

August 1, 1991

# The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**SHOULD YOU FEAR  
THE LAST JUDGMENT?**

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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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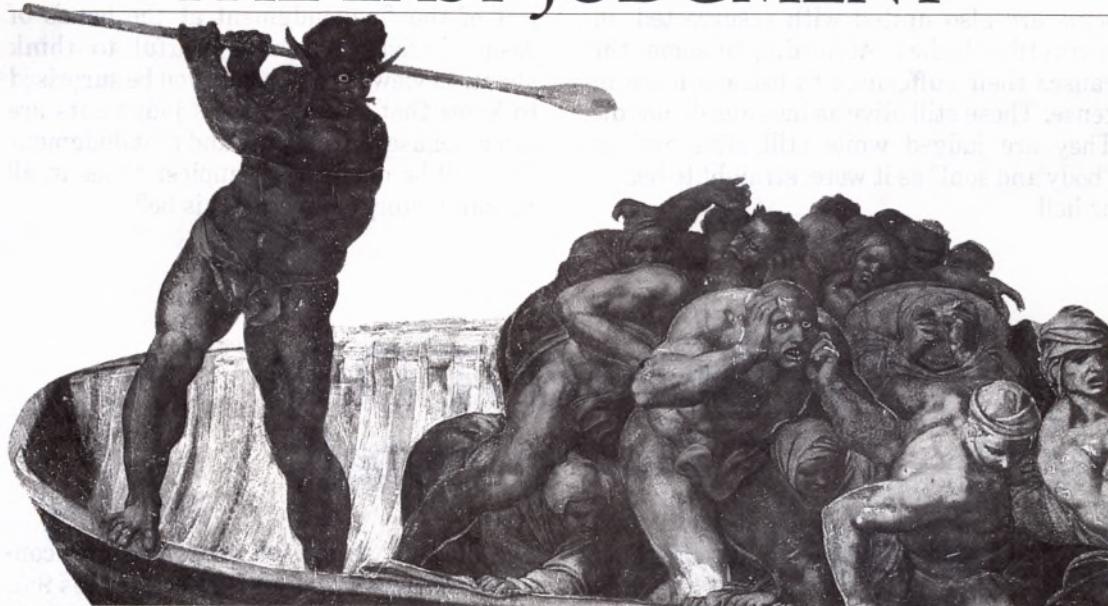
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# THE LAST JUDGMENT



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**"WHEN thou diest thy soul will be tormented alone; that will be a hell for it: but at the day of judgment thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin-hells, thy soul sweating drops of blood, and thy body suffused with agony."**

**T**HIS is how the 19th-century preacher C. H. Spurgeon described the clergy view of judgment day and the sufferings of the damned. The Italian artist Michelangelo had a similarly terrifying belief, as is seen in his painting "The Last Judgment" (a section of which is reproduced above), on the wall of the Sistine chapel in Rome. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* says of this painting: "The Christ in Judgment is a thundering god rather than a Christian saviour, more concerned with damning the human race than in welcoming the blessed into heaven."

## Christendom's Doctrine

In past centuries, judgment day and hellfire were favorite subjects for sermons. From their pulpits, preachers like C. H. Spurgeon thundered forth with graphic descriptions

of the hideous torments awaiting sinners. Nowadays, that kind of preaching is seldom heard. But hellfire and the last judgment are still official teachings of most churches.

The majority of religions of Christendom more or less agree with the Roman Catholic teaching that God's judgments come in two stages. First, there is the "particular judgment." When a person dies, his supposed immortal soul is immediately judged and consigned to an eternity either in hell or in heaven.\* Then comes the last, or general, judgment at the end of time when the bodies of the dead are resurrected and reunited with their immortal souls.

On this judgment day, souls in heaven remain there and are reunited with bodies

\* Roman Catholics also believe in a third possibility: temporary punishment in purgatory before final entry into heaven.

that have been made incorruptible. Those suffering in hell remain there too, and their souls are also united with resurrected, incorruptible bodies. According to some, this causes their sufferings to become more intense. Those still alive as humans do not die. They are judged while still alive and go, "body and soul" as it were, straight to heaven or hell.

The possibility of enduring unspeakable torments in hellfire has made the whole subject of the final judgment at the hands of Jesus Christ something fearful to think about. In view of this, would you be surprised to know that, in fact, God's judgments are often a cause for rejoicing and that Judgment Day will be one of the happiest times in all human history? How can this be?

## JUDGMENT DAY

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### *A Time of Hope!*

**I**F THE idea of judgment day frightens you, why not examine what the Bible says about it? For example, is it true that when God executes judgment on sinners, they are cast into hellfire?

Well, the first recorded instance of divine judgment was right at the beginning of human history. Adam and Eve had the opportunity of living forever on a paradise earth. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7-9, 15-25) They sinned, however, and came under God's adverse judgment. The result? God withdrew the gift of life. In other words, they died. God told them: "In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." —Genesis 3:16-19.

This was a severe judgment, but it was just. And it certainly did not involve hellfire. When Adam and Eve died, they returned to the dust. They ceased to exist. The Bible nowhere suggests that a part of Adam or of any other human survived death to be tormented somewhere for all eternity. Rather, we read: "The living are conscious that they

will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all."—Ecclesiastes 9:5.

Did you know that the Bible says this? Did you know, too, that the Bible never uses the expression "immortal soul"? Instead, it says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4, King James Version) This is fully in harmony with the Bible principle: "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23, KJ) This rule affects all of us. All of us are descendants of sinful Adam, so all of us sin and receive the wages of sin, death. As the Bible says: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Romans 5:12, KJ) The Day of Judgment is a key part of God's arrangement to save us from this situation.

#### **The Basis for Judgment Day**

According to the Bible, it was almost 2,000 years ago that God laid the basis for what will happen on Judgment Day. This was when Jesus came to earth and offered his perfect human life in our behalf. Jesus himself explained: "God loved the world 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.

If we exercise faith in Jesus, we benefit from his sacrifice even now in a spiritual way. God forgives our sins and allows us to approach him. (John 14:6; 1 John 2:1, 2) But we are still imperfect, sinners, and as such, we still get physically sick and eventually die. We do not yet have the everlasting life that Jesus promised. This will come as a result of Judgment Day.

### The Day of Judgment

The apostle John saw a vision of Judgment Day, and he described it as follows: “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”—Revelation 20:11, 12, *KJ*.

Yes, according to John’s vision, Judgment Day will be presided over by God himself. But someone else is involved. The apostle Paul explained: “[God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.” (Acts 17:31, *KJ*) Who was that man? Jesus, who himself said: “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” (John 5:22, *KJ*) So Jesus will be God’s appointed Judge on Judgment Day.

This is good news for humans. The Gospels reveal Jesus to be a person of great compassion. He is not haughty or demanding but “mild-tempered and lowly in heart.” (Matthew 11:29; 14:14; 20:34) We are happy to be in the hands of such a judge.

### When Will It Be?

When, though, is the Day of Judgment? Revelation says it will be when “the earth and the heaven [have] fled away.” This reminds us of the apostle Peter’s words: “The heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:7) Is the literal earth to be burned up? No, the Bible is clear on this point. The literal earth will never be destroyed. “The earth . . . [will] not be removed for ever.” (Psalm 104:5, *KJ*) The context of Peter’s words shows that it is the present ungodly world system of things that is to be destroyed. Ungodly men, not the planet Earth, will perish.—John 12:31; 14:30; 1 John 5:19.

These ungodly men will be destroyed at what the Bible calls the battle of Armageddon—which, as this magazine has often shown, will take place soon. (Revelation 16:14, 16) Afterward, Satan himself will be abyssed and prevented from interfering with humanity for a thousand years, and this thousand years is the actual duration of Judgment Day. (Revelation 19:17-20:3) What happens to the faithful when the ungodly men perish at Armageddon? They survive right into Judgment Day. We read: “The blameless are the ones that will be left over in [the earth]. As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth.”—Proverbs 2:21, 22.

In support of this, the Bible tells of “a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues” that would appear on earth before Armageddon. These “come out of the great tribulation”; in other words, they survive the end of this ungodly world just as Noah survived the end of the world of his day. (Revelation 7:9-17; 2 Peter 2:5) Did you know that this international great crowd of active Christians exists even now?

These hope to survive the great tribulation and live forever on earth. Their existence is a sure evidence of the nearness of Judgment Day.

### Who Will Be Judged?

This great crowd will be judged on Judgment Day. But they will not be alone. John's account continues: "The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." (Revelation 20:13, KJ) Here is further proof that people do not suffer forever in hell. If hell gives up those dead in it, how can anyone be there for all eternity? In fact, the Bible hell is the common grave of mankind, where the dead remain unconscious awaiting a resurrection. On Judgment Day, hell is to be completely emptied of its dead.—Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Who will be resurrected from the dead on Judgment Day? The apostle Paul said: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24:15, KJ) Hence, faithful servants of God, "the just," will be resurrected. But so will countless others, "the unjust." Evidently, the resurrection will embrace all those who have died and are still in the grave—with the exception of any whose sins were so serious that God has already judged them totally unworthy of life.—Matthew 12:31.

### The Judgment

What, though, happens to the great crowd of survivors and the resurrected ones on Judgment Day? The Bible says: "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." This is a time of scrutiny. All who are willing to act according to 'those things written in the books'—evidently God's requirements for mankind at that time—will be written up in "the book of life." (Revela-

tion 20:12, KJ) They will be on the way to gaining everlasting life!

Then, at last, Christ's sacrificial death will bring physical benefits! Those listed in the book of life at that time will no longer sink into sickness and death. Rather, they will gradually be restored to human perfection, with the everlasting life promised to those who exercise faith in Jesus. What a remarkable prospect! Nevertheless, some will evidently refuse to obey 'those things written in the books.' What happens to them? They do not gain eternal life. Instead, the scripture says: "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."—Revelation 20:15, KJ.

Is this the hellfire Christendom speaks about? No, for in the preceding verse, we read: "Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Revelation 20:14, KJ) If hell is cast into the lake of fire, the lake cannot itself be hellfire. Moreover, death is not something concrete that can be picked up and hurled somewhere. So the lake of fire must be symbolic. Of what? The Bible says: "This is the second death." When death and Hades are hurled into the lake of fire, they "die," cease to exist. Similarly, rebellious humans who end up there die, or cease to exist. This, though, is the second death, without hope of a resurrection.

### Judgment Day—A Time of Hope

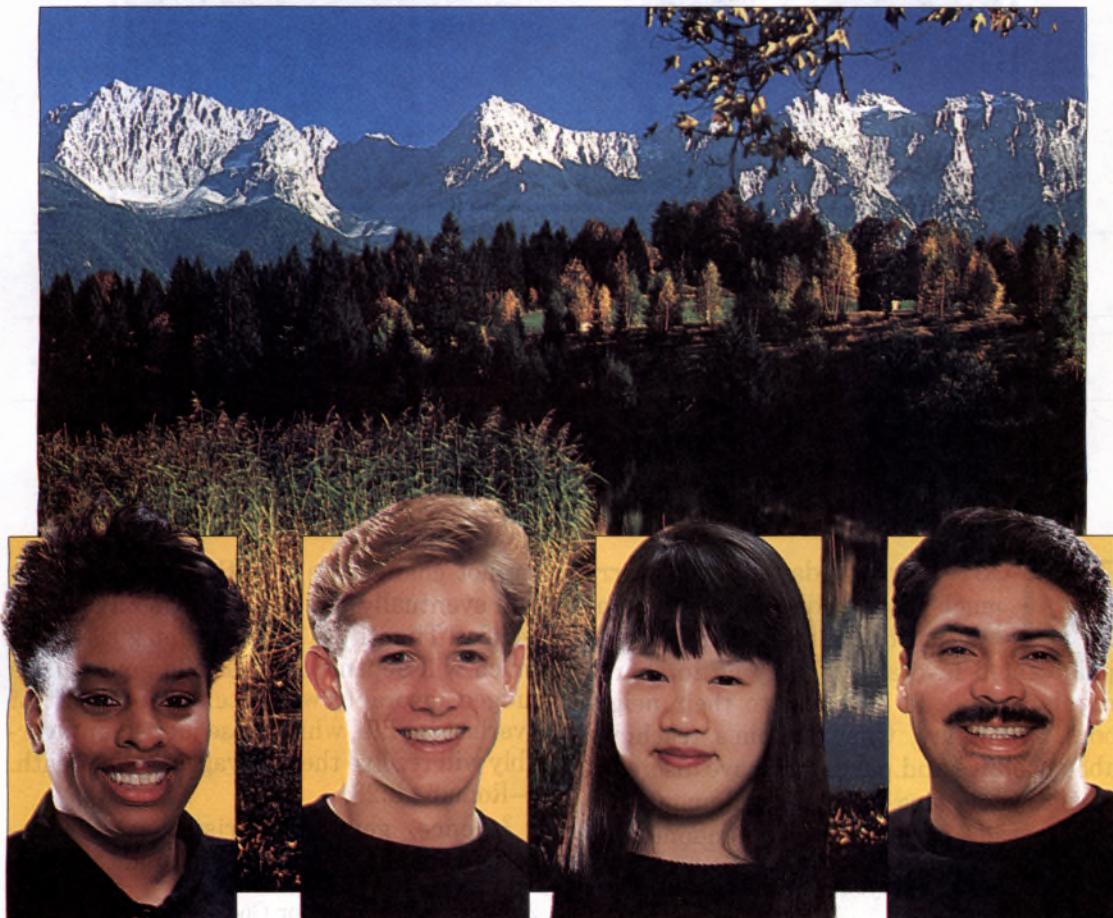
So when we think of Judgment Day, we should not be terrified or disgusted. Judgment Day is a time of hope, a time to restore to mankind the everlasting life that Adam lost. Listen to the blessings it will bring to those judged faithful: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death

will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

By the end of the thousand-year Judgment Day, faithful humans from all parts of the earth will finally be perfect. They will have "come to life" in the fullest sense, and Judgment Day will have achieved its purpose. (Revelation 20:5) Then, the Bible says, Satan will be allowed access to mankind for one last time. (Revelation 20:3, 7-10) Those who resist him this final time will enjoy the complete fulfillment of the Bible's promise: "The righteous themselves will possess the

earth, and they will reside forever upon it."  
—Psalm 37:29.

What a wonderful provision Judgment Day is! And how remarkable that we can prepare for it even now, by studying the Bible, learning God's will, and applying this divine will in our lives! No wonder the psalmist expressed joy at the thought of God's judgment when he wrote: "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be joyful. Let the sea thunder and that which fills it. Let the open field exult and all that is in it. At the same time let all the trees of the forest break out joyfully before Jehovah. For he has come; for he has come to judge the earth."—Psalm 96:11-13.





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## "THE LIGHT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD"

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*"This is the basis for judgment, that the light has come into the world but men have loved the darkness rather than the light." —JOHN 3:19.*

MOST people today do not worry much about God's judgment. Some take it for granted that God will judge them favorably if they go to church regularly and do no harm to their neighbors. For many, Christendom's teachings about hellfire and purgatory have discredited the whole idea of divine judgment. But widespread apathy and Christendom's lies

1. Why should everyone be concerned about God's judgment?

cannot change the fact that every human will eventually be judged by God. (Romans 14:12; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 20:13) And much will depend on this judgment. Those judged favorably will receive God's gift of everlasting life, while those judged unfavorably will receive the full wages of sin: death. —Romans 6:23.

<sup>2</sup> Hence, genuine Christians are concerned about God's judgment, and they ear-

2. What is the basis for God's judgment?

nestly desire to please him. How can they do this? At John 3:19, Jesus gives us the key. He says: "This is the basis for judgment, that the light has come into the world but men have loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were wicked." Yes, God's judgment will be based on whether we love the light rather than the darkness.

### "God Is Light"

<sup>3</sup> In a spiritual sense, darkness has to do with the ignorance and hopelessness that exist in Satan's realm—although Satan often pretends to be "an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14; Ephesians 6:12) On the other hand, light has to do with the understanding and enlightenment that come from Jehovah God. Paul spoke of the light when he wrote: "For God is he who said: 'Let the light shine out of darkness,' and he has shone on our hearts to illuminate them with the glorious knowledge of God by the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6) Spiritual light is so closely identified with Jehovah God that the apostle John wrote: "God is light."

—1 John 1:5; Revelation 22:5.

<sup>4</sup> Jehovah has made light available by means of his word, which today is freely available in written form in the Holy Bible. (Psalm 119:105; 2 Peter 1:19) Hence, the psalmist was really expressing his love of the light when he wrote: "How I do love your law! All day long it is my concern. My soul has kept your reminders, and I love them exceedingly." (Psalm 119:97, 167) Do you love the light as much as the psalmist evidently did? Do you regularly read God's Word, meditate on it, and try hard to apply what it says? (Psalm 1:1-3) If so, you are seeking to receive a favorable judgment from Jehovah.

3. What is the darkness, and what is the light?
4. (a) How has Jehovah made light available?  
(b) In what way can we manifest a love of the light?

### "I Am the World's Light"

<sup>5</sup> Life-giving light from Jehovah focuses on the person of Jesus Christ. In the introduction of John's Gospel, we read: "By means of [Jesus] was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light is shining in the darkness, but the darkness has not overpowered it." (John 1:4, 5) Indeed, Jesus has such a close association with the light that he is called "the true light that gives light to every sort of man." (John 1:9) Jesus himself said: "As long as I am in the world, I am the world's light."—John 9:5.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore, those who love the light love Jesus and have faith in him. It is impossible to gain a favorable judgment without reference to Jesus. Yes, it is only by looking to him as God's appointed means of salvation that we can gain a favorable judgment. Jesus said: "He that exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life; he that disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him." (John 3:36) What, though, does it mean to exercise faith in Jesus?

<sup>7</sup> First, Jesus himself said: "He that puts faith in me puts faith, not in me only, but in him also that sent me; and he that beholds me beholds also him that sent me. I have come as a light into the world, in order that everyone putting faith in me may not remain in the darkness." (John 12:44-46) Those who love Jesus and exercise faith in him must also have deep love for and faith in the God and Father of Jesus, Jehovah. (Matthew 22:37; John 20:17) Any who use Jesus' name in their worship but fail to give the greater honor to Jehovah do not manifest a genuine love of the light.—Psalm 22:27; Romans 14:7, 8; Philippians 2:10, 11.

5. On whom does divine light focus?
6. What must a person do in order to gain a favorable judgment leading to everlasting life?
7. Faith in Jesus implies faith in whom else?



*Eventually, all mankind will have to acknowledge Jesus' authority*

purposes. Similarly, Paul told the Galatian Christians that the Law covenant was a "tutor leading to Christ." (Galatians 3:24) That ancient Law covenant was designed to prepare the nation for Jesus' coming as Messiah. So even before his human birth, the light from Jehovah focused on Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> In 29 C.E., Jesus presented himself for baptism and was anointed with holy spirit, thus becoming the promised Messiah. In 33 C.E. he died a perfect man, was resurrected, ascended to heaven, and there offered the value of his life in behalf of our sins. (Hebrews 9:11-14, 24) This series of events marked a turning point in God's dealings with humans. Jesus was now "the Chief Agent of life," "the Chief Agent of salvation," "the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith." (Acts 3:15; Hebrews 2:10; 12:2; Romans 3:23, 24)

From 33 C.E. onward, lovers of the light have recognized, and accepted, that apart from Jesus "there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved."

—Acts 4:12.

<sup>10</sup> Exercising faith in Jesus also means accepting him as "the Word" and the "Wonderful Counselor." (John 1:1; Isaiah 9:6) What Jesus says always reflects divine

### God's "Chief Agent"

<sup>8</sup> Exercising faith in Jesus also means fully accepting his role in Jehovah's purposes. The importance of this role was highlighted when the angel said to John: "The bearing witness to Jesus is what inspires prophesying." (Revelation 19:10; Acts 10:43; 2 Corinthians 1:20) From the very first prophecy in Eden, all divinely inspired prophecies ultimately have to do with Jesus and his place in the outworking of God's

8. How did divine light focus on Jesus even before his human birth?

9. What has loving the light involved since 33 C.E.?

10. Why is it so important to listen to Jesus' words and obey them?

truth. (John 8:28; Revelation 1:1, 2) Listening to him is a matter of life and death. Jesus told the Jews of his day: "He that hears my word and believes him that sent me has everlasting life, and he does not come into judgment but has passed over from death to life." (John 5:24) In the first century C.E., those who acted on Jesus' words were rescued from the darkness of Satan's world and came to life, as it were. They were declared righteous with a view to being joint heirs with him in his heavenly Kingdom. (Ephesians 1:1; 2:1, 4-7) Today, obeying Jesus' words opens the way for many to be declared righteous with a view to surviving Armageddon and attaining perfect human life in the new world.—Revelation 21:1-4; compare James 2:21, 25.

### "Head Over All Things"

<sup>11</sup> After his resurrection, Jesus revealed to his followers another facet of the light. He said: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth." (Matthew 28: 18) Jesus was thus being elevated to a preeminent position in Jehovah's universal organization. Paul gives further details when he says: "[God] raised [Jesus] up from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above every government and authority and power and lordship and every name named, not only in this system of things, but also in that to come. He also subjected all things under his feet, and made him head over all things to the congregation, which is his body." (Ephesians 1:20-23; Philippians 2:9-11) Since 33 C.E., loving the light has included acknowledging this lofty position of Jesus.

<sup>12</sup> Eventually, all mankind will have to

11. What high authority was given to Jesus in 33 C.E.?

12. What have anointed Christians gladly accepted right from the beginning, and how have they shown this in a practical way?

acknowledge Jesus' authority. (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7) Lovers of the light, however, have gladly recognized it right from the beginning. Anointed members of the Christian congregation accept Jesus as "the head of the body, the congregation." (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23) When they become part of that body, they are 'delivered from the authority of the darkness and are transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love.' (Colossians 1:13) Henceforth, they earnestly follow Jesus' leadership in every aspect of their lives, and in our time they have taught the "other sheep" to do the same. (John 10:16) Acknowledging Jesus' headship is a key requirement for receiving a favorable judgment.

<sup>13</sup> At his ascension to heaven in 33 C.E., Jesus did not immediately exercise his authority to the fullest extent. Although Head of the Christian congregation, he waited for the proper time to exercise full authority over mankind in general. (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:33-35) That time came in 1914, when Jesus was enthroned as King of God's Kingdom and "the last days" of this world began. (2 Timothy 3:1) Since 1919, the gathering of the remaining anointed ones has proceeded toward its completion. From 1935 particularly, Jesus has been dividing mankind into "the sheep," who will inherit "the kingdom prepared for [them]," and "the goats," who will "depart into everlasting cutting-off."—Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46.

<sup>14</sup> Happily, the sheep have proved to be numerous in these last days. A great crowd of them numbering into the millions has appeared on the world scene "out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." Like their companions, the anointed, these

13. When did Jesus begin to exercise Kingdom authority, and what has followed here on earth?

14. How has a great crowd manifested a love of the light, and what will result to them?

sheeplike ones love the light. They have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and they cry in a loud voice: "Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb." Because of this, the great crowd as a group will receive a favorable judgment. Its members "come out of the great tribulation," surviving the destruction at Armageddon of those who love the darkness.—Revelation 7:9, 10, 14.

### "Children of Light"

<sup>15</sup> How, though, in a practical way do lovers of the light, whether anointed or other sheep, submit to Jesus as the one enthroned by God as King and acting Judge? One way is by trying to be the kind of people that Jesus approves. While on earth Jesus showed an appreciation for such qualities as sincerity, wholeheartedness, and enthusiasm for the truth, and he himself exemplified these qualities. (Mark 12:28-34, 41-44; Luke 10:17, 21) If we desire a favorable judgment, we must develop such qualities.

<sup>16</sup> This is particularly true since the darkness of Satan's world is getting denser as the end draws close. (Revelation 16:10) The words Paul wrote to the Romans are therefore very appropriate: "The night is well along; the day has drawn near. Let us there-

15. In what way do our actions show our submission to the King, Jesus Christ?
16. Why is it vital to put off the works belonging to darkness?



fore put off the works belonging to darkness and let us put on the weapons of the light. As in the daytime let us walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts, not in illicit intercourse and loose conduct, not in strife and jealousy." (Romans 13:12, 13) While everlasting life is a gift from God, the genuineness of our faith and our love for the light is evidenced by our actions. (James 2:26) Hence, the judgment that we receive will depend to a large degree on the extent to which we practice fine works and shun wicked works.

<sup>17</sup> After giving his counsel at Romans 13:12, 13, the apostle Paul concludes by saying: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not be planning ahead for the desires of the flesh." (Romans 13:14) What does it mean to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ"? It means that Christians should follow Jesus closely, clothing themselves, as it were, with his example and his disposition, striving to be Christlike. "To this course you were called," said Peter, "because even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely."—1 Peter 2:21.

<sup>18</sup> This has often involved radical changes in a Christian's life. "For you were once darkness," said Paul, "but you are now light in connection with the Lord. Go on walking as children of light, for the fruitage of the light consists of every sort of goodness and righteousness and truth." (Ephesians 5:8, 9) Any who practice works of darkness are not lovers of the light and will not receive a favorable judgment unless they make a change.

### "You Are the Light of the World"

<sup>19</sup> Finally, loving the light means reflecting the light so that others can see it and be attracted to it. "You are the light of the world," said Jesus. And he added: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens." (Matthew 5:14, 16) The fine works of a Christian include manifesting every sort of goodness and righteousness and truth, since such fine conduct provides a powerful witness for the truth. (Galatians 6:10; 1 Peter 3:1) They especially include talking to others about the truth. Today, this means sharing in the

17. What does it mean to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ"?

18. What radical changes may be needed if we wish to receive a favorable judgment?

19. In what different ways can a Christian reflect the light?

worldwide campaign of preaching "this good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." It means, too, patiently calling back on interested ones, studying the Bible with them, and helping them, in turn, to produce the works that belong to the light.

—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.

<sup>20</sup> In our day, thanks to the zealous preaching activity of faithful Christians, the good news is being heard in more than 200 lands, and the light is shining as never before. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world. He that follows me will by no means walk in darkness, but will possess the light of life." (John 8:12) What a joy it is to share in the fulfillment of this promise! Our lives are so much richer now that we no longer languish in the darkness of Satan's world. And our prospects are truly wonderful as we look forward to a favorable judgment from Jehovah's appointed Judge. (2 Timothy 4:8) What a tragedy it would be if, having come to the light, we drifted back into the darkness and received an unfavorable judgment! In the following article, we will discuss how we may remain solid in the faith.

20. (a) How brightly is the light shining today?  
(b) What rich blessings are enjoyed by those who respond to the light?

### Can You Explain?

- What is the basis for God's judgment?
- What central role does Jesus have with regard to God's purposes?
- How do we demonstrate that we are subject to Jesus as the one Jehovah enthroned as King?
- How can we prove ourselves to be "children of light"?
- In this world's darkness, in what way is the light shining as never before?



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## “PUT ON THE WEAPONS OF THE LIGHT”

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*“The night is well along; the day has drawn near. Let us therefore put off the works belonging to darkness and let us put on the weapons of the light.”*

—ROMANS 13:12.

JESUS CHRIST is “the true light that gives light to every sort of man.” (John 1:9) When he came as Messiah in 29 C.E., he came to a nation that had been chosen by God to be His witnesses and that was, nominally at least, dedicated to Jehovah.

1, 2. How did most first-century Jews respond to “the true light,” and this despite what advantages?

vah. (Isaiah 43:10) Many of the Israelites had been waiting for the Messiah, and a number knew some of the prophecies that would identify him. Moreover, Jesus preached in all parts of Palestine, performing signs in full view of the multitudes. Crowds flocked to hear him and were impressed by what they saw and heard.—Matthew 4:23-25; 7:28, 29; 9:32-36; John 7:31.

**The majority of the Jews of Jesus' day did not respond to the light**

<sup>2</sup> In the end, though, the majority of the Jews rejected Jesus. John's Gospel says: "He came to his own home, but his own people did not take him in." (John 1:11) Why was this? The answer to that question will help us to avoid repeating their mistake. It will help us to "put off the works belonging to darkness and . . . put on the weapons of the light," thus avoiding an unfavorable judgment like that suffered by first-century Israel.—Romans 13:12; Luke 19:43, 44.

**Opposition From Religious Authorities**

<sup>3</sup> In Israel the religious leaders were foremost in rejecting the light. Despite being teachers "versed in the Law," they had imposed on the people a legalistic system of rules that often contradicted God's Law. (Luke 11:45, 46) Thus, they 'made the word of God invalid by the tradition which they handed down.' (Mark 7:13; Matthew 23:16, 23, 24) They were "blind guides," hindering the light from shining through.—Matthew 15:14.

<sup>4</sup> On one occasion when many Israelites were wondering whether Jesus was perhaps the Christ, the alarmed Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. The officers came back empty-handed, saying: "Never has another man spoken like this." Unmoved, the Pharisees asked the officers: "You have not been misled also, have you? Not one of the rulers or of the Pharisees has put faith in him, has he? But this crowd that does not know the

3. In what way did the Jewish religious leaders prove to be "blind guides"?

4, 5. (a) How did the Pharisees react when a number of Jews began wondering whether Jesus was the Messiah? (b) What bad heart attitude did the Pharisees betray?

Law are accursed people." Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, protested that it was unlawful to judge a man before hearing him. spitefully, the Pharisees turned on him and said: "You are not also out of Galilee, are you? Search and see that no prophet is to be raised up out of Galilee."—John 7:46-52.

<sup>5</sup> Why did religious leaders in a nation dedicated to God act in such a way? Because they had developed a bad condition of heart. (Matthew 12:34) Their disdainful view of the common people betrayed their arrogance. Their claim that "not one of the rulers or of the Pharisees has put faith in him" made the prideful assumption that the Messiah could be genuine only if they approved of him. Moreover, they were dishonest, trying to discredit Jesus because he came from Galilee, when a simple investigation would have revealed that he was actually born in Bethlehem, the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah.—Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1.

<sup>6</sup> The implacable opposition of these religious leaders to the light was convincingly shown when Jesus resurrected Lazarus. To a God-fearing person, such an act would have been proof that Jesus had Jehovah's backing. The religious leaders, however, could only see a possible threat to their privileged position. They said: "What are we to do, because this man performs many signs? If we let him alone this way, they will all put faith in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." (John 11:44, 47, 48) So they took counsel to kill both Jesus and Lazarus, perhaps hoping in this way to extinguish the light.—John 11:53, 54; 12:9, 10.

6, 7. (a) How did the religious leaders react to the resurrection of Lazarus? (b) What did Jesus say to expose the religious leaders' love of the darkness?

<sup>7</sup> Hence, those religious leaders of God's nation were driven away from the light by arrogance, pride, intellectual dishonesty, and an overpowering self-interest. Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus exposed their guilt, saying: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut up the kingdom of the heavens before men; for you yourselves do not go in, neither do you permit those on their way in to go in."

—Matthew 23:13.

### **Selfishness and Pride**

<sup>8</sup> In general, the Jewish people of the first century mirrored their religious leaders in rejecting the light because of bad heart attitudes. For example, on one occasion Jesus was invited to speak in a synagogue in Nazareth. He read and explained a passage from Isaiah, and at first, the congregation listened to him. But when he drew historical comparisons that exposed their selfishness and lack of faith, they were infuriated and tried to kill him. (Luke 4:16-30) Pride, among other bad traits, hindered them from responding properly to the light.

<sup>9</sup> On another occasion, Jesus miraculously fed a large crowd beside the Sea of Galilee. Witnesses of this miracle said: "This is for a certainty the prophet that was to come into the world." (John 6:10-14) When Jesus went to another location by boat, the crowd followed him. Jesus knew, however, that the motive of many was not a love of the light. He told them: "You are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate from the loaves and were satisfied." (John 6:26) He was soon proved correct when a number that had been following him turned back to the

8. What events in Nazareth exposed the bad heart condition of some people there?
9. How were the wrong motives of a large group of Galileans exposed?

world. (John 6:66) A selfish, "what's in it for me?" attitude blocked out the light.

<sup>10</sup> After Jesus' death and resurrection, believing Jews continued to carry the light to others of Jewry, but few responded. Therefore, the apostle Paul and others, serving as "a light of nations," spread the good news to other lands. (Acts 13:44-47) Many non-Jews responded, but the general reaction came to be as Paul described: "We preach Christ impaled, . . . [a message that is] to the nations foolishness." (1 Corinthians 1:22, 23) Most non-Jews rejected the light because they were blinded by pagan superstitions or by worldly philosophies.

—Acts 14:8-13; 17:32; 19:23-28.

### **'Called Out Of Darkness'**

<sup>11</sup> In the first century, despite the general lack of response, many righthearted ones were 'called out of darkness into God's wonderful light.' (1 Peter 2:9) Of these the apostle John writes: "As many as did receive [Christ], to them he gave authority to become God's children, because they were exercising faith in his name." (John 1:12) Starting from Pentecost 33 C.E., these lovers of the light were baptized with holy spirit and became sons of God with the hope of reigning with Jesus in his heavenly Kingdom.

<sup>12</sup> In our day the final ones of those anointed sons of God have been gathered, and fulfilling Daniel's prophecy, they "shine like the brightness of the expanse . . . , bringing the many to righteousness." (Daniel 12:3) They have let their light shine to such an extent that more than four million "other sheep" have been attracted to the truth and enjoy a righteous standing

10. How did the majority of Gentiles react to the light?
- 11, 12. Who responded to the light in the first century, and who respond today?

before God. (John 10:16) These, in turn, reflect the light around the world, so that now that light is shining as never before. In our day, as in the first century, "the darkness has not overpowered [the light]."  
—John 1:5.

### 'There Is No Darkness With God'

<sup>13</sup> We should, however, never forget the warning of the apostle John: "God is light and there is no darkness at all in union with him. If we make the statement: 'We are having a sharing with him,' and yet we go on walking in the darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth." (1 John 1:5, 6) Clearly, it is possible for Christians to fall into the same trap as the Jews and, while being nominal witnesses for God, to produce works of darkness.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this happened in the first cen-

13. What warning did the apostle John give us?
- 14, 15. What works of darkness manifested themselves in the first-century Christian congregation, and what do we learn from this?

tury. We read of serious divisions in Corinth. (1 Corinthians 1:10-17) The apostle John had to warn anointed Christians not to hate one another, and James had to counsel some not to favor the rich above the poor. (James 2:2-4; 1 John 2:9, 10; 3 John 11, 12) In addition, when Jesus inspected the seven congregations of Asia Minor, as related in the book of Revelation, he reported the intrusion of works of darkness, including apostasy, idolatry, immorality, and materialism. (Revelation 2:4, 14, 15, 20-23; 3:1, 15-17) In those early days of the Christian congregation, a number had thus abandoned the light, some being disfellowshipped and others just drifting away to "the darkness outside."—Matthew 25:30; Philippians 3:18; Hebrews 2:1; 2 John 8-11.

<sup>15</sup> All these reports from the first century show different ways that the darkness of Satan's world can infiltrate the thinking

*Over the decades various methods have been used to let the light shine in making disciples*



**"You should put away the old personality . . . and should put on the new personality"**

of individual Christians or even whole congregations. We should be on guard that such a thing never happens to us. How can we do that?

### The New Personality

<sup>16</sup> Paul urged the Ephesians to be no longer "in darkness mentally, and alienated from the life that belongs to God." In order not to slip back into that darkness, they had to cultivate heart attitudes that belong to the light. Paul said: "You should put away the old personality which conforms to your former course of conduct and which is being corrupted according to his deceptive desires; but . . . you should be made new in the force actuating your mind, and should put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."—Ephesians 4:18, 22-24.

<sup>17</sup> Paul here counsels, as it were, radical surgery—cutting out what was formerly a part of us, our old personality, and allowing the development of a whole new spirit to 'actuate our minds.' And he was speaking not to newly interested ones but to baptized Christians. The changing of our personality does not stop at baptism. It is a continuing process. If we stop cultivating the new personality, the old one is likely to resurface, with its pride, arrogance, and selfish-

16. What sound counsel did Paul give to the Ephesians?

17. How can we today avoid slipping back into the darkness?



ness. (Genesis 8:21; Romans 7:21-25) This could lead to a return to works of darkness.

### "By Light From You We Can See Light"

<sup>18</sup> Remember that our attaining eternal life depends on our receiving a favorable judgment from God, which judgment is based on how much we love the light. After alluding to this latter fact, Jesus said: "He that practices vile things hates the light and does not come to the light, in order that his works may not be reproved. But he that does what is true comes to the light, in order that his works may be made manifest as having been worked in harmony with God."—John 3:19-21.

<sup>19</sup> Paul supported this thought when he wrote to the Ephesians: "Go on walking as

18, 19. How did Jesus and Paul describe the way to recognize the "children of light"?

children of light, for the fruitage of the light consists of every sort of goodness and righteousness and truth." (Ephesians 5:8, 9) So our works show whether we are children of the light or of the darkness. But right works can only spring from a good heart. This is why we have to watch our heart, be conscious of the need to keep renewing our personality, be careful about the spirit actuating our mind.—Proverbs 4:23.

<sup>20</sup> In some cases, this has proved to be a special challenge for children born to dedicated Witnesses of Jehovah. Why? Well, on the one hand, such children enjoy a wonderful blessing. Knowing the truth from earliest childhood means, in effect, that a person never needs to experience firsthand being in the darkness of Satan's world. (2 Timothy 3:14, 15) On the other hand, some children in this situation take the truth for granted and never learn truly to love the light. This was the situation of most Jews of the first century. They grew up in a nation dedicated to Jehovah, and to some extent they had a knowledge of the truth. But it was not in their hearts.—Matthew 15:8, 9.

<sup>21</sup> Christian parents are responsible before God to raise their children in the light. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4) In the end, though, the child himself has to come to love the light more than the darkness. He has to make the light of truth his own. As he grows up, some features of Satan's world may seem attractive. The carefree or irresponsible life-styles of his peers may seem exciting. The skepticism taught in the classroom may be seductive. But he should never forget that outside the light, 'darkness covers the earth.' (Isaiah 60:2) In

the long run, this bedarkened world has nothing good to offer.—1 John 2:15-17.

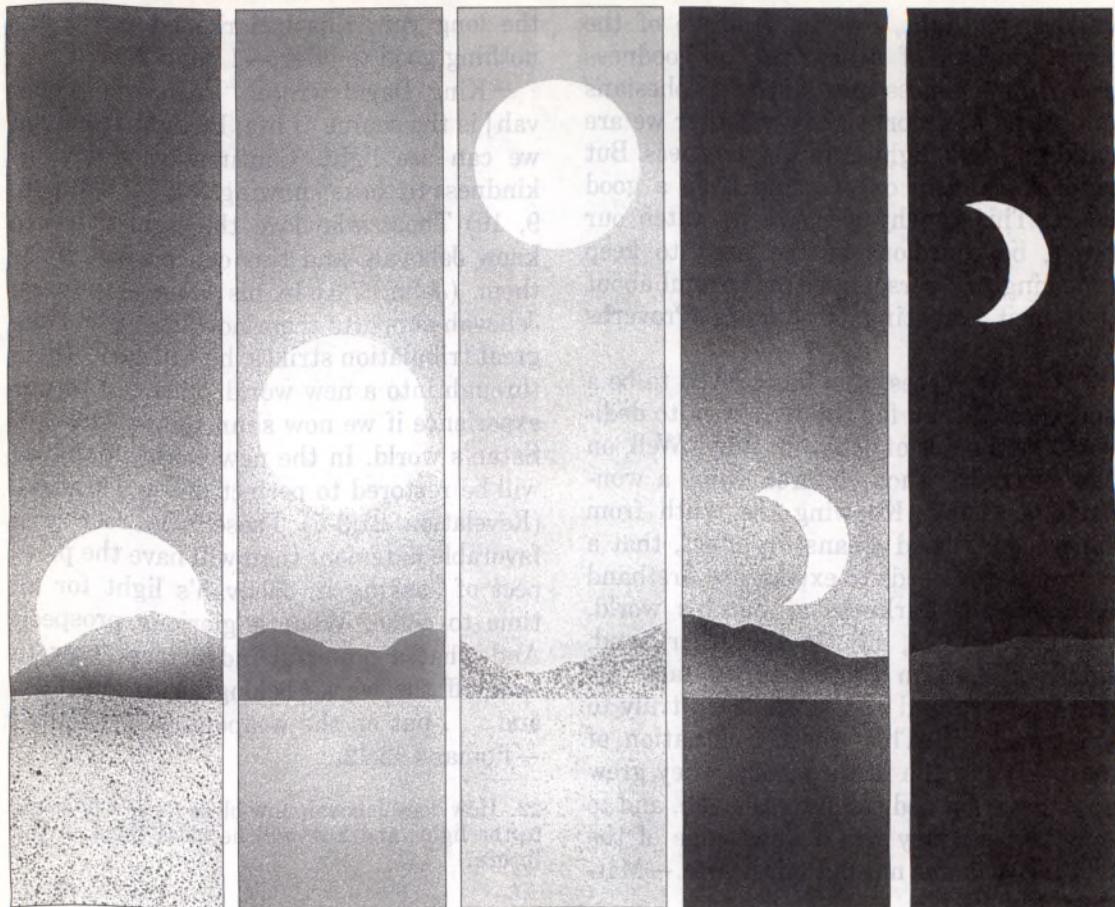
<sup>22</sup> King David wrote: "With you [Jehovah] is the source of life; by light from you we can see light. Continue your loving-kindness to those knowing you." (Psalm 36:9, 10) Those who love the light come to know Jehovah, and this can mean life for them. (John 17:3) In his loving-kindness, Jehovah supports them now, and when the great tribulation strikes, he will carry them through into a new world. This can be our experience if we now shun the darkness of Satan's world. In the new world, mankind will be restored to perfect life in Paradise. (Revelation 21:3-5) Those who receive a favorable judgment then will have the prospect of basking in Jehovah's light for all time to come. What a glorious prospect! And what a powerful inducement now to "put off the works belonging to darkness and . . . put on the weapons of the light!" —Romans 13:12.

22. How does Jehovah now bless those who come to the light, and how will he bless them in the future?

### Do You Remember?

- Why did most Jews of Jesus' day reject the light?
- To what extent has the light been shining in modern times?
- What warnings concerning selfishness and pride do first-century examples provide?
- What is essential if we are going to remain in the light?
- What blessings are in store for lovers of the light?

20, 21. (a) What special challenge faces children born into Christian families? (b) What challenge faces all children of Christian parents?



## 'WHAT TIME WAS IT?'

**W**HAT time is it?" How often have you asked that question? In our fast-paced modern age, we are always conscious of time. Most of our daily activities—getting up in the morning, going to work, having our meals, meeting friends, and so on—are tightly governed by time. And we rely on an array of items—clocks, watches, alarms, radios—to tell us what time it is.

What about in Bible times when people did not have timepieces like ours? How did

they count time? Does the Bible record give any indication of this? Knowing the time of day when a certain Bible event took place may give you fresh insight into the Word of God and add enjoyment to your Bible study.

### God-Given Time Indicators

In early days the time of an event was usually marked by observing the sun or the moon, "the two great luminaries" that the Creator had placed in the heavens "to

make a division between the day and the night.” (Genesis 1:14-16) For example, it was “when the dawn ascended” that the two angels urged Lot and his family to flee the doomed city of Sodom. (Genesis 19:15, 16) And it was “about evening time” that Abraham’s faithful servant arrived at the well where he met Rebekah.—Genesis 24:11, 15.

On occasion, more precise designations of time are given. For instance, Abimelech, Judge Gideon’s violent son, was advised to make a dash against the city of Shechem “in the morning . . . as soon as the sun shines forth.” (Judges 9:33) Evidently there was a tactical reason behind this. The glare of the rising sun behind Abimelech’s forces must have made it very difficult for the defenders of Shechem to discern the attacking armies in “the shadows of the mountains.”—Judges 9:36-41.

### Idiomatic Time Expressions

The Hebrews used expressions that are both colorful and interesting to denote time. Not only do they convey to us a feeling of the local environment and customs but they also reveal something about the circumstances of the action.

For example, Genesis 3:8 tells us that it was “about the breezy part of the day” when Jehovah spoke to Adam and Eve on the day they sinned. This is understood to be close to sundown when cool breezes would come up, bringing relief from the heat of the day. Usually, as the day draws to its end, it is time to relax and rest. Yet, Jehovah did not let a serious judicial matter linger on to the next day when there was still time to take care of it.

On the other hand, Genesis 18:1, 2 shows that Jehovah’s angels came to the tent of Abraham at Mamre “about the heat

of the day.” Picture the midday sun blazing overhead in the Judean hills. The heat could be oppressive. It was the customary time to have a meal and to rest. (See Genesis 43:16, 25; 2 Samuel 4:5.) Accordingly, Abraham was “sitting at the entrance of the tent,” where there might be a little movement of air, perhaps taking a respite after his meal. We can appreciate all the more this elderly man’s hospitality when we read that he “began running to meet” the visitors and then went “hurrying to the tent” to tell Sarah to prepare the bread, after which he “ran to the herd” and “went hurrying to get it ready.” All of this in the heat of the day!—Genesis 18:2-8.

### Night Hours of the Hebrews

The Hebrews evidently divided the night into three periods, called “watches.” Each one covered one third of the time between sundown and sunrise, or about four hours, depending on the season. (Psalm 63:6) It was “at the start of the middle night watch,” which ran from about ten at night to about two in the morning, that Gideon made his attack on the Midianite camp. An attack at this time clearly took the guards by complete surprise. Surely, the cautious Gideon could not have chosen a more strategic time for his attack!—Judges 7:19.

At the time of the Exodus, Jehovah made “the sea go back by a strong east wind all night long,” allowing the Israelites to cross over on dry land. By the time the Egyptians caught up with them, it was already “the morning watch,” and Jehovah went throwing the camp of the Egyptians into confusion, finally destroying them by bringing the water “back to its normal condition at the approaching of morning.” (Exodus 14:21-27) So it took almost

a whole night for the sea to be divided and the Israelites to cross through it.

### In the First Century

By the first century, the Jews had adopted the count of 12 hours to the day. This is why in one of his illustrations, Jesus said: “There are twelve hours of daylight, are there not?” (John 11:9) These were counted from sunrise to sunset, or roughly from six in the morning to six in the evening. Thus, “the third hour” would be about nine in the morning. It was at this time on the day of Pentecost that holy spirit was poured out. When the people accused the disciples of being “full of sweet wine,” Peter quickly laid that accusation to rest. Surely no one would be drunk at that early hour!—Acts 2:13, 15.

Similarly, Jesus’ statement “my food is for me to do the will of him that sent me” takes on added meaning when we consider the time element involved. “The hour was about the sixth,” according to John 4:6, or about noontime. After trekking through the hilly country of Samaria all morning, Jesus and the disciples would be hungry and thirsty. That was why the disciples urged him to eat when they returned with food. Little did they know the strength and nourishment that Jesus received from doing Jehovah’s work. Jesus’ statement was no doubt more than a figure of speech. He literally was sustained by doing God’s work even though it must have been hours since he had eaten.—John 4:31-34.

As sunrise and sunset varied according to the time of year, usually only the approximate time of an event was given. Thus, we usually read of events taking place at the third, sixth, or ninth hour—often meaning approximately at those times. (Matthew 20:3, 5; 27:45, 46; Mark 15:25, 33, 34; Luke 23:44; John 19:14; Acts

10:3, 9, 30) However, when the time element was essential to the narrative, more specific statements of time were given. For example, to the man who was anxious to know if his son really got better by the power of Jesus, the slaves answered: “Yesterday at the seventh hour [about one o’clock in the afternoon] the fever left him.”—John 4:49-54.

### Nocturnal Divisions

By the time of Roman domination, the Jews seem to have adopted the Greek and Roman division of the night into four watches instead of the three that they used formerly. At Mark 13:35, Jesus evidently referred to the four divisions. The “late in the day” watch ran from sunset until about nine in the evening. The second watch, the “midnight” watch, began at about nine o’clock and ended at midnight. The “cockcrowing” covered from midnight until about three o’clock. And the final watch, “early in the morning,” expired at dawn, or about six o’clock.

The “cockcrowing” watch is of particular interest because of Jesus’ words to Peter at Mark 14:30: “Before a cock crows twice, even you will disown me three times.” While some commentators maintain that the “twice” refers to specific points of time—midnight and dawn, respectively—*A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, edited by James Hastings, indicates that “as a matter of fact cocks crow during the night, in the East as elsewhere, at irregular times from midnight onward.” Apparently, Jesus was not referring to the specific time when Peter would deny him. Rather, he was giving a sign to mark his words to Peter, which were accurately fulfilled that very night.—Mark 14:72.

It was “in the fourth watch period of the night”—between three and six in the morning—that Jesus, walking on the wa-

ter of the Sea of Galilee, came to his disciples, who were in a boat "many hundreds of yards away from land." It is, perhaps, easy to understand why the disciples "were troubled, saying: 'It is an apparition!' And they cried out in their fear." (Matthew 14:23-26) On the other hand, this shows that Jesus must have spent considerable time praying by himself in the mountain. Since this was soon after John the Baptizer had been beheaded by Herod Antipas and just before the Passover, which marked the start of the last year of Jesus' earthly ministry, Jesus surely had much to meditate on in his personal prayer to the Father.

Along with the four watches, a 12-hour count of the nighttime was also in use. In order to escort Paul safely to Caesarea, military commander Claudius Lysias told his officers to get ready a band of 470

soldiers "at the third hour of the night." (Acts 23:23, 24) Thus Paul was taken safely under cover of night away from Jerusalem.

### Know the Time of Day

Reading and meditating on accounts of what happened among God's ancient people is a source of pleasure and spiritual strength. If you can include the time factor in your consideration, it will certainly increase the joy of your Bible study. Why so? Because in this way you can be well informed as to the Word of God. Publications like *Insight on the Scriptures* and the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures With References* are invaluable aids in this respect (both published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.). They will help you to find the answer when you ask yourself: 'What time was it?'

## A N N U A L M E E T I N G

OCTOBER 5, 1991

**T**HE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 5, 1991, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:30 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The members of the Corporation should inform the Secretary's Office now of any change in their mailing addresses during the past year so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them shortly after August 1.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual

meeting, are to be returned so as to reach the Office of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 15. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and reports, will be concluded by 1:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. Because of limited space, admission will be by ticket only. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone lines to other auditoriums.



## "FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE"

**E**VERY day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus." (Acts 5:42) Jehovah's Witnesses often use this text and the one at Acts 20:20 to prove the Scriptural basis for their door-to-door preaching work. In Germany, however, some critics of Jehovah's Witnesses have challenged the way the *New World Translation* renders these verses, claiming that it misrepresents the original Greek.

Do such claims have validity? Not at all. For one thing, at least six other German Bible translations render these verses similarly. Among them are the revised *Zürcher Bibel* and the "New Testaments" by Rupert Storr, Franz Sigge, and Jakob Schäfer (revised by N. Adler). Many English versions agree.

German scholar Hans Bruns justifies his translation, "from house to house," at Acts 5:42, saying: "According to the original

text, it seems as if they went from house to house." Yes, *kat' oi'kon*, the original expression in this text, is not used in an adverbial sense ("at home") but in a distributive sense, literally meaning "according to house." (The plural form, *kat' oi'kous*, meaning "according to houses," is found at Acts 20:20.) Other scholars, such as Heinz Schürmann, substantiate the distributive translation of these expressions. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, publishers of an exegetical dictionary to the New Testament, say that this expression can be rendered "house after house." A number of English reference works explain this verse similarly.

Once again, then, the *New World Translation* has stood up to the attacks of critics. More important, it is clear that there is a solid Biblical basis for the house-to-house ministry. (Compare Matthew 10:11-14; 24:14.) Jehovah's Witnesses are privileged to imitate their first-century counterparts in this regard.



## WHAT A JOY TO SIT AT JEHOVĀH'S TABLE!

As told by Ernst Wauer

Today it is relatively easy for me to attend meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, to study the Bible, and to preach the good news of the Kingdom. However, that has not always been the case here in Germany. When Adolf Hitler was dictator, from 1933 to 1945, participation in such Christian activities entailed risking one's life.

THE year before Hitler came to power, when I was 30 years old, I first met Jehovah's Witnesses in Dresden. In January 1935, I dedicated myself to Jehovah and expressed my desire to be baptized. Our work had already been banned in 1933, so I was asked: "Do you realize what your decision means? You are putting your family, health, work, freedom, and even your life at risk!"

"I have counted the cost, and I am willing to do God's will and to die for it," I replied.

Even before my baptism, I had started to

preach from house to house. At one door, I met a uniformed SS (Hitler's Blackshirts/Elite Guard) youth leader, who shouted: "Don't you know that this is prohibited? I am going to call the police!"

"Go ahead. I am only speaking about the Bible, and there is no law against that," I calmly replied. Thereupon I turned to the next door and was promptly invited in by a friendly gentleman. Nothing happened to me.

Soon I was entrusted to look after a study group of from five to seven Witnesses who

met weekly. We studied issues of *The Watchtower* that had been smuggled into Germany from neighboring countries. So, despite the ban, we regularly sat down at "the table of Jehovah" in order to get strengthened spiritually.—1 Corinthians 10:21.

### Undergoing Trials

In 1936, J. F. Rutherford, the president of the Watch Tower Society, visited an assembly in Lucerne, Switzerland, and invited brothers who were in positions of theocratic oversight in Germany to be present. Since the passports of many of the brothers had been confiscated and a number of the brothers were being closely watched by the police, only a few could attend. The brother overseeing the work in Dresden asked me to represent him in Lucerne.

"But am I not too young and inexperienced?" I asked.

"What matters now," he assured me, "is being faithful. That's the main thing."

Shortly after returning from Lucerne, I was arrested and suddenly torn away from my wife, Eva, and our two little children. On my way to police headquarters in Dresden, I racked my brains for a scripture to guide me. Proverbs 3:5, 6 came to mind: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." Recalling this text strengthened me for the initial interrogation. Afterward I was locked in a cramped cell, and for a moment I had a desperate feeling of abandonment. But fervent prayer to Jehovah filled me with peace.

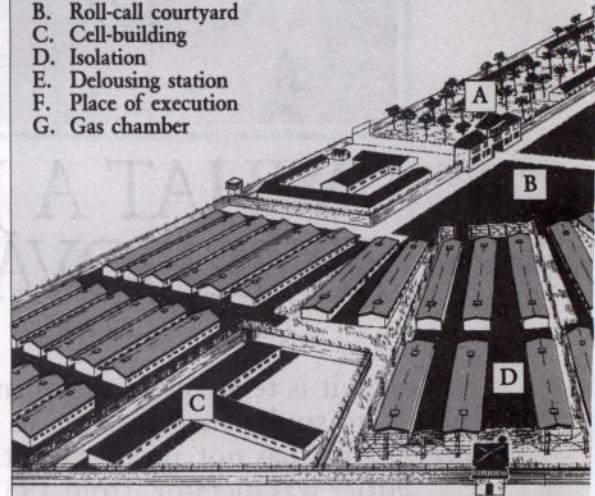
The court sentenced me to prison for 27 months. I was kept in solitary confinement for one year at the penitentiary in Bautzen. Once, a retired judicial officer—he was sub-

stituting for someone else—opened my cell door and remarked sympathetically: "I know you're not allowed to read anything, but maybe you need something to take your mind off it all." With that he slipped me a few old family magazines and said: "I'll collect them tonight."

Actually I didn't need anything to 'take my mind off it all.' While in solitary confinement, I recalled Bible texts from memory and developed sermons and delivered

SACHSENHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP

- A. SS barracks
- B. Roll-call courtyard
- C. Cell-building
- D. Isolation
- E. Delousing station
- F. Place of execution
- G. Gas chamber

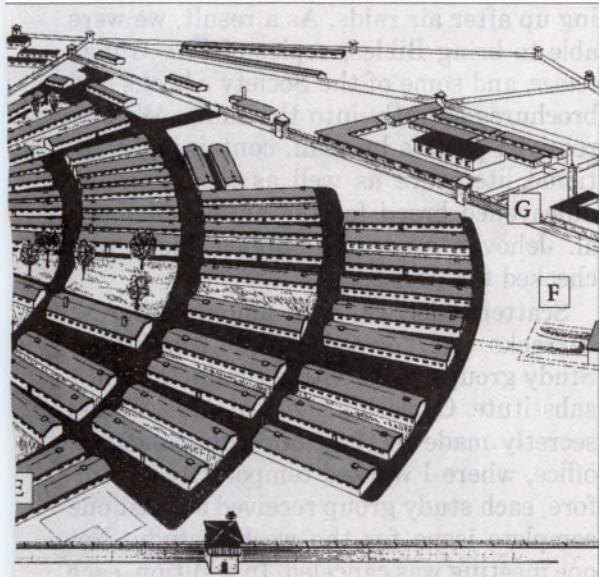


them aloud. But I glanced over the magazines to see if they contained any Scripture texts—and I found several! One was Philippians 1:6, which reads in part: "I am confident . . . that he who started a good work in you will carry it to completion." I thanked Jehovah for this encouragement.

Later I was transferred to a labor camp. Then, in the spring of 1939, when my confinement was due to end, the camp supervisor asked whether my views had changed. "I intend to stay loyal to my faith" was my reply. He then informed me that I would be transferred to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

There I surrendered my personal clothing, showered, was shaved of all body hair, and was supplied with prison clothes. Then I was put under the shower again, this time fully clothed—a process the SS termed "baptism." Afterward I was forced to stand outside, completely drenched, until evening.

In the camps Jehovah's Witnesses were subjected to special brutality by the SS. On many occasions we had to stand on the



parade ground for hours on end. Sometimes one of us would sigh: "Wouldn't it be nice to have a really good meal?" Another would reply: "Don't fix your mind on such things. Just think what an honor it is to stand up for Jehovah's name and his Kingdom." And somebody else would add: "Jehovah will strengthen us!" In this way we encouraged one another. Sometimes just a friendly nodding of the head was sufficient to say: "I want to be loyal; you do too!"

### Spiritual Food in the Camp

Certain ones took the lead in feeding the brothers spiritually, and I was selected to

assist them. A thick Luther Bible was all we had. Possessing it, of course, was forbidden. So this treasure was hidden, and in each cellblock only one designated brother had access to it for a short time. When it was my turn, I would creep under the bed with a pocket lamp and read for about 15 minutes. I memorized scriptures that I could later discuss with the brothers in our cellblock. Thus, the distribution of spiritual food was organized to some degree.

All the brothers were encouraged to ask Jehovah in prayer for further spiritual food, and he heard our supplications. In the winter of 1939/40 a newly imprisoned brother managed to smuggle a few new issues of *The Watchtower* into the camp inside his wooden leg. This seemed like a miracle, since all persons were carefully searched.

These magazines, for safety reasons, were made available to the selected brothers for one day at a time. Once, when a garage was under construction, I cowered in a trench and read while a brother kept watch outside. On another occasion I put *The Watchtower* on my lap during our "sewing hour" (in the evenings we sat in our barrack repairing gloves and other items), while brothers sat on either side as look-outs. When an SS guard came, I quickly stashed *The Watchtower* away. To have been caught would have meant my life!

Jehovah helped us in a marvelous way to commit to memory the fortifying thoughts in the articles. Sheer exhaustion usually drove me into a deep sleep at night. But on nights after I read *The Watchtower*, I would wake up several times and recall the thoughts quite clearly. The designated brothers in other cellblocks had similar experiences. Thus Jehovah sharpened our memory so that we could distribute the spiritual food. We did this by approaching

each brother personally and strengthening him.

### Faithful Until Death

On September 15, 1939, our labor detachment had to march back to camp earlier than usual. What was the occasion? August Dickmann, one of our young brothers, was to be publicly executed. The Nazis were confident that this would convince a large number of Witnesses to renounce their faith. After the execution, all other prisoners were dismissed. But we Jehovah's Witnesses were hounded back and forth on the parade ground, kicked and beaten with sticks until we couldn't move anymore. We were ordered to sign a declaration renouncing our faith; otherwise, we also were to be shot.

By the next day, nobody had signed. In fact, a new prisoner, who had signed upon arrival, now retracted his signature. He preferred to die with his brothers rather than leave the camp as a traitor. In the following months, we were punished with hard labor, continual mistreatment, and deprivation of food. Over a hundred of our brothers died during the severe winter of 1939/40. They kept their integrity to Jehovah and his Kingdom to the very end.

Then Jehovah provided some relief. Many brothers were relocated to work in newly established camps, where they received more food. Moreover, the bullying declined somewhat. In the spring of 1940, I was transferred to the Neuengamme concentration camp.

### Spiritual Provisions in Neuengamme

When I arrived, there was a group of some 20 Witnesses, with no Bible or other publications. I prayed to Jehovah that he might help me use the things I had learned in Sachsenhausen to strengthen the brothers in Neuengamme. As a first step, I re-

called scriptures and selected them as daily texts. Then provisions were made for meetings in which I could explain thoughts from *Watchtower* articles I had read in Sachsenhausen. When new brothers arrived, they reported the things they had learned from recent *Watchtowers*.

By 1943 the number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Neuengamme had risen to 70. Jehovah's Witnesses came to be preferred to do work outside the camp, such as cleaning up after air raids. As a result, we were able to bring Bibles, copies of *The Watchtower*, and some of the Society's books and brochures secretly into the camp. We also received parcels by mail, containing additional literature as well as red wine and unleavened bread for the annual Memorial. Jehovah evidently blinded those who checked the parcels.

Scattered as we were among different barracks, we formed seven *Watchtower* Study groups, each with a conductor and a substitute. Copies of *The Watchtower* were secretly made in the camp commandant's office, where I worked temporarily. Therefore, each study group received at least one complete issue for the weekly study. Not one meeting was canceled. In addition, each morning on the parade ground, the groups got a copy of the daily text, including a comment taken from *The Watchtower*.

Once the SS had a holiday, so we were able to hold a half-day convention and to discuss how to preach in the camp. We divided the camp into territories and tried systematically to reach the prisoners with the "good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) Since the prisoners came from various countries, we made multilingual testimony cards that explained our work and the Kingdom. We preached so zealously that political prisoners complained: "Wherever you go, all you hear is talk about

Jehovah!" A field service report of our activity even reached the branch office in Bern, Switzerland.

All went well until the Gestapo made an investigation of all concentration camps in 1944. Our literature depot in Neuengamme was not detected, but a few things were found with Karl Schwarzer and me. For three days we were interrogated and beaten. When the ordeal ended, both of us were covered with bruises. However, with Jehovah's help, we survived.

### Spiritual Blessings in Abundance

I was freed by Allied troops in May 1945. The day after being liberated, I began marching along with a small group of brothers and interested persons. Tired, we sat down at a well in the first village we came to and had a drink of water. Feeling refreshed, I went from house to house with a Bible under my arm. A young woman was quite moved to learn that we Jehovah's Witnesses had been in concentration camps for our faith. She disappeared into her kitchen, returning with fresh milk and sandwiches for our group.

Afterward, still wearing our camp clothing, we proclaimed the Kingdom message through that whole village. Another villager invited us in for a generous spread. He served us things we had lacked for years. What a mouth-watering sight! Yet, we did not just devour the food. We said a prayer and ate in a calm, well-mannered fashion. This impressed the onlookers so much that when we began a meeting afterward, they listened to the Bible talk. A woman accepted the message and is today our spiritual sister.

We marched on and experienced Jehovah's care in amazing ways. What a grand feeling it has been to continue enjoying, now in freedom, all the spiritual food published by Jehovah's organization and to

share it with others! In the years that have followed, our absolute trust in Jehovah has been rewarded again and again.

From 1945 to 1950, I had the privilege of serving in the Magdeburg Bethel and then, until 1955, in the office of the Watch Tower Society in Berlin. Afterward, I served as a traveling overseer until 1963, when my wife, Hilde, announced that she was expecting a baby. (Eva, my first wife, had died during my detention, and I married again in 1958.) Our daughter later became a zealous Witness.

What about the children from my first marriage? Unfortunately, my son showed no interest in the truth. But my daughter Gisela did, and she attended the Gilead missionary school in 1953. She now serves, together with her husband, at one of the Assembly Halls in Germany. With Jehovah's help, I have been able to stay in the regular pioneer service since 1963 and to serve where help was needed, first in Frankfurt and then in Tübingen.

To this day I continue to enjoy all the provisions made by Jehovah's organization for his household of faith. (1 Timothy 3:15) Nowadays, it is so easy to get spiritual food, but do we always appreciate it? I am confident that Jehovah has abundant blessings in store for those who trust in him, stay loyal, and feed at his table.

### In Our Next Issue

- **Health and Happiness  
—How Can You Find Them?**
- **The Abundant Goodness  
of Jehovah**
- **Do You Deny  
Sinful Tendencies?**

# Kingdom Proclaimers Report

## Preaching "a Release to the Captives" in Brazil

JEHOVAH'S spirit is working mightily on his people in Brazil as they preach the good news of a release to those in bondage to false religion. (Isaiah 61: 1, 2; Luke 4:18) In 1947 there were only 648 Witnesses in the country. In 1967 the number had climbed to 41,548. With Jehovah's blessing, in early 1991 it reached a peak of over 302,000! Truly, 'God made it grow.' (1 Corinthians 3:7) In the 1990 service year alone, 27,068 were baptized.

Such growth made necessary the organizing of one new circuit each month, and 150 new Kingdom Halls were dedicated in just one year. Moreover, the branch office purchased 450 acres of land to expand their printing facilities, where they are now printing Bibles on their own presses. Thus the Witnesses in Brazil work hard to help meekhearted ones to get out of "Babylon the Great" before "the great tribulation."—Revelation 7:9, 10, 14; 18:2, 4.

An eight-year-old publisher left a book with the wife of the chief of police and then, all alone, made a return visit. His objective was to have the lady read some of the stories to him and have her tell him what she had understood from each one. As she explained the stories to him, she herself began to

appreciate the book and asked him to introduce her to his mother. He did so, and now the lady is enjoying a regular home Bible study.

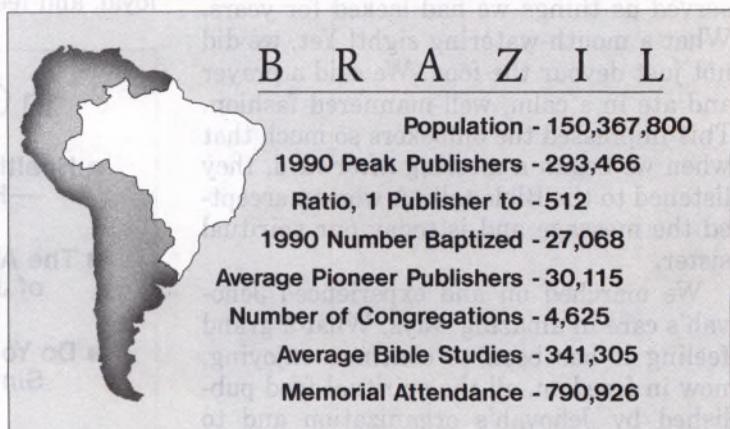
□ In 1984, Maria was tired of the hypocrisy she perceived in society, and she despaired because of the disasters she read about that were happening in the world. So she adopted the punk life-style. She states: "Our goal was to be against everything and everyone. My appearance was designed just to shock people—odd, dark-colored clothes, head partly shaved. I forgot my husband, children, and home and began to smoke marijuana and use cocaine in order to get away from reality. But this just made me feel worse. I cried. When I read the Bible, it was without understanding. So I prayed to God for help.

"One day two Witnesses vis-

ited my home and, after a brief discussion, offered me two magazines. Leafing through one of them, I noticed an article entitled 'Independence From God—Why Not?\*' The article touched my heart. I felt that God had answered my prayers, and that very day, the Witnesses began studying the Bible with me. From then on I made changes for the better. My husband and family at first objected to my study of the Bible, but as they saw the changes I was making, they began to encourage me. I am now a baptized servant of God."

Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil, as in all other parts of the earth, are active in preaching "a release to the captives." Multitudes are responding, finding true liberation and happiness in serving Jehovah.

\* November 1, 1985, issue of *The Watchtower*.



# Questions From Readers

- What basic counsel is Proverbs 27:23 offering to spiritual shepherds as well as to Christians in general?

The verse reads: "You ought to know positively the appearance of your flock. Set your heart to your droves." (Proverbs 27:23) This text has often been used to encourage spiritual shepherds to show interest in and to be familiar with the situation and problems of Christians in the congregation. Such encouragement is appropriate, since the Bible likens the elders to shepherds and the congregation to a flock of sheep. (Acts 20:28, 29; 1 Peter 5:2-4) Yet, though the above principle applies, this verse is not basically about spiritual shepherds.

The book of Proverbs contains many verses that stand alone as pithy statements of counsel, but Proverbs 27:23 is part of a group of verses: "You ought to know positively the appearance of your flock. Set your heart to your droves; for treasure will not be to time indefinite, nor a diadem for all generations. The green grass has departed, and the new grass has appeared, and the vegetation of the mountains has been gathered. The young rams are for your clothing, and the he-goats are the price of the field. And there is a sufficiency of goats' milk for your food, for the food of your household, and the means of life for your girls." —Proverbs 27:23-27.

This inspired passage extols having a life-style marked by diligence, industriousness, simplicity, and recognition of our dependence on Jehovah. It does this by highlighting the pastoral life of an Israelite shepherd, perhaps in contrast with a flamboyant life based on business deals and quick riches.

"Treasure," or wealth gained in fast business ventures, with resulting prominence ("diadem"), can easily disappear, as many will testify. There is thus much to be said for a simple life, such as that followed by ancient shepherds in caring for livestock. That way of life was not simple in the sense of being carefree. A shepherd needed to be attentive to his flock, making sure that the sheep were protected. (Psalm 23:4) If, in giving them attention, he found a sick or injured sheep, he might anoint it with soothing oil. (Psalm 23:5; Ezekiel 34:4; Zechariah 11:16) In most cases the diligent shepherd

who set his heart to his droves would see his efforts produce results—the gradual increase of his flock.

A hardworking and careful shepherd had a dependable source of help—Jehovah. How so? Well, God provides the seasons and cycles that normally result in ample grass that could feed the flock. (Psalm 145:16) When, with seasonal changes, the green grass disappears from lower regions, it might be abundant at higher elevations, where an attentive shepherd could move his animals.

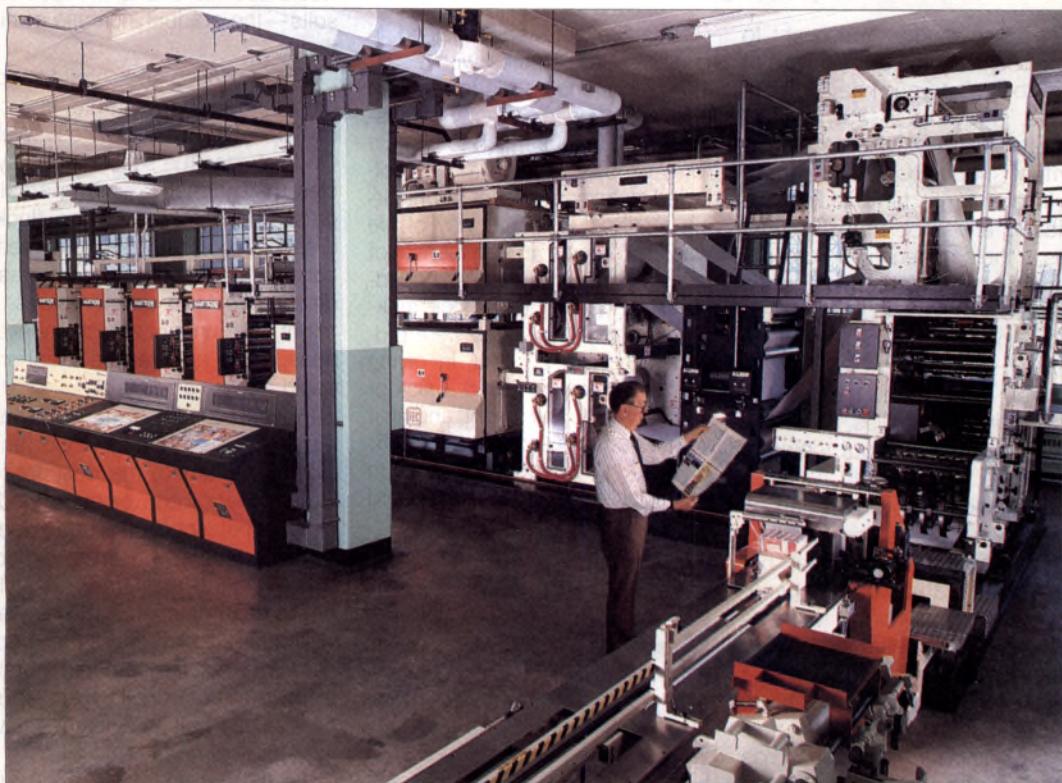
Proverbs 27:26, 27 mentions one result of such labor—food and clothing. Granted, the description is not of fancy convenience foods or gourmet specialties, nor does it give a laborer reason to expect clothing in the latest designer style or the best material. But if he was willing to put forth effort, the shepherd and his family could obtain from the flock milk (and thus cheese), as well as wool for weaving sturdy garments.

So the advice: "You ought to know positively the appearance of your flock" is not primarily for spiritual overseers; it is for all Christians. It underscores the value of our being content with sustenance and covering obtained by steady, diligent work, trusting that God will not abandon us. (Psalm 37:25; 2 Thessalonians 3:8, 12; Hebrews 13:5) Comparing Proverbs 27:23-27 with the counsel at Luke 12:15-21 and 1 Timothy 6:6-11, we see how consistent has been God's advice on this matter. So each of us might reread Proverbs 27:23-27, asking ourselves, 'Am I taking this to heart and applying it in my daily life?'

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# WHICH RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE HAS THE LARGEST CIRCULATION?



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