charcoal burners. Some things took a little getting used to!

Learning the language was a priority, and we studied Japanese 11 hours a day for a month. Afterward, we headed out in the ministry with a sentence or two written down to get us started. On my very first day out, I met a lovely lady, Miyo Takagi, who received me kindly. During return visits, we struggled with the help of Japanese-English dictionaries until a fine Bible study developed. In 1999, while attending the dedication of the expanded branch facility in Japan, I saw Miyo again, as well as a number

of other dear ones with whom I had studied. Fifty years have passed, but they are still zealous Kingdom proclaimers, doing what they can to serve Jehovah.

In Kobe on April 1, 1950, some 180 attended our observance of the Memorial of Christ's death. To our surprise, the next morning 35 persons showed up to share in the field ministry. Each missionary took three or four of these new ones along in the service. Householders did not speak to me—the foreigner who understood little—but rather to the Japanese Memorial attenders who accompanied me. The conversations went on and on, but I had no idea what they were talking about. I am happy to say that some of these new ones progressed in knowledge and have continued in the preaching work down to this day.

Many Privileges and Assignments

We continued in our missionary work in Kobe until 1952, at which time we were assigned to Tokyo, where Lloyd was entrusted with oversight of the branch office. In time, his work assignments took him throughout Japan and to other countries. Later, on one of his visits to Tokyo, Nathan H. Knorr from world headquarters said to me: "By the way, do you know where your husband is going on his next zone trip? Australia and New Zealand." He added: "You can go, too, if you pay your own way." What excitement! After all, it had been nine years since we left home.

A flurry of letter writing quickly followed. My mother helped me get my ticket. Lloyd and I had been busy in our assignments, and we did not have the wherewithal to visit our families. So this was an answer to my prayers. As you can imagine, Mother was very happy to see me. She said, "Well, I'm going to save up for you to come again in three years' time." We parted with that in mind, but sad to say, she passed away the following July.

What a wonderful reunion I hope to have with her in the new world!

Up until 1960 the missionary work was my only assignment, but then I received a letter explaining: "The arrangement from this date will be for you to do the laundry and ironing for the whole Bethel family." Our family then included only about a dozen people, so I was able to care for this work in addition to my missionary assignment.

In 1962 our Japanese-style home was demolished, and a new six-story Bethel Home was completed on the site the next year. I was assigned to help the young, new Bethel brothers to keep their rooms tidy and to clean up after themselves. Customarily, boys in Japan were not taught to do anything in the home. Emphasis was placed on secular education, and their mothers did everything for them. They soon learned that I was not their mother. In time, many progressed to take on new, responsible assignments within the organization.

One very hot summer day, a Bible student toured our facilities, and she saw me scrubbing the shower rooms. She said, "Please tell whoever is in charge that I would like to pay to have a maid come in to do this work for you." I explained to her that while I appreciated her

With Lloyd in
magazine work
in Japan



kind thought, I was more than willing to do anything I was assigned to do within Jehovah's organization.

About this time, Lloyd and I received an invitation to attend the 39th class of Gilead! What a privilege it was in 1964, at the age of 46, to be going to school again! The course was provided particularly to help those serving in the branch offices to care for their responsibilities. After the ten-month course, we were assigned back to Japan. By this time, we had over 3,000 Kingdom proclaimers in that country.

The growth gained such momentum that by 1972 there were over 14,000 Witnesses, and a new five-story branch office was built in Numazu, south of Tokyo. From our buildings, we had a spectacular view of Mount Fuji. Over a million magazines a month in the Japanese language began rolling off the huge new rotary printing press. But a change for us was in the offing.

Late in 1974, Lloyd received a letter from the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn that invited him to serve on the Governing Body. At first I thought: 'Well, this is it. Since Lloyd has the heavenly hope and I have the earthly hope, sooner or later we will have to part anyway. Perhaps Lloyd should go to Brooklyn without me.' But I soon readjusted my thinking and willingly made the move with Lloyd in March 1975.

Blessings at Headquarters

Even in Brooklyn, Lloyd's heart was very much in the Japan field, and he was always talking of the experiences that we had had there. But now there were opportunities for widening out. For the last 24 years of his life, Lloyd was used extensively for zone work, which involved worldwide travel. I accompanied him around the world several times.

Visiting our Christian brothers in other countries helped me appreciate the con-

ditions under which many of them live and work. I will never forget the face of ten-year-old Entellia, a girl whom I met in northern Africa. She loved God's name and walked an hour and a half each way to Christian meetings. In spite of severe persecution from her family, Entellia had dedicated herself to Jehovah. When we visited her congregation, there was just a single, low-wattage light bulb hanging over the speaker's notes—otherwise, the meeting place was pitch black. In all of that darkness, it was breathtaking to hear the beautiful singing of the brothers and sisters.

A highlight of our lives occurred in December 1998 when Lloyd and I were among a delegation to the "God's Way of Life" District Conventions held in Cuba. How impressed we were by the gratitude and joy the brothers and sisters there expressed at having some from the Brooklyn headquarters visit them! I treasure so many memories of meeting dear ones who are zealously giving a great shout of praise to Jehovah.

At Home With God's People

Although my native country is Australia, I came to love the people wherever I was sent by Jehovah's organization. That was true in Japan, and now that I have been in the United States for more than 25 years, I find it to be the same here. When I lost my husband, my thought was, not to return to Australia, but to stay at Brooklyn Bethel, where Jehovah has assigned me.

I am now in my 80's. After 61 years in the full-time ministry, I am still willing to serve Jehovah wherever he sees fit. He has truly taken good care of me. I treasure the more than 57 years during which I was able to share my life with a dear companion who loved Jehovah. I am confident of Jehovah's continued blessing upon us, and I know that He will not forget our work and the love that we have shown for his name.—Hebrews 6:10.

OBEDIENCE

An Important Childhood Lesson?

PARENTS Want Individuals, Not Kids Who Obey." So read a newspaper headline. This bit of reporting was based on the results of a survey done in New Zealand, which revealed that only "22 per cent of respondents thought children should be taught obedience at home." The survey also found that parents today believe that it is far more important to teach children such matters as good manners, independence, and responsibility.

In this age of individualism and self-interest, it is not surprising that most people hold a dim view of obedience and of teaching it to children. But is childhood obedience simply to be dismissed as something old-fashioned and out-of-date? Or is it among the important lessons that children can learn and benefit from? More important, how does Jehovah God, the Originator of the family arrangement, view obedience to parents, and what are some of the benefits that flow from such obedience?—Acts 17:28; Ephesians 3:14, 15.

"This Is Righteous"

To the first-century Christian congregation in Ephesus, the apostle Paul wrote: "Children, be obedient to your parents in union with the Lord, for this is righteous." (Ephesians 6:1) Thus, the primary reason for such obedience is that it is in harmony with the divine standard of what is right. As Paul put it, "this is righteous."

In line with this, we note that God's Word describes parental discipline in love

as an object of beauty, "a wreath of attractiveness to your head and a fine necklace to your throat," and as something "well-pleasing in the Lord." (Proverbs 1:8, 9; Colossians 3:20) In direct contrast, disobedience to parents elicits divine disapproval.—Romans 1:30, 32.

"That It May Go Well With You"

Paul pointed to another merit of obedience when he wrote: "Honor your father and your mother"; which is the first command with a promise: "That it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth." (Ephesians 6:2, 3; Exodus 20:12) In what ways may obedience to parents result in one's well-being?

To begin with, is it not true that parents have the advantage of age and experience? Though they may not appear to know much about computers or some other subjects taught in school, they do know much about living and coping with life's problems. Young people, on the other hand, lack the balanced thinking that comes with maturity. Thus, they tend to be rash in decision making,

often yielding to negative peer pressure, much to their own detriment. Realistically, the Bible says: "Foolishness is tied up with the heart of a boy." What is the remedy? "The rod of discipline is what will remove it far from him."—Proverbs 22:15.



The benefits of obedience go far beyond the parent-child relationship. For human society to function smoothly and productively, there must be cooperation, which in turn requires a measure of obedience. For example, in a marriage, it is readiness to yield, rather than being demanding and insensitive to the rights and feelings of others, that results in peace, harmony, and happiness. In the workplace, employee subordination is a requisite for any business or endeavor to succeed. In relation to governmental laws and regulations, obedience not only frees one from punishment but also brings at least a degree of safety and protection.—Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:21-25; 6:5-8.



Young people who disobey authority often become misfits in society. In contrast, the lesson of obedience learned in childhood can extend rewardingly throughout one's life. How advantageous to learn this in childhood!

The Grand Reward for Obedience

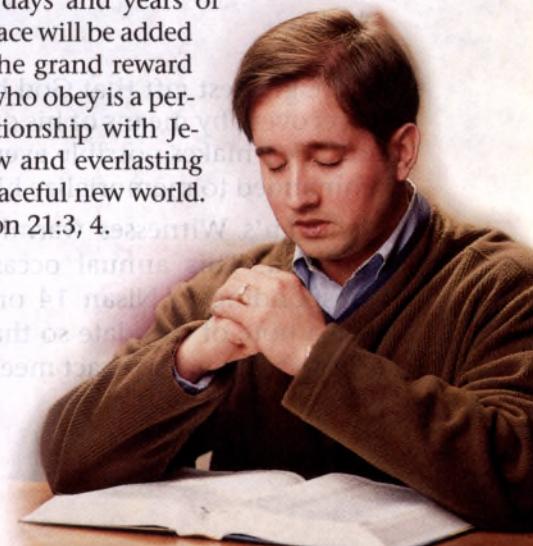
Obedience not only brings happy family relations and other lifelong benefits but also

Obedience brings happy relations in the family, at the workplace, and with Jehovah

provides the foundation upon which can be built the most vital relationship of all—that between a person and his Creator. As the “Grand Creator” with whom is “the source of life,” Jehovah God rightfully deserves our complete obedience.—Ecclesiastes 12:1; Psalm 36:9.

The word “obey” in its various forms occurs more than 160 times in the Bible. Additionally, there are hundreds of references to God’s laws, orders, commandments, judicial decisions, and regulations, all of which call for submission. We are left in no doubt that God views obedience as a requirement for enjoying his approval. Yes, obedience is an indispensable ingredient for building a relationship with Jehovah. (1 Samuel 15:22) Sadly, the natural human tendency is not obedience but disobedience. “The inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up,” says the Bible. (Genesis 8:21) Therefore, the lesson of obedience has to be learned not only in childhood but throughout life. Doing so brings a grand reward.

Recall that, as the apostle Paul put it, the command to be obedient to parents comes with a two-fold promise, namely, that “it may go well with you *and* you may endure a long time on the earth.” A confirmation of this promise is found at Proverbs 3:1, 2: “My son, my law do not forget, and my commandments may your heart observe, because length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you.” The grand reward for those who obey is a personal relationship with Jehovah now and everlasting life in a peaceful new world.
—Revelation 21:3, 4.





An Event You Should Not Miss

"Every good gift and every perfect present" comes down from God, our heavenly Father.

—James 1:17.



THE greatest gift that God has given to fallen mankind is the provision for their recovery by means of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The death of Jesus, our Ransomer, makes possible everlasting life on a paradise earth. At Luke 22:19, we are commanded to memorialize his death.

Jehovah's Witnesses warmly invite you to share with them in heeding Jesus' command. This annual occasion will be observed after sundown on the date corresponding to Nisan 14 on the Bible's lunar calendar—Sunday, April 8, 2001. Make a note of this date so that you will not forget it. Jehovah's Witnesses in your area can tell you the exact meeting place and time.