

JUNE 15, 2003

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Do You Believe That  
JESUS  
WALKED THE EARTH?**

# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

June 15, 2003

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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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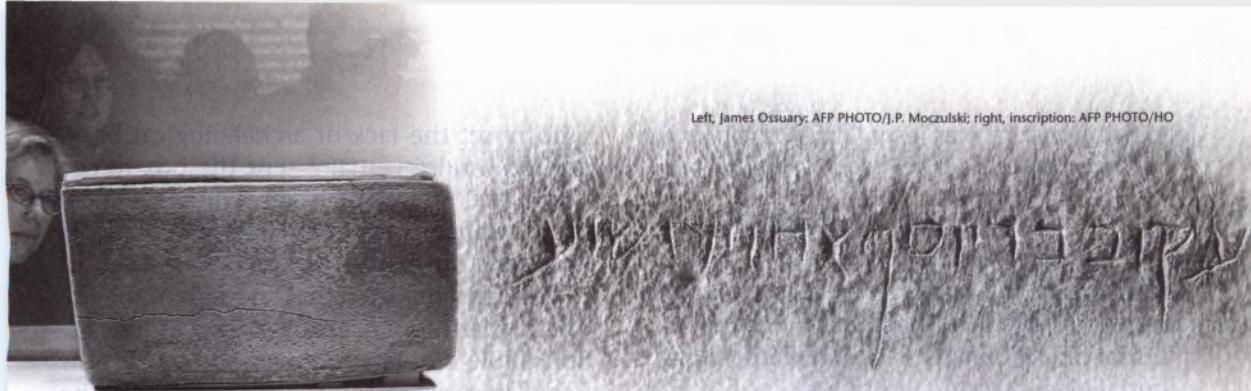
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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF JESUS' EXISTENCE?

**"E**VIDENCE of Jesus Written in Stone." So proclaimed the cover of *Biblical Archaeology Review* (November/December 2002). That cover featured a limestone bone box, an ossuary, that was found in Israel. Ossuaries were widely used among the Jews during the brief period between the first century B.C.E. and 70 C.E. What made this one especially significant was an Aramaic inscription on one side. Scholars acknowledged its reading: "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

According to the Bible, Jesus of Nazareth had a brother named James who was considered a son of Joseph, the husband of Mary. When Jesus Christ taught in his hometown, the astounded audience asked: "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?"—Matthew 13:54-56; Luke 4:22; John 6:42.

Yes, the inscription on the ossuary fits the description of Jesus the Nazarene. If the James mentioned in the inscription was the half brother of Jesus Christ, then it would be "the oldest extrabiblical archaeological evidence of Jesus," asserts André Le-

maire, an authority on ancient inscriptions and the writer of the aforementioned article in *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Hershel Shanks, editor of the magazine, notes that the ossuary "is something tactile and visible reaching back to the single most important personage ever to walk the earth."

However, all three names readable on the inscribed ossuary were common in the first century. So it is possible that a family whose members included a James, a Joseph, and a Jesus existed apart from the family of Jesus Christ. Lemaire estimates: "In Jerusalem during the two generations before 70 C.E., there were . . . probably about 20 people who could be called 'James/Jacob son of Joseph brother of Jesus.'" Nevertheless, he feels that there is a 90-percent chance that the James on the ossuary was the half brother of Jesus Christ.

There is another factor that makes some believe that the James in the inscription was Jesus Christ's half brother. Although it was common to mention the father of the deceased in such inscriptions, it was very rare to name a brother. Therefore, some scholars believe that this Jesus must have been somebody important, causing them

to think that he was Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity.

### Is the Ossuary Authentic?

What is an ossuary? It is a box, or chest, into which the bones of a deceased person were put after the body had decayed in a burial cave. Many ossuaries were looted from burial places around Jerusalem. The box with the James inscription emerged from the antiquities market, not from an official excavation site. The owner of the artifact is said to have bought it for a few hundred dollars in the 1970's. Thus, the origin of the ossuary is shrouded in mystery. "If you cannot say where an artifact was found and where it has been for nearly 2,000 years, you cannot pretend to draw the lines of connection between the object and the people it might mention," says Professor Bruce Chilton of Bard College, New York.

To offset the lack of archaeological background, André Lemaire sent the box to the Geological Survey of Israel. The researchers there verified that the ossuary was made of limestone from the first or second century C.E. They reported that "no sign of the use of a modern tool or instrument was found." Still, Bible scholars interviewed by *The New York Times* expressed the opinion that "the circumstantial evidence supporting a link to Jesus was possibly strong, but circumstantial nonetheless."

*Time* magazine commented that "almost no educated person these days doubts that Jesus lived." Still, many feel that there ought to be evidence in addition to the Bible of Jesus' existence. Should archaeology be the basis for one's belief in Jesus Christ? What evidence do we have of the historicity of "the single most important personage ever to walk the earth"?

## JESUS CHRIST EVIDENCE THAT HE WALKED THE EARTH

DO YOU believe in the existence of the man named Albert Einstein? You may readily answer yes, but why? Most people have not personally met him. Yet, reliable reports of his accomplishments prove that he did exist. The influence of his existence is felt through scientific applications of his discoveries. For instance, many benefit from electricity generated by nuclear energy, the release of which is closely linked with the application of Einstein's famous equation,  $E=mc^2$  (energy equals mass times the speed of light squared). The same reasoning applies to Jesus Christ, admittedly the most influential man in history. What was written about him



and the visible evidence of the influence he wielded prove beyond doubt that he did exist. As interesting as the recent archaeological finding of the James inscription, described in the preceding article, may be, Jesus' historicity does not depend on this or any other artifact. The fact is, we can find evidence of Jesus' existence in what secular historians wrote about him and his followers.

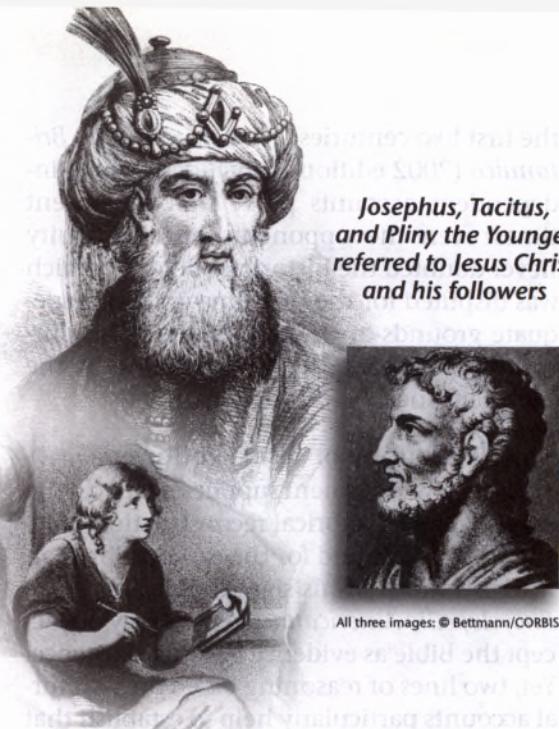
### Testimony of Historians

For instance, consider the testimony of Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian who was a Pharisee. He referred to Jesus Christ in the book *Jewish Antiquities*. Although some doubt the authenticity of the first reference where Josephus mentioned Jesus as the Messiah, Professor Louis H. Feldman of Yeshiva University says that few have doubted the genuineness of the second reference. There Josephus said: "[Ananus the high priest] convened the judges of the Sanhedrin and brought before them a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ." (*Jewish Antiquities*, XX, 200) Yes, a Pharisee, a member of the sect many of whose adherents were avowed enemies of Jesus, acknowledged the existence of "James, the brother of Jesus."

The influence of Jesus' existence was felt through the activities of his followers. When the apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome about 59 C.E., the principal men of the Jews told him: "As regards this sect it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against." (Acts 28:17-22) They called Jesus' disciples "this sect." If they were everywhere spoken against, secular historians would likely report about them, would they not?

Tacitus, born about 55 C.E. and considered one of the world's greatest historians, mentioned the Christians in his *Annals*. In the account about Nero's blaming the great fire of Rome in 64 C.E. on them, he wrote: "Nero

*Josephus, Tacitus,  
and Pliny the Younger  
referred to Jesus Christ  
and his followers*



All three images: © Bettmann/CORBIS

fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus." The details of this account match the information regarding the Jesus of the Bible.

Another writer who commented on Jesus' followers was Pliny the Younger, the governor of Bithynia. In about the year 111 C.E., Pliny wrote to Emperor Trajan, asking how to handle Christians. People who were falsely accused of being Christians, wrote Pliny, would repeat an invocation to the gods and worship the statue of Trajan, just to prove that they were not Christians. Pliny continued: "There is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians, into any of these compliances." That testifies to the reality of the existence of the Christ, whose followers were prepared to give their lives for their belief in him.

After summarizing the references to Jesus Christ and his followers by the historians of

the first two centuries, *The Encyclopædia Britannica* (2002 edition) concludes: "These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries."

### Testimony of Jesus' Followers

"The New Testament supplies nearly all the evidence for a historical reconstruction of Jesus' life and fate and for the earliest Christian interpretations of his significance," says *The Encyclopedia Americana*. Skeptics may not accept the Bible as evidence of Jesus' existence. Yet, two lines of reasoning based on Scriptural accounts particularly help to establish that Jesus actually walked the earth.

As we noted, Einstein's great theories prove his existence. Similarly, Jesus' teachings prove the reality of his existence. Take for example the Sermon on the Mount, a well-known discourse that Jesus gave. (Matthew, chapters 5-7) The apostle Matthew wrote of the impact of that sermon: "The crowds were astounded at his way of teaching; for he was teaching them as a person having authority." (Matthew 7:28, 29) Regarding the effect the sermon has had on people over the centuries, Professor Hans Dieter Betz noted: "The influences exerted by the Sermon on the Mount generally far transcend the borderlines of Judaism and Christianity, or even Western culture." He added that this sermon has "a peculiarly universalistic appeal."

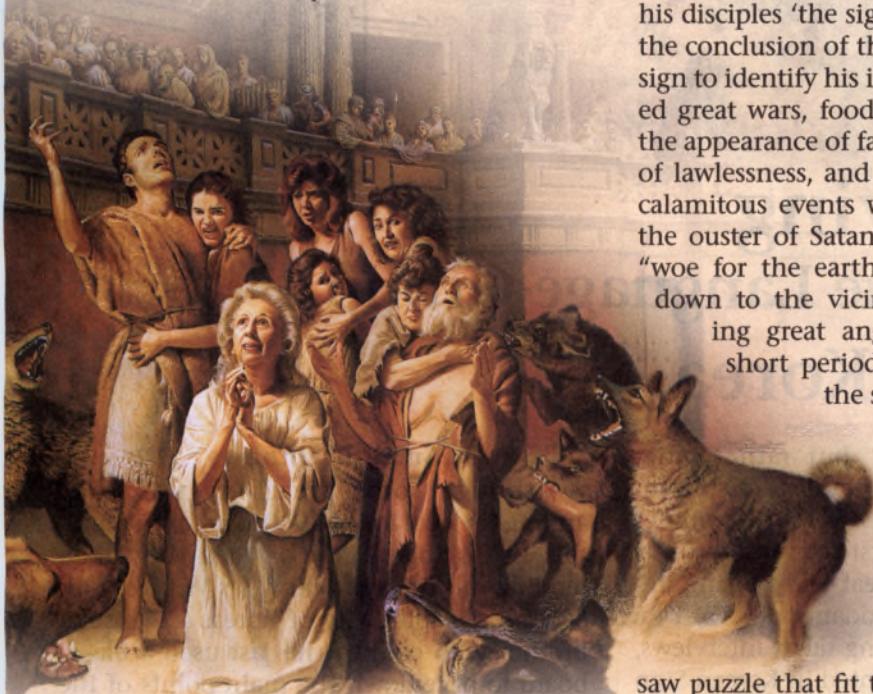
Consider the following concise and practical words of wisdom found in the Sermon on the Mount: "Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other also to him." "Take good care not to practice your righteousness in front of men." "Never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own

anxieties." "Do not . . . throw your pearls before swine." "Keep on asking, and it will be given you." "All things . . . that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." "Go in through the narrow gate." "By their fruits you will recognize them." "Every good tree produces fine fruit." —Matthew 5: 39; 6:1, 34; 7:6, 7, 12, 13, 16, 17.

No doubt you have heard some of these expressions or the gist of them. Perhaps they have become proverbs in your language. These are all taken from the Sermon on the Mount. The influence that this sermon has on many peoples and cultures eloquently testifies to the existence of "the great teacher."

Let us imagine that someone fabricated a figure called Jesus Christ. Suppose that person was clever enough to come up with the teachings credited to Jesus in the Bible. Would he not contrive to make Jesus and his teachings as palatable as possible to people in general? Yet, the apostle Paul observed: "Both the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks look for wisdom; but we preach Christ impaled, to the Jews a cause for stumbling but to the nations foolishness." (1 Corinthians 1: 22, 23) The message of Christ impaled was attractive neither to the Jews nor to the nations. That was, though, the Christ that first-century Christians proclaimed. Why the depiction of the Christ impaled? The only satisfactory explanation would be that the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures recorded the truth about Jesus' life and death.

Another line of reasoning supporting Jesus' historicity is found in the untiring preaching of his teachings by his followers. Only some 30 years after Jesus started his ministry, Paul could say that the good news "was preached in all creation that is under heaven." (Colossians 1:23) Yes, Jesus' teachings spread throughout the ancient world despite opposition. Paul, who was himself per-



secuted as a Christian, wrote: "If Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and our faith is in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:12-17) If preaching a Christ who had not been resurrected would be in vain, preaching a Christ who had never existed would be even more in vain. As we read in the report by Pliny the Younger, first-century Christians were willing to die for their belief in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for

**Early Christians were convinced that Jesus was real**  
Christ because he was real; he had walked the earth and had lived as the Gospel accounts record.

### You Have Seen Proof

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the prerequisite for Christian preaching. In your mind's eye, you too can envision the resurrected Jesus by seeing the impact he is making today.

Just before Jesus was impaled, he gave a grand prophecy about his future presence. He also indicated that he would be resurrected and would sit at God's right hand awaiting the time to deal with his enemies. (Psalm 110:1; John 6:62; Acts 2:34, 35; Romans 8:34) Thereafter, he would take action and oust Satan and his demons from the heavens.—Revelation 12:7-9.

When would all of that happen? Jesus gave his disciples 'the sign of his presence and of the conclusion of the system of things.' The sign to identify his invisible presence included great wars, food shortages, earthquakes, the appearance of false prophets, an increase of lawlessness, and severe pestilences. Such calamitous events were to be expected, for the ouster of Satan the Devil would mean "woe for the earth." The Devil has come down to the vicinity of the earth "having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time."

In addition, the sign includes the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom "in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations."—Matthew 24:3-14; Revelation 12:12; Luke 21:7-19.

Like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that fit together, the things that Jesus prophesied have occurred. Since the outbreak of World War I in 1914, we have seen the composite evidence of the invisible presence of Jesus Christ. He is reigning as the King of God's Kingdom and is wielding tremendous influence. That you have this magazine in your hand is evidence that the Kingdom preaching work is being carried out today.

To appreciate further the effect of Jesus' existence, you need to study the Bible. Why not ask Jehovah's Witnesses about the details of Jesus' presence?



# Serving a Unique Language Group in Korea

A VERY enthusiastic but rather quiet group assembled for a district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in the summer of 1997. This was the first convention of its kind in Korea for the deaf and hearing impaired. It had a peak attendance of 1,174. The entire program—including talks, interviews, and a drama—was presented in Korean Sign Language and projected on a large screen visible throughout the Assembly Hall. This was the climax of many years of hard work on the part of numerous volunteers.

The time will come in an earthly paradise when "the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped." (Isaiah 35:5) To experience life in that Paradise, everyone, including the deaf, must first enter into the spiritual paradise, the prosperous spiritual condition of God's blessed people. They must become dedicated, baptized Witnesses of Jehovah, being instructed by him.—Micah 4:1-4.

## Small Beginnings

Although some preaching was done among the deaf in the 1960's, it was not until the 1970's that a few of them began attending meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses in Seoul, the capital city of Korea. A Christian brother who could write fast used a blackboard to note down the main points of the talks, including the Bible texts used.

In 1971 in the city of Taejon, one Witness who had a deaf son began teaching him and his deaf friends the Kingdom message. From this group have come several zealous individuals who now serve as the backbone in the sign-language field.—Zechariah 4:10.

## Young Ones Offer Themselves Willingly

If deaf ones were to take in knowledge of Jehovah and Jesus and thus get on the road to life, considerable effort would have to be put forth by other volunteers. (John 17:3) To this

end, quite a few of Jehovah's Witnesses have learned sign language and have been blessed with enriching experiences.

One 15-year-old, Park In-sun, made it his goal to learn sign language. To do so, he became an apprentice in a factory where a group of 20 deaf individuals were employed. For eight months he worked closely with them in order to learn the language and the thinking of the deaf. The following year, he became a regular pioneer, or full-time Kingdom proclaimer, and worked with a group of deaf people who were interested in Bible truth. The group grew very rapidly, and soon more than 35 attended the Sunday meetings.  
—Psalm 110:3.

Thereafter, for the first time in Seoul, Christian meetings were arranged exclusively in sign language. Brother Park In-sun served as a special pioneer in this expanding group. He had now become proficient in sign language. During some months, he conducted 28 home Bible studies with deaf people. Many of these progressed and became Witnesses of Jehovah.

As a result of this very active volunteer work, the first sign-language congregation in Seoul was formed in October 1976, with 40 publishers and 2 regular pioneers. This spurred on the activity in other cities in Korea. Many deaf people were hungering for the good news and were waiting to be visited.

### Working Among the Deaf

You may wonder how the deaf were found. A number of them were contacted through referrals. Also, the owners of local rice shops were approached, and they provided the names and addresses of deaf people. Some government offices were helpful in providing such information. Diligent coverage of the territory where the deaf lived was so successful that, in time, four sign-language congregations were formed. Many Christian



youths were encouraged to learn sign language.

Special pioneer ministers who had learned sign language were assigned by the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses to work with the congregations. More recently, graduates of the Ministerial Training School have been assigned to these congregations and have strengthened them spiritually.

There are difficulties to be overcome. Serving in this territory requires putting forth effort to understand the culture of the deaf. They are very straightforward in thought and action. This sometimes surprises people and may cause misunderstandings. Furthermore, when Witnesses conduct home Bible studies with deaf people, there is a need to help them become proficient in their own language and to encourage them to expand their own program of reading and studying.

In their daily activities, the deaf face difficulties that are largely unknown to others. Communication in government offices and health-care facilities, as well as simple business transactions, often become major problems for them. Because Witnesses from

nearby congregations have offered loving assistance, deaf people in the Christian congregation have experienced real brotherhood.—John 13:34, 35.

### Informal Witnessing Brings Results

In Pusan, Korea's major southern port city, a Witness happened to meet two deaf individuals who wrote on a piece of paper: "We like Paradise. We want to know the scriptures that tell about everlasting life." The brother noted down their address and arranged to visit them. When he did so, he found a roomful of deaf ones waiting to hear the Kingdom message. This experience prompted him to begin learning sign language. Soon a sign-language congregation was formed in Pusan.

*Clockwise from below: Sign-language video being produced at the Korea branch; preparing signs for theocratic terms; sign-language translation team; prompting the signer during video production*



**Sign-language videos produced in Korea:**  
"What Does God Require of Us?,"  
"Appreciating Our Spiritual Heritage,"  
"Warning Examples for Our Day,"  
and "Respect Jehovah's Authority"

A brother from that congregation noticed two deaf persons signing to each other and approached them. Finding that they had just attended a religious meeting, he invited them to the Kingdom Hall at two in the afternoon of the same day. They came, and a Bible study was started. Shortly thereafter, the 2 attended the district convention along with 20 of their deaf friends. From that group, several have dedicated their lives to Jehovah. Two have become congregation elders and one a ministerial servant in sign-language congregations.



## Determination Is Rewarded

Since some deaf people live quite a distance from any sign-language congregation, great effort and determination are often required to provide them with regular spiritual nourishment from the Bible. For example, a 31-year-old man made a living by fishing off an island. He heard of the Bible's message from his younger brother, who had been contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses. In an effort to satisfy his spiritual hunger, the deaf fisherman traveled ten miles by boat to Tongyoung City, on the southern coast of Korea. That was in order to meet a special pioneer from the Masan City sign-language congregation. Every Monday, this special pioneer made a 40-mile trip just to conduct the Bible study with the deaf fisherman.

To attend the Sunday meeting in Masan City, the deaf Bible student had to travel 10 miles by boat and then take a bus for another 40 miles. His determination paid off. In a few months, he had improved in sign language, learned more Korean characters, and—most important—learned of the only way to build a relationship with Jehovah. Realizing the importance of meetings and regular witnessing, he moved to the territory of the sign-language congregation. Was that easy? No. He had to give up his fishing job that netted him up to \$3,800 dollars a month, but his determination was rewarded. After progressing in the truth, he was baptized and now happily serves Jehovah along with his family.

## Translation for the Deaf

The good news of the Kingdom is often conveyed by word of mouth. How-



ever, to convey the message from God's Word more accurately, it is essential that Bible teaching be presented in a more permanent form. Thus, in the first century, books and letters were written by experienced older men. (Acts 15:22-31; Ephesians 3:4; Colossians 1:2; 4:16) In our time, an abundance of spiritual food has been provided by means of books and other Christian publications. These have been translated into hundreds of languages, including various sign languages. To do this in Korean Sign Language, the branch office has a sign-language translation department. A video department produces sign-language videos. This provides spiritual sustenance for deaf proclaimers of the good news and interested ones in congregations throughout Korea.

Although many have become proficient in sign language and have assisted in producing videos, usually the best translators are children of deaf parents. They have learned sign language from infancy. These not only sign accurately but also give heartfelt meaning and emphasis to the message by their gestures and facial expressions, thus reaching the mind and the heart.

As noted, conventions and assemblies in sign language are now held on a regular basis in Korea. Much work, expense, and effort are needed to accomplish this. However, those in attendance appreciate this arrangement. After these gatherings conclude, many linger, wanting to continue the wholesome association and review the fine spiritual food provided. Clearly, serving in this unique group has its challenges, but the spiritual blessings make it worthwhile.

# IMITATE JEHOVAH, OUR IMPARTIAL GOD

*"There is no partiality with God."*—ROMANS 2:11.

CAMPED on the Plains of Moab in 1473 B.C.E., Israel listened attentively to Moses. A challenge lay ahead, beyond the Jordan River. Moses declared Jehovah's purpose to have Israel defeat the seven mighty Canaanite nations in the Promised Land. How reassuring were Moses' words: "Jehovah your God will certainly abandon them to you, and you must defeat them"! Israel was to conclude no covenant with them, and they merited no favor.—Deuteronomy 1:1; 7:1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Yet, Jehovah spared one family from the first city that Israel attacked. People from four other towns also received God's protection. Why was this? What do the remarkable events associated with the survival of these Canaanites teach us about Jehovah? And how can we imitate him?

## Reactions to Jehovah's Fame

<sup>3</sup> During Israel's 40 years in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land, Jehovah protected and fought for his people. To the south of the Promised Land, Israel faced the Canaanite king of Arad. With Jehovah's help the Israelites defeated him and his people at Hormah. (Numbers 21:1-3) Later, Israel skirted the land of Edom and journeyed northward to the northeast of the Dead Sea. In this area, formerly inhabited by Moab, there now were Amorites. Amorite King Sihon refused

1, 2. (a) What was Jehovah's purpose regarding the Canaanites in general? (b) What did Jehovah do, and what questions does this raise?

3, 4. News of the Israelites' victories had what effect on individuals in Canaan?

to allow Israel passage through his territory. Battle was joined at Jahaz, evidently north of the Torrent Valley of Arnon, where Sihon met his death. (Numbers 21:23, 24; Deuteronomy 2:30-33) Farther north, Og ruled over other Amorites in Bashan. Though Og was a giant, he proved no match for Jehovah. Og was killed at Edrei. (Numbers 21:33-35; Deuteronomy 3:1-3, 11) News of these victories coupled with stories of Israel's Exodus from Egypt had a powerful effect on individuals living in Canaan.\*

<sup>4</sup> When Israel first penetrated Canaan after crossing the Jordan, they set up camp at Gilgal. (Joshua 4:9-19) Not far away stood the walled city of Jericho. What Canaanite Rahab heard of Jehovah's actions stirred her to act in faith. As a result, when Jehovah brought destruction on Jericho, he spared her and those in her house.—Joshua 2:1-13; 6:17, 18; James 2:25.

<sup>5</sup> Next, Israel ascended from the lowlands near the river into the central hills of the region. Following Jehovah's direction, Joshua employed ambush tactics against the city of Ai. (Joshua, chapter 8) News of the ensuing rout prompted many of Canaan's kings to assemble for war. (Joshua 9:1, 2) The inhabitants of the nearby Hivite city of Gibeon reacted differently. "They, even of their own accord," relates Joshua 9:4, "acted with shrewdness." Like Rahab, they had heard of Jehovah's deliverance of his

\* Jehovah's fame later became the subject of sacred songs.—Psalm 135:8-11; 136:11-20.

5. What prompted the Gibeonites to act shrewdly?

### *Israel's conquest of Canaan begins*

people at the Exodus and at the defeat of Sihon and Og. (Joshua 9:6-10) The Gibeonites realized the futility of resistance. So on behalf of Gibeon and three nearby cities—Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim—they sent to Joshua at Gilgal a delegation disguised as though from a distant land. The stratagem succeeded. Joshua concluded a covenant with them that ensured their survival. Three days later Joshua and the Israelites learned that they had been tricked. Nevertheless, they had sworn by Jehovah to the covenant and thus held to it. (Joshua 9:16-19) Did Jehovah approve?

<sup>6</sup> The Gibeonites were allowed to become woodcutters and water carriers for the Israelites, even "for Jehovah's altar" at the tabernacle. (Joshua 9:21-27) More than that, when five Amorite kings and their armies threatened the Gibeonites, Jehovah miraculously intervened. Hailstones killed more of the enemy than did Joshua's troops. Jehovah even answered Joshua's plea for the sun and the moon to stand still to allow for a complete rout. "No day has proved to be like that one, either before it or after it," noted Joshua, "in that Jehovah listened to the voice of a man, for Jehovah himself was fighting for Israel." —Joshua 10:1-14.

<sup>7</sup> Canaanite Rahab and her family, as well as the Gibeonites, feared Jehovah and acted accordingly. What happened to them clearly demonstrates a truth that the Christian apostle Peter later stated: "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." —Acts 10:34, 35.

6. How did Jehovah react to the covenant that Joshua concluded with the Gibeonites?

7. What truth acknowledged by Peter was demonstrated in the case of certain Canaanites?



### **Dealings With Abraham and Israel**

<sup>8</sup> The disciple James drew attention to God's undeserved kindness in His dealings with Abraham and his offspring. It was Abraham's faith, not his ethnic origin, that made him "Jehovah's friend." (James 2:23) Abraham's faith and love for Jehovah brought blessings to his descendants. (2 Chronicles 20:7) Jehovah promised Abraham: "I shall surely bless you and I shall surely multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand that are on the seashore." But note the promise in the next verse: "By means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves." —Genesis 22:17, 18; Romans 4:1-8.

<sup>9</sup> Far from showing partiality, Jehovah demonstrated by his dealings with Israel what he can do for those who obey him. Such dealings are an example of how Jehovah expresses loyal love toward his faithful servants. Although Israel was Jehovah's "special property," this did not mean that other peoples were excluded from experiencing God's benevolence. (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6-8) True, Jehovah repurchased Israel from slavery in Egypt and consequently

8, 9. How is Jehovah's impartiality shown in his dealings with Abraham and with the nation of Israel?

declared: "You people only have I known out of all the families of the ground." But through the prophet Amos and others, Jehovah also held out a wonderful prospect for people of "all the nations."—Amos 3:2; 9:11, 12; Isaiah 2:2-4.

### Jesus, the Impartial Teacher

<sup>10</sup> During his earthly ministry, Jesus, who is the exact representation of his Father, imitated Jehovah's impartiality. (Hebrews 1:3) His primary concern at the time was to find "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Yet, he did not hold back from witnessing to a Samaritan woman at a well. (Matthew 15:24; John 4:7-30) He also performed a miracle at the request of an army officer, apparently a non-Jew. (Luke 7:1-10) That was in addition to demonstrating by his actions his love for God's people. Jesus' disciples preached far and wide too. It became clear that the criterion for receiving Jehovah's blessing was linked, not to nationality, but to attitude. Humble, honesthearted people who were hungry for the truth responded to the Kingdom good news. In contrast, the proud and haughty despised Jesus and his message. "I publicly praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth," Jesus declared, "because you have carefully hidden these things from wise and intellectual ones, and have revealed them to babes. Yes, O Father, because to do thus came to be the way approved by you." (Luke 10:21) When we deal with others on the basis of love and faith, we act impartially, knowing that this is the way Jehovah approves.

<sup>11</sup> In the early Christian congregation, Jews and non-Jews were equal. "Glory and honor and peace for everyone who works what is good," explained Paul, "for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For there is no partiality."  
10. How did Jesus imitate his Father in showing impartiality?  
11. How was impartiality demonstrated in the early Christian congregation?

with God."\* (Romans 2:10, 11) What determined whether they benefited from Jehovah's undeserved kindness was, not their ethnic origin, but their reaction upon learning about Jehovah and the prospects offered by the ransom of his Son, Jesus. (John 3:16, 36) Paul wrote: "He is not a Jew who is one on the outside, nor is circumcision that which is on the outside upon the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one on the inside, and his circumcision is that of the heart by spirit, and not by a written code." Then, using a play on words involving the term "Jew" (meaning "of Judah," that is, lauded or praised), Paul added: "The praise of that one comes, not from men, but from God." (Romans 2:28, 29) Jehovah extends praise impartially. Do we?

<sup>12</sup> Later, in a vision, the apostle John saw the faithful anointed Christians depicted as a spiritual nation of 144,000, "sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel." After these, John caught sight of "a great crowd . . . out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands." (Revelation 7:4, 9) Thus, no ethnic group or language is excluded from the modern-day Christian congregation. Individuals from all backgrounds have the prospect of surviving the coming "great tribulation" and drinking from "fountains of waters of life" in the new world.—Revelation 7:14-17.

### Positive Effects

<sup>13</sup> Jehovah knows us well, as a good father does his children. Likewise, when we come to

\* Here, the expression "Greeks" refers to Gentiles in general.—*Insight on the Scriptures*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, Volume 1, page 1004.

12. Revelation 7:9 offers what prospect, and to whom?

13-15. (a) How can we overcome racial and cultural differences? (b) Cite examples of the benefits that showing friendliness can bring.



*Jesus did not hold back from witnessing to a Samaritan woman*

understand others by taking an interest in their culture and background, differences tend to pale into insignificance. Ethnic barriers melt, and bonds of friendship and love are strengthened. Unity is enhanced. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) This is well demonstrated by the activity of missionaries who serve in foreign assignments. They take an interest in the people who live there, and as a result, the missionaries soon find that they blend into local congregations.—Philippians 2:4.

<sup>14</sup> The positive effects of being impartial shine forth in many lands. Aklilu, who hails from Ethiopia, found himself lonely in Britain's capital, London. His feelings of loneliness were compounded by what seemed to him to be a general lack of friendliness toward people from other countries, something sensed in many large cities of modern Europe. How different Aklilu's experience was when he attended a Christian meeting at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses! Those present welcomed him, and it was not long before he felt at home. He made rapid progress in deepening his appreciation for the Creator. He soon sought opportunities to share in spreading the Kingdom good news to others in that district. Indeed, one

day when Aklilu's preaching companion asked him what goals he now had in life, Aklilu readily responded that he hoped someday to be part of a congregation that spoke his language, Amharic. When the elders of the local English-speaking congregation learned of this, they happily arranged for a public Bible discourse in Aklilu's native tongue. The invitation to attend brought scores of foreigners and local people together to support the first Amharic public meeting in Britain. Today, Ethiopians and others in that area are united in a thriving congregation. Many there have found that nothing prevents them from taking a stand for Jehovah and symbolizing this by Christian baptism.—Acts 8:26-36.

<sup>15</sup> Characteristics and backgrounds vary. They are no measure of superiority or of inferiority; they are simply differences. When watching the baptism of newly dedicated servants of Jehovah on the island of Malta, the local Witnesses' joyful exuberance complemented the tears of joy that welled up in the eyes of visitors from Britain. Both the Maltese and the British groups expressed their feelings but in different ways, and their strong love for Jehovah cemented the bonds of Christian fellowship.—Psalm 133:1; Colossians 3:14.

### Overcoming Prejudice

<sup>16</sup> As our love for Jehovah and for our Christian brothers deepens, we can more closely imitate Jehovah in the way we view

16-18. Relate an experience that demonstrates how prejudice can be overcome in the Christian congregation.



An Amharic public meeting in Britain

others. Any prejudice we may once have felt toward certain nationalities, races, or cultures can be overcome. Take, for example, the case of Albert who served in the British Army during World War II and who was captured by the Japanese at the fall of Singapore in 1942. He later spent some three years working on the "death railroad," near what became known as the bridge over the river Kwai. On his release at the end of the war, he weighed 70 pounds, had a broken jaw and nose, and suffered from dysentery, ringworm, and malaria. Thousands of his fellow prisoners fared worse; many did not survive. As a result of the atrocities that Albert had seen and experienced, he returned home in 1945 a bitter man, wanting nothing to do with God or religion.

<sup>17</sup> Albert's wife, Irene, became one of Jeho-

vah's Witnesses. To please her, Albert attended a few meetings of the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. A young Christian in the full-time ministry named Paul visited Albert to study the Bible with him. Albert soon came to realize that Jehovah looks at individuals according to their heart condition. He dedicated his life to Jehovah and got baptized.

<sup>18</sup> Paul later moved to London, learned Japanese, and associated with a Japanese-speaking congregation. When he suggested taking some visiting Japanese Witnesses to his former congregation, the brothers there called to mind Albert's strong prejudice against people from that background. Since his return to Britain, Albert had avoided coming face-to-face with anyone from Japan, so the brothers wondered how he would handle the situation. They need not have worried—Albert received the visitors with unconditional brotherly affection.—1 Peter 3:8, 9.

#### "Widen Out"

<sup>19</sup> "The showing of partiality is not good," wrote wise King Solomon. (Proverbs 28:21) It is easy to feel close to those whom we know well. Sometimes, however, we tend to show

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19. What advice of the apostle Paul can help us if we have any trace of partiality?



*Albert's love for Jehovah helped him overcome prejudice*

little interest in those whom we do not know well. Such partiality does not befit a servant of Jehovah. Certainly, we would all do well to follow Paul's clear advice to "widen out"—yes, widen out in our love for fellow Christians from different backgrounds.—2 Corinthians 6:13.

<sup>20</sup> Whether we have the privilege of the heavenly calling or the prospect of living forever on earth, our being impartial enables us to enjoy the unity of one flock, one Shepherd. (Ephesians 4:4, 5, 16) Endeavoring to imitate Jehovah, our impartial God, can help

20. In what areas of life should we imitate Jehovah, our impartial God?

us in our Christian ministry, within our families, and in the congregations, indeed, in all areas of life. How so? The following article will address this subject.

### How Would You Answer?

- How did Jehovah demonstrate impartiality toward Rahab and the Gibeonites?
- How did Jesus demonstrate impartiality in his teaching?
- What can help us overcome any cultural and racial prejudice?

## LOOK FOR THE GOOD IN ALL

*"Do remember me, O my God, for good."*—NEHEMIAH 13:31.

AFTER many cloudy and gray days, sunshine brings a welcome change. Spirits soar, and people experience a good feeling. Likewise, following long periods of blazing sunshine and dry weather, a shower of rain—even a cloudburst—provides refreshment and relief. Our loving Creator, Jehovah, has built into earth's atmosphere this wonderful gift of weather. Jesus drew attention to God's bounty when he taught: "Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you; that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens, since he makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous." (Matthew 5:43-45) Yes, Jehovah acts with goodness toward all. His servants should strive to imitate him by looking for the good in others.

1. How does Jehovah act with goodness toward all?

<sup>2</sup> On what basis does Jehovah act with goodness? Ever since Adam's fall into sin, Jehovah has not failed to look for the good in humans. (Psalm 130:3, 4) His purpose is to restore obedient mankind to life in Paradise. (Ephesians 1:9, 10) His undeserved kindness has given us the prospect of deliverance from sin and imperfection through the promised Seed. (Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:12, 15) Acceptance of the ransom arrangement paves the way for an eventual return to perfection. Jehovah is now observing each of us to see, among other things, our reaction to his generosity. (1 John 3:16) He notices whatever we do to demonstrate our appreciation for his goodness. "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for

2. (a) On what basis does Jehovah act with goodness? (b) What notice does Jehovah take of how we respond to his goodness?

*Despite his brothers' earlier hatred toward him, Joseph looked for their good*



his name," wrote the apostle Paul.—Hebrews 6:10.

<sup>3</sup> How, then, can we imitate Jehovah in looking for the good in others? Let us consider answers to this question in four areas of life: (1) the Christian ministry, (2) the family, (3) the congregation, and (4) our relationships with others.

### In Preaching and Disciple Making

<sup>4</sup> "The field is the world," Jesus explained in answer to his disciples' queries about the meaning of the parable of the wheat and the weeds. As Christ's modern-day disciples, we recognize this truth when engaging in our ministry. (Matthew 13:36-38; 28:19, 20) Our field ministry involves the public declaration of our faith. The very fact that Jehovah's Witnesses are now well-known for their ministry from house to house and on the streets testifies to our diligence in

3. What question deserves our consideration?
4. How is participation in the Christian ministry an expression of looking for the good in others?

seeking out all who are deserving of the Kingdom message. Indeed, Jesus instructed: "Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is deserving."—Matthew 10:11; Acts 17:17; 20:20.

<sup>5</sup> When making uninvited calls on people, we observe their reaction to our message. Sometimes we find that one member of a household will give us a hearing ear, while another from within the home calls out, "We are not interested," and the visit ends. How sorry we feel that opposition or lack of interest on the part of one person affects the response of another! What, then, can we do to persevere in looking for the good in all?

<sup>6</sup> Our next visit to the home when we preach in that area may provide an opportunity to speak directly to the person who curtailed the earlier visit. Remembering what happened at that time can help us to prepare. The opposer may have acted with good motives, believing that he should

- 5, 6. Why do we persevere in making repeated visits to people in their homes?

stop the responsive one from listening to the Kingdom message. His views were perhaps shaped by false information about our intentions. But that does not prevent us from persisting in preaching the Kingdom good news at that home, tactfully trying to correct misunderstandings. We are interested in helping all to come to an accurate knowledge of God. Then perhaps Jehovah will draw that person to him.—John 6:44; 1 Timothy 2:4.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus' instructions to his disciples took into account family opposition. Did he not state: "I came to cause division, with a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a young wife against her mother-in-law"? Jesus added: "A man's enemies will be persons of his own household." (Matthew 10:35, 36) Yet, circumstances and attitudes change. A sudden illness, loss of a relative, disasters, emotional crises, and countless other factors influence people's reaction to our preaching. If we have a negative view—that the people to whom we preach will remain unresponsive—are we really looking for the good in them? Why not joyfully revisit their homes on another occasion? We may find a different reaction. Sometimes it is not only what we say but the way we say it that elicits a changed response. Fervent prayer to Jehovah before we start preaching will surely help us to be positive and to present the Kingdom message in an appealing way to all.—Colossians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

7. What can help us to be positive when we approach people?



*Opposition does not prevent us from trying to help all*

<sup>8</sup> In some congregations many members of the same family serve Jehovah. Often what captured the admiration and respect of younger ones was the perseverance of an older relative whose good relationships within the family and within the marriage bond paved the way for a change of heart in the younger ones. Heeding the apostle Peter's counsel has helped many a Christian wife to win her husband "without a word."—1 Peter 3:1, 2.

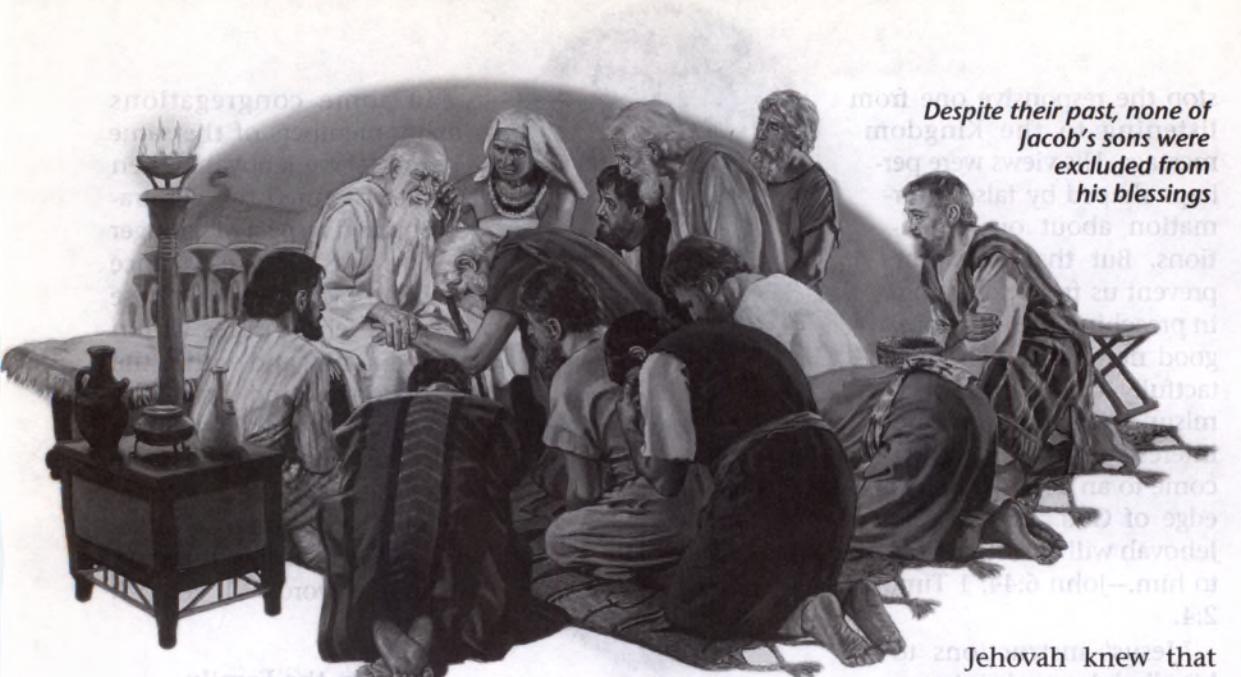
### In the Family

<sup>9</sup> The close ties that link members of a family together provide another area in which we can look for the good in others. Consider a lesson from Jacob's dealings with his sons. At Genesis chapter 37, verses 3 and 4, the Bible indicates that Jacob especially loved Joseph. Joseph's siblings reacted jealously, even to the point of conspiring to murder their brother. However, note the attitudes of Jacob and Joseph later in their lives. Both looked for the good in their family.

<sup>10</sup> When Joseph was serving as chief food administrator in famine-stricken Egypt, he welcomed his brothers. While not immediately revealing his identity, he maneuvered events to ensure that they were well cared for and had food to take back to their aging father. Yes, despite having been the victim of their hatred, Joseph acted in their best interests. (Genesis 41:53-42:8; 45:23) Likewise, on

8. What can result when Christians look for the good in their unbelieving relatives?

9, 10. How did both Jacob and Joseph look for the good in their family?



*Despite their past, none of Jacob's sons were excluded from his blessings*

his deathbed Jacob pronounced prophetic blessings on all his sons. Though their wrong actions resulted in the curtailment of some privileges, no one was excluded from receiving an inheritance in the land. (Genesis 49:3-28) What a wonderful expression of enduring love Jacob there demonstrated!

<sup>11</sup> Jehovah's long-suffering in dealing with the faithless nation of Israel provides further insight into how he looks for the good in his people. Using the family circumstances of the prophet Hosea, Jehovah illustrated his enduring love. Gomer, Hosea's wife, committed repeated acts of adultery. Despite that, Jehovah instructed Hosea: "Go once again, love a woman loved by a companion and committing adultery, as in the case of Jehovah's love for the sons of Israel while they are turning to other gods and are loving raisin cakes." (Hosea 3:1) Why such instructions?

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11, 12. (a) What prophetic example emphasizes the importance of looking for the good within the family? (b) What lesson do we learn from the example of the father in Jesus' illustration of the prodigal son?

Jehovah knew that from among the nation that had strayed from his ways, individuals would respond to his forbearance. Hosea declared: "Afterwards the sons of Israel will come back and certainly look for Jehovah their God, and for David their king; and they will certainly come quivering to Jehovah and to his goodness in the final part of the days." (Hosea 3:5) Surely this is a fine example on which to reflect when faced with family difficulties. Your continuing to look for the good in other family members will at least set a fine example in forbearance.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus' parable of the prodigal son offers yet more insight into how we can look for the good in connection with our own family. The younger son returned home after he quit his profligate life. The father treated him mercifully. How did the father react to complaints from the older son who had never left his family? Addressing his older son, the father declared: "Child, you have always been with me, and all the things that are mine are yours." This was no bitter rebuff but simply confirmation of the father's love. "We just had to enjoy ourselves and rejoice," he con-

## Welcome all at Christian meetings

tinued, "because this your brother was dead and came to life, and he was lost and was found." We can similarly keep looking for the good in others.—Luke 15:11-32.

### In the Christian Congregation

<sup>13</sup> As Christians, we aim to practice the kingly law of love. (James 2:1-9) True, we may accept members of our congregation whose situation differs from ours materially. But do we have "class distinctions" based on racial, cultural, or even religious backgrounds? If so, how can we take James' counsel to heart?

<sup>14</sup> Welcoming all who attend Christian meetings gives evidence of our largeheartedness. When we take the initiative to speak to new ones who visit the Kingdom Hall, any initial nervousness and self-consciousness on their part may well disappear. Indeed, some who attend a Christian meeting for the very first time remark: "Everyone was so friendly. It seemed as though everyone knew me already. I felt at home."

<sup>15</sup> In some congregations, a few youths may gather together inside or outside the Kingdom Hall at the end of a meeting, shying away from association with older ones. How might something positive be done to overcome this trend? A first step, of course, is for parents to train their children at home, preparing them for meetings. (Proverbs 22:6) They can be given the task of getting various publications ready so that all will have what is needed to take along with them to meetings. Parents are also in the best position to encourage their children to share a few thoughts with older and infirm ones at the Kingdom Hall. Having something pur-

13, 14. What is one way to practice the kingly law of love within the Christian congregation?

15. How can young ones in the congregation be helped to show an interest in the older ones?



poseful to say to such ones can give children a feeling of satisfaction.

<sup>16</sup> Older brothers and sisters should take an interest in the young ones in the congregation. (Philippians 2:4) They could take the initiative to speak to young ones in an encouraging way. Usually some outstanding points are developed during the meeting. Young ones could be asked if they enjoyed the meeting and whether there were any points that they especially appreciated and that could be applied. As an integral part of the congregation, youths should be given recognition for their attentiveness and commended for any comments they make during the meeting or for any share they have in program parts. The way in which youths interact with older ones in the congregation and the way they take care of simple chores at home will indicate that they can likely care well for greater responsibilities later on in life.—Luke 16:10.

<sup>17</sup> By accepting responsibility, some youngsters progress to the point where their

16, 17. How can adults look for the good in younger ones in the congregation?

spiritual qualities enable them to receive weightier assignments. Having something to do may also help to stifle foolish conduct. (2 Timothy 2:22) Such assignments may ‘test as to fitness’ brothers who are reaching out to serve as ministerial servants. (1 Timothy 3:10) Their ready participation at the meetings and their zeal in the ministry, as well as their caring attitude toward all in the congregation, enable the elders to discern their potential when considering them for additional assignments.

### Looking for the Good in All

<sup>18</sup> “The showing of partiality in judgment is not good,” declares Proverbs 24:23. Heavily wisdom dictates that elders avoid partiality when judging matters in the congregation. James declared: “The wisdom from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, not making partial distinctions, not hypocritical.” (James 3:17) Obviously, while looking for the good in others, elders need to ensure that their judgment is not beclouded by personal relationships or emotions. “God is stationing himself in the assembly of the Divine One,” wrote the psalmist Asaph. “In the middle of the gods [‘godlike ones,’” footnote, referring to hu-

18. What pitfall as to judging is to be avoided, and why?

### How Would You Answer?

- On what basis does Jehovah act with goodness toward all?
- How can we look for the good in others
  - in our ministry?
  - in our family?
  - in our congregation?
  - in all our relationships?

man judges] he judges: ‘How long will you keep on judging with injustice and showing partiality to the wicked themselves?’” (Psalm 82:1, 2) Accordingly, Christian elders shun any hint of favoritism where matters involving a friend or relative are concerned. In this way they preserve the unity of the congregation and allow Jehovah’s spirit to flow freely.—1 Thessalonians 5:23.

<sup>19</sup> In looking for the good in our brothers and sisters, we reflect Paul’s attitude when he addressed the Thessalonian congregation. He said: “Moreover, we have confidence in the Lord regarding you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things we order.” (2 Thessalonians 3:4) We will be more inclined to cover over the faults of others when we look for the good in them. We will search out areas in which we can commend our brothers, certainly avoiding a critical spirit. “What is looked for in stewards,” wrote Paul, “is for a man to be found faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:2) The faithfulness not only of those having stewardship of the congregation but of all our Christian brothers and sisters endears them to us. We are thus drawn closer to them, strengthening the bonds of Christian friendship. We adopt a view like that of Paul toward brothers in his day. They are “fellow workers for the kingdom of God” and “a strengthening aid” to us. (Colossians 4:11) We thus manifest Jehovah’s attitude.

<sup>20</sup> Surely we echo Nehemiah’s prayer: “Do remember me, O my God, for good.” (Nehemiah 13:31) How glad we are that Jehovah looks for the good in people! (1 Kings 14:13) May we act likewise in our dealings with others. Doing so offers us the prospect of redemption and life eternal in the new world now so near.—Psalm 130:3-8.

19. In what ways can we look for the good in others?

20. What blessings will come to those who look for the good in all?

# Gilead School

## 60 Years of Missionary Training



**B**ECAUSE of our intensive Bible study, we drew closer to Jehovah and learned more about his organization. This prepared us for life in a foreign assignment." That is how a graduate of the first class described the course of studies she followed at the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. Since its inauguration 60 years ago, Gilead School has been sending missionaries. On March 8, 2003, the graduation of the 114th class took place at the Watchtower Educational Center in Paterson, New York. The 6,404 who gathered in the auditorium and at satellite locations listened attentively to the program, which consisted of talks, interviews, and a group discussion.

Theodore Jaracz, a member of the Governing Body, was chairman. His opening remarks drew attention to the international character of the audience, which was made up of visitors from Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Europe. Centering his comments on 2 Timothy 4:5, Brother Jaracz highlighted the main work of a Gilead-trained missionary—to "do the work of an evangelizer." The missionaries bear witness to the truth by teaching people the Bible.

### Students Receive Final Instruction

Leading off a series of short talks, John Larson, a member of the United States Branch Committee, spoke on the faith-strengthening subject "If God Is for Us, Who Will Be Against Us?" (Romans 8:31) The speaker explained the Biblical basis for the students to have absolute confidence in Jehovah's power to help them overcome any obstacle that they might face in their assignments. Drawing on Romans 8:38, 39, Brother Larson admonished the students: "Stop and reflect on the power that God is using in your behalf, and remember that nothing can break Jehovah's personal attachment to you."

Next on the program was Guy Pierce, a member of the Governing Body. He chose the theme "Keep Your Eyes Happy!" (Luke 10:23) He explained that true happiness involves knowing Jehovah and understanding his eternal purpose as well as seeing the fulfillment of Bible prophecies. Wherever they go, the students can maintain real happiness by keeping their

eyes happy. Brother Pierce encouraged the graduates to meditate deeply on Jehovah's goodness and to keep their mind and heart fixed on doing His will. (Psalm 77:12) By maintaining a positive attitude, the graduates can overcome any problems that may come their way.

Then the class received parting words of encouragement from two of the instructors who had been teaching them on a daily basis. "Are You Seeking Glory?" was the question asked by Lawrence Bowen in the title of his talk. Most people think of glory in connection with praise, honor, and distinction for themselves. The

### CLASS STATISTICS

Number of countries represented: 12

Number of countries assigned to: 16

Number of students: 48

Average age: 34.4

Average years in truth: 17.6

Average years in full-time ministry: 13.5



### 114th Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Rosa, D.; Garrigolas, J.; Lindström, R.; Pavanello, P.; Tait, N. (2) Van Hout, M.; Donabauer, C.; Martínez, L.; Millar, D.; Festré, Y.; Nutter, S. (3) Martínez, P.; Clarke, L.; Maughan, B.; Fischer, L.; Romo, G. (4) Romo, R.; Eadie, S.; Tuynman, C.; Campbell, P.; Millar, D.; Rosa, W. (5) Lindström, C.; Garrigolas, J.; Markevich, N.; Lindala, K.; van den Heuvel, J.; Tait, S.; Nutter, P. (6) Maughan, P.; Pavanello, V.; Eadie, N.; West, A.; Clarke, D.; Markevich, J. (7) Fischer, D.; Donabauer, R.; Curry, P.; Curry, Y.; Carfagno, W.; West, M.; Tuynman, A. (8) Van Hout, M.; Campbell, C.; Festré, Y.; Carfagno, C.; van den Heuvel, K.; Lindala, D.

psalmist Asaph, however, came to appreciate real glory—the priceless treasure of a blessed relationship with Jehovah. (Psalm 73:24, 25) The graduating students were encouraged to maintain an intimate relationship with Jehovah through a continued deep study of the Bible. The angels “are desiring to peer” into the details regarding the outworking of Jehovah’s purpose through Christ. (1 Peter 1:12) They want to learn as much as possible about their Father so as to reflect his glory. Then the speaker urged the students to glorify Jehovah in their missionary assignments by helping others to find the treasure of priceless worth.

The school’s registrar, Wallace Liverance, brought the opening series of talks to a conclusion with the theme “Speak God’s Wisdom in a Sacred Secret.” (1 Corinthians 2:7) What is this godly wisdom about which the apostle Paul spoke during the course of his missionary service? It is Jehovah’s wise and powerful means to bring about universal peace and unity. This wisdom centers on Jesus. Rather than preaching a social gospel, Paul helped people to see how God would undo the consequences of Adam’s sin. (Ephesians 3:8, 9) The speaker exhorted his listeners: “Use your privilege of service as did Paul,

who saw his missionary assignment as an opportunity to help people to see how Jehovah would carry out his purpose."

Following this, Mark Noumair, another Gilead instructor, presided over an enthusiastic discussion with several students of the class. The theme "Study of God's Word Produces Zealous Ministers" highlighted Paul's words at Romans 10:10. The class related numerous field service experiences that they had enjoyed while attending the school. Their experiences demonstrated that when we study and meditate on God's Word, the good things concerning Jehovah God and his Kingdom will fill our heart and will be found on our lips. During their five-month stay at the Watchtower Educational Center, the students started more than 30 home Bible studies with interested ones in the well-worked territories of the nearby congregations.

### Mature Voices Speak Up

During their schooling, the students benefited from association with members of the United States Bethel family. Branch staff members Robert Ciranko and Robert P. Johnson conducted interviews with several long-time faithful servants of Jehovah, including traveling overseers currently receiving special training at the Watchtower Educational Center. All those interviewed were Gilead graduates who had at one time served as missionaries. It was reassuring for the students and their families and friends to hear words of wisdom from these seasoned spiritual men.

Their advice included: "Keep as busy as possible in the ministry and in the congregation." "Don't take yourself too seriously. Keep focused on your purpose as a missionary, and make your assignment your home." Other helpful comments illustrated how Gilead training equips a minister for good work, no matter where he is assigned. Here are

some of them: "We learned to cooperate and to work together." "The school helped us to accept new cultures." "We were taught to use the Scriptures on a new level."

John E. Barr, a longtime member of the Governing Body, gave the principal talk of the program. His Scriptural theme was "Into All the Earth Their Sound Went Out." (Romans 10:18) He posed the question, Have God's people been able to meet this challenge today? Yes, indeed! As far back as 1881, readers of the *Watchtower* magazine were asked: "Are you preaching?" Then the speaker reminded all in the audience of the historic call at the 1922 convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, U.S.A.: "Advertise the King and his Kingdom!" With the passing of time, the zeal of God's faithful servants moved them to declare the marvelous Kingdom truths to all the nations. By means of the printed page and by word of mouth, the utterances of the good news have reached the extremities of the inhabited earth—all to Jehovah's honor and praise. In a stirring conclusion, Brother Barr exhorted the graduates to count their blessings, saying: "Day by day, when you pray to Jehovah out in your assignment, thank him from the bottom of your heart for your part in the fulfillment of the words, 'Into all the earth their sound went out.'"

After this talk, greetings were read, and the chairman handed a diploma to each graduate. Then, with mixed feelings of joy and sadness at leaving the beloved school, a class representative read a heartfelt resolution addressed to the Governing Body and the Bethel family, expressing the determination of the graduates to bless Jehovah "from now on and to time indefinite."—Psalm 115:18.

We pray that these graduates will adjust to their new homes and make fine contributions to the progress of the worldwide preaching work, just as those who went out before them have done for some 60 years.

# ALEXANDER VI

## A Pope That Rome Does Not Forget

"FROM a Catholic standpoint, it is not possible to condemn Alexander VI with sufficient severity." (*Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters* [History of the Popes From the End of the Middle Ages]) "His private life is absolutely indefensible . . . We have to admit that this pontificate does no honor to the Church. The contemporaries of the Borgia family, though accustomed to similar spectacles, observed their crimes with unspeakable horror, the echoes of which, more than four centuries later, still have not completely died down."

—*L'Église et la Renaissance* (1449-1517) (The Church and the Renaissance).

Why do respected historical works on the Roman Catholic Church offer such severe comments about a pope and his family? What did they do to deserve such criticism? An exhibition staged in Rome (October 2002–February 2003), entitled *I Borgia –l'arte del potere* (The Borgias—The Art of Power), offered an occasion to reflect on prerogatives claimed by the papacy, particularly on the way they were used by Rodrigo Borgia, or Alexander VI (pope 1492–1503).

### Rise to Power

Rodrigo Borgia was born in 1431 into a prominent family at Játiva, in the kingdom of Aragon, now in Spain. His uncle Alfonso de Borgia, bishop of Valencia, guided his nephew's education and saw to it that while still in his teens, Rodrigo was endowed with ecclesiastical benefices (ecclesiastical offices



Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI

with revenue attached). At age 18, under the protection of Alfonso, by now a cardinal, Rodrigo moved to Italy, where he studied law. When Alfonso became Pope Calixtus III, he made Rodrigo and another nephew cardinals. Pere Lluís Borgia was given the governorship of various cities. Soon Rodrigo was appointed vice-chancellor of the church, a position that he held under various popes, enabling him to procure numerous opulent benefices, amass fabulous wealth, exercise enormous power, and live the luxurious life of a prince.

Rodrigo was intelligent, an eloquent speaker, a patron of the arts, and capable of attaining his objectives. He had a number of illicit relationships, however, fathering four chil-

dren with his lifelong mistress and more with other women. Although reprimanded by Pope Pius II for his propensity for "the most dissolute" amusement and "unbridled pleasure," Rodrigo did not change his ways.

Upon the death of Pope Innocent VIII in 1492, the cardinals of the church met to elect a successor. It is undisputed that Rodrigo Borgia, with splendid offers and open cynicism, bought sufficient votes from fellow cardinals to emerge from that conclave as Pope Alexander VI. How did he pay for the cardinals' votes? By granting them ecclesiastical positions, palaces, castles, cities, abbeys, and bishoprics with enormous revenues. You can understand why one church historian called Alexander VI's reign "days of infamy and scandal for the Roman Church."

### No Better Than Secular Princes

By virtue of his spiritual power as head of the church, Alexander VI arbitrated the division between Spain and Portugal of the newly discovered territories in the Americas. His temporal powers made him head of the papal states with territories in central Italy, and he governed his kingdom much like any other Renaissance sovereign. Alexander VI's reign, like those of popes before and after him, was thus marked by venality, nepotism, and more than one suspicious death.

Rival powers contended for Italian territories during these turbulent times, and the pope was no passive spectator. His political maneuvers and alliances, made and broken, were designed to maximize his power, advance his children's careers, and raise the Borgia family above all others. His son Juan, married to the cousin of the king of Castile, was made duke of Gandia, Spain. Jofré, another son, was married to the granddaughter of the king of Naples.

When the pope needed an ally to strengthen his relations with France, he broke the betrothal of his 13-year-old daughter, Lucrezia,

to an Aragonese noble and gave her instead to a relative of the duke of Milan. When that marriage was no longer politically expedient, a pretext was found to annul it, and Lucrezia was wed to a member of a rival dynasty, Alfonso of Aragon. In the meantime, Lucrezia's ambitious and ruthless brother, Cesare Borgia, formed an alliance with Louis XII of France, and his sister's recent marriage to

*Lucrezia Borgia's father used her to maximize his power*



an Aragonese became an embarrassment. The solution? One source says that Alfonso, her hapless husband, "was wounded by four would-be assassins on the steps of St. Peter's. While recovering, he was strangled by one of Cesare's servants." The pope, desiring new strategic alliances, arranged a third marriage for Lucrezia, now 21, to the son of the powerful duke of Ferrara.

Cesare's career has been described as "a story of unscrupulousness, reddened by blood." Though his father appointed Cesare a cardinal at 17, he was better suited for war than for church matters, being astute, ambitious, and corrupt like few others. After resigning ecclesiastical office, he wed a French princess, thus obtaining the duchy of Valentinois. Then, with the support of French troops, he began a campaign of siege and assassination to bring the north of Italy under his control.

To secure the French military support needed to further Cesare's objectives, the pope condescended to a convenient but scandalous divorce sought by Louis XII of France that allowed him to marry Anne of Brittany and add her duchy to his kingdom. In effect, says one reference work, the pope "sacrificed the prestige of the Church and the rigors of principle to obtain temporal advantages for members of his family."

### Criticism of Papal Excess

The excesses of the Borgias made enemies and drew criticism. The pope basically ignored his detractors, but one who could not be ignored was Girolamo Savonarola. He was a Dominican monk, a fiery preacher, and a political leader of Florence. He condemned the vices of the papal court as well as the person and the politics of the pope himself, calling for him to be deposed and for ecclesiastical reform. Savonarola thundered: "Church leaders, . . . at night you go to your concubines and in the morning to your sacraments." He later said: "[Those leaders] have the face of a harlot, their fame is to the detriment of the Church. These, I tell you, do not believe in the Christian faith."

Attempting to buy silence, the pope offered Savonarola the office of cardinal, which he refused. Whether it was his antipapal politics or his preaching that caused his undoing, Savonarola was finally excommunicated, arrested, tortured into making a confession, and then hanged and burned.

### Serious Questions

These historical events raise important questions. How can such intrigues and conduct of a pope be explained? How do historians explain them? Different lines of reasoning are used.

Many hold that Alexander VI has to be seen in his historic context. His political and

ecclesiastical activities were ostensibly conditioned by the desire to safeguard peace, maintain equilibrium between rival states, strengthen bonds of friendship with allies who would defend the papacy, and keep Christendom's monarchs united against the Turkish threat.

But his conduct? "Every era of the Church has seen bad Christians and unworthy

*Cesare Borgia  
was ambitious  
and corrupt*



priests," says one scholar. "So that no one be shocked by this, Christ himself foretold it; he even likened his Church to a field in which good wheat and weeds grow, or to a net in which there are good fish and bad, just as he even tolerated a Judas among his apostles."<sup>\*</sup>

The same scholar continues: "Just as a defective setting does not lessen the value of a gem, so the sinfulness of a priest cannot essentially prejudice . . . the doctrine he teaches. . . . Gold remains gold, whether it is a pure or impure hand that dispenses it." One Catholic historian argues that the standard that sincere Catholics should have followed in the case of Alexander VI is the counsel Jesus gave to his disciples regarding the scribes and Pharisees: 'Do as they say, but not as they do.'

\* For accurate explanations of these parables, see *The Watchtower*, February 1, 1995, pages 5-6, and June 15, 1992, pages 17-22.

(Matthew 23:2, 3) Honestly, though, does such reasoning convince you?

### Is This True Christianity?

Jesus left a simple guideline to test the quality of professed Christians: "By their fruits you will recognize them. Never do people gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles, do they? Likewise every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit; a good tree cannot bear worthless fruit, neither can a rotten tree produce fine fruit. Really, then, by their fruits you will recognize those men."—Matthew 7: 16-18, 20.

In general, how have religious leaders through the centuries measured up, and how are they now measuring up, to the pattern of true Christianity established by Jesus and exemplified by his true followers? Let us consider just two areas—political involvement and life-style.

Jesus was no worldly prince. He lived such a modest life that, as he admitted, he did not even have a place "to lay down his head." His Kingdom was "no part of this world," and his disciples were to be "no part of the world, just as [he was] no part of the world." Jesus thus refused to get involved in the political affairs of his day.—Matthew 8:20; John 6:15; 17:16; 18:36.

Is it not true, however, that for centuries religious organizations have made it a practice to consort with political rulers for power and material gain, though this has resulted in suffering for the common people? Is it not also true that many of their clergy live in luxury, even though multitudes of the people to whom they should minister may be impoverished?

Jesus' half brother James stated: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Who-

ever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4) Why "an enemy of God"? First John 5:19 notes: "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one."

Concerning Alexander VI's morals, one historian of Borgia's day wrote: "His style of life was dissolute. He knew neither shame nor sincerity, neither faith nor religion. He

*Because Girolamo Savonarola would not be silenced, he was hanged and burned*



was possessed by insatiable greed, immoderate ambition, barbarous cruelty, and a burning passion for the advancement of his many children." Borgia, of course, was not the only member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to act in such a way.

What do the Scriptures say of such behavior? "Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God's kingdom?" asked the apostle Paul. "Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor . . . adulterers, nor . . . greedy persons . . . will inherit God's kingdom." —1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

One of the declared objectives of the recent exhibition in Rome on the Borgias was "to place these great personages in their historic context . . . , to understand but certainly not to absolve nor to condemn." In fact, visitors were left to draw their own conclusions. So what conclusion have you reached?

## Questions From Readers

### Does Satan the Devil have the ability to read the human mind?

Although we cannot be dogmatic, it would appear that neither Satan nor his demons have the ability to read our thoughts.

Consider the descriptive names ascribed to Satan. He is called Satan (Resister), Devil (Slanderer), Serpent (synonymous with Deceiver), Tempter, and Liar. (Job 1:6; Matthew 4:3; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9) None of these descriptive names imply that Satan has the ability to read minds.

By way of contrast, however, Jehovah God is described as "the examiner of hearts." (Proverbs 17:3; 1 Samuel 16:7; 1 Chronicles 29:17) "There is not a creation that is not manifest to his [Jehovah's] sight," declares Hebrews 4:13, "but all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting." Not surprisingly, Jehovah has granted the ability to examine hearts to his Son, Jesus. The resurrected Jesus declared: "I am he who searches the kidneys and hearts, and I will give to you individually according to your deeds."—Revelation 2:23.

The Bible does not say that Satan is able to search men's hearts and minds. This is significant, inasmuch as the apostle Paul assures us that Christians "are not ignorant of [Satan's] designs." (2 Corinthians 2:11) So we need not fear that Satan has some extraordinary ability of which we are entirely unaware.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that our Adversary cannot discern our weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Satan has had centuries to study human behavior. He does not need to be able to read minds to discern what patterns of behavior we set, to observe what en-

tertainment we pursue, or to listen to what things we talk about, and so forth. Our facial expressions and posture may also give clues as to what we are thinking or feeling.

By and large, though, Satan uses the same devices that he used in the garden of Eden—lies, deception, and misinformation. (Genesis 3:1-5) While Christians need not fear that Satan will read their minds, they do have reason to be concerned about what thoughts Satan might try to put *into* their minds. He wants Christians to become "corrupted in mind and despoiled of the truth." (1 Timothy 6:5) Little wonder that Satan's world has unleashed a flood of corrupting information and entertainment. To withstand this onslaught, Christians must protect their minds by wearing "the helmet of salvation." (Ephesians 6:17) They do this by filling their minds with Bible truths and avoiding unnecessary contact with the unsavory elements of Satan's world.

Satan is a formidable foe. But we need not have a morbid fear of him or his demons. James 4:7 assures us: "Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you." If we follow this counsel, we will be able to declare, like Jesus, that Satan has no hold on us.—John 14:30.

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

How to Develop Genuine Love

"God Is Love"

Men of Humble Origins  
Translate the Bible



## What Birds Can Teach Us

"**O**BSERVE intently the birds of heaven, because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are?" (Matthew 6:26) Jesus Christ said these words in a famous sermon given on a mountainside near the Sea of Galilee. His audience was not limited to his followers. A great crowd of potential disciples from all parts of the land were present. Many of them were poor people who had brought the sick for Jesus to cure.—Matthew 4:23–5:2; Luke 6:17–20.

Having cured all the ailing ones, Jesus gave attention to the more important spiritual needs. Among the lessons he taught was the one mentioned above.

The birds of heaven have been in existence for a long time. Some of them feed on insects, others on fruit and seeds. If God has made available such abundant provisions for the birds, surely he is capable of helping his human servants to obtain their daily bread. He may do this by helping them to find employment so

as to earn money for food. Or he may grant them success in growing their own food. As for times of emergency, God can move the hearts of kind neighbors and friends to share with needy ones what food they have.

There is much more that we can learn by carefully observing bird life. God has created birds with marvelous instincts to make nests in which they can raise their offspring. Notice two different kinds of nests. Pictured on the left is the nest of an African rock martin. It is built on the face of a rock or on the wall of a house. The roof of such nests is an overhanging rock or, as shown in this picture, the eaves of a building. The floor of the nest is made of tiny mud pellets stuck together in the shape of a cup. Both male and female work hard to collect mud pellets and may take over a month to complete their nest. Then they line it with grass and feathers. Both share in feeding their young. What appears below is the nest of a male masked weaver. This industrious African bird builds its nest using blades of grass or strips of other vegetation. It can complete a nest in one day and may weave more than 30 in one season!

The lesson? If God provides birds with such skills and abundant materials to make nests, surely he can help his human servants to get needed housing. However, Jesus showed that something else is necessary if we want Jehovah God to help us obtain our material necessities. "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom

and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you," Jesus promised. (Matthew 6:33) You may wonder, 'What is involved in seeking God's Kingdom first?' Jehovah's Witnesses, who distribute this magazine, would be happy to answer that question.





## Simply a Custom or Bribery?

AT SOME Polish colleges, students customarily collect money to buy gifts for their teachers, hoping to get better grades on their exams. No wonder a young Christian named Katarzyna faced a difficult situation. "Shall I give money or not?" she wondered. Her peers reasoned: "It is a common custom. You risk nothing, but you can gain a lot, so why do you have doubts?"

"I have to admit that in my first year of studies, I participated in the collection of money," acknowledges Katarzyna. "Only later did I realize that in this way I had supported bribery, which is condemned in the Bible." She recalled scriptures that show that Jehovah strongly disapproves of bribery.

(Deuteronomy 10:17; 16:19; 2 Chronicles 19:7) Katarzyna says: "I understood how easy it is to succumb to peer pressure. I thought it over and since then never shared in this custom again." Over the last three years, despite ridicule from other students, she was able to explain to some that she does not participate in these "gift" collections because of her Bible-based convictions.

Some accused Katarzyna of selfishness and an antisocial attitude. "I still do not get along well with some of them," she says. "On the other hand, many respect my point of view, which makes me glad." Katarzyna became known as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, who observe Bible principles in everyday life.