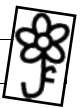


THEOCRATIC MINISTRY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

2011

This document contains information for the TMS 2011, includes references in talks where research is needed. It's recommended you do your own research in all cases and avail yourself of the study aids provided by the FDS. All information has been obtained from the WT Library CD ROM.



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SCHEDULE 2011

LETTER



January

- Jan. 3 Bible Reading: 2 Chrónicles 29 a 32**
- No. 1:** 2 Chronicles 30:13-22
- No. 2:** Was Jesus Christ Simply a Good Man? (rs p.210¶1)
- No. 3:** How People Are Slaves Because of the Fear of Death (Heb. 2:15)

Bible Reading: 2 Chrónicles 29 a 32

*** w05 12/1 p. 21 Highlights From the Book of Second Chronicles ***

32:6, 7. We too must be courageous and strong as we “put on the complete suit of armor from God” and carry on spiritual warfare.—Ephesians 6:11-18.

*** w96 8/15 p. 6 Practical Lessons From the Promised Land ***

In what has been called one of the great engineering feats of antiquity, Hezekiah dug a tunnel from the spring of Gihon all the way to the Pool of Siloam. Averaging 6 feet [**1.8 m**] in height, this tunnel was 1,749 feet [**533 m**] long. Just imagine it—a tunnel almost a third of a mile [**half a kilometer**] long, cut through rock! Today, some 2,700 years later, visitors to Jerusalem can wade through this masterpiece of engineering, commonly known as Hezekiah’s tunnel.—2 Kings 20:20; **2 Chronicles 32:30.**

Hezekiah’s efforts to protect and increase Jerusalem’s water supply can teach us a practical lesson. Jehovah is “the source of living water.” (Jeremiah 2:13) His thoughts, contained in the Bible, are life-sustaining. That is why personal Bible study is essential. But opportunity for study, and the resulting knowledge, will not simply flow to you. You may have to ‘dig tunnels,’ such as through your hard-packed daily routine, to make room for it. (Proverbs 2:1-5; Ephesians 5:15, 16) Once you have begun, stick to your schedule, giving high priority to your personal study. Be careful not to let anyone or anything rob you of this precious water supply.—Philippians 1:9, 10.

No. 1: 2 Chronicles 30:13-22

No. 2: Was Jesus Christ Simply a Good Man? (rs p.210¶1)

*** rs p. 210 Jesus Christ ***

Was Jesus Christ simply a good man?

Interestingly, Jesus rebuked a man who addressed him with the title “Good Teacher,” because Jesus recognized not himself but his Father to be the standard of goodness. (Mark 10:17, 18) However, to measure up to what people generally mean when they say that someone is good, Jesus surely must have been truthful. Indeed, even his enemies acknowledged that he was. (Mark 12:14) He himself said that he had a prehuman existence, that he was the unique Son of God, that he was the Messiah, the one whose coming was foretold throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. Either he was what he said or he was a gross impostor, but neither option allows for the view that he was simply a good man.—John 3:13; 10:36; 4:25, 26; Luke 24:44-48.

No. 3: How People Are Slaves Because of the Fear of Death (Heb. 2:15)

*** w73 10/1 pp. 603-606 Release from a Climate of Fear ***

THE man was getting old. If at all possible, he stayed near a companion, rarely going afar by himself. For he feared that otherwise he might meet death without anyone around to put a little water into his throat. This would be disastrous, he believed, because he would be in dire need of water to climb the steep hill that leads into eternity. Too, whatever companions surrounded him at death would entreat his spirit not to permit evil to enter the house that he was leaving, and entreat it to allow the women of his family to bear children.

In another part of the earth a man also viewed the prospect of death with dread. The belief of his people was that for a time the dead still possessed sensation, feeling. First, he believed, he would feel the crushing weight of the grave, then eternal darkness. Then, somehow, he would be leaning on two sticks cut from his garden when angels of death would arrive to ask his spirit: “Who is your God?” While he was being questioned, his head would strike the tombstone and he would sneeze and say: “Glory to Allah, lord of the universe.” In order to be sure to answer properly after death, the man, while living, always rehearsed this statement when he sneezed.

At the same time, far away, another man was fearful that he might die a sudden or violent death, not because of the kind of death itself, but because he might not have time to be “shriven” (granted absolution by a priest’s services), thus



making his final peace with God. His relatives, however, were more fearful than he was, for they must quickly open all the doors and windows at the moment of his death, to liberate the soul. This is because they believe that great care must be taken not to offend the souls of the dead, who have malevolent powers. A member of the family places his hands over the dead man's heart and closes his eyes, lest he cast a spell. Mirrors in the house are covered so that both the living and the dead may not see the reflection of the dead person or of death itself. The man's cattle and bees, now belonging to a new owner, are quickly notified of the death so that they will not blindly follow their former master in dying.

Yes, fear of death and, more especially, fear of the dead, are universal. The three persons just described were, respectively, a native of West Africa, a Moslem of Iran and a Catholic peasant of Poland. Their views differed in detail, but they had the same fear of death and the dead.

Even in Russia, the efforts of a materialistic Communistic government have not eliminated the fear and mystery of death and the desire to live on after death. In fact, the permanent embalment and display of Lenin's body and, later, the body of Josef Stalin beside it, is very similar to the ancestor worship of African and Asian tribes. It actually constitutes a cult of national heroes. And the elaborateness of state funerals and their ceremonials reveal their preoccupation with death to be greater than they would like to admit.

One writer observes: "Even the most hard-boiled materialist, who his life long has loudly voiced the conviction that death is the end, realizes when the hour of death comes that his theory is only a hypothesis which may or may not be correct. He too then notices that as a person he is something other than an animal with a specially large and differentiated brain. He then sees that his materialistic theory does not cover his personality and that his alleged explanation of death amounts to ignorance."

THE SLAVERY THAT FEAR OF DEATH BRINGS

The Bible is therefore fully true when it speaks of those "who for fear of death were subject to slavery all through their lives." (Heb. 2:15) How many persons under dictator rule have wanted to speak out against atrocities they see committed, but their lips are sealed by fear of death! How many have been controlled through threats against relatives living in dictator lands! But, more oppressively, fear of the dead, particularly of ancestors and dead members of the family, causes millions to live in a veritable climate of fear.

The Hindu, for example, believes he has many lives to live through a process of reincarnation, until he at last reaches a state of reabsorption into or identity with the "Oversoul," *Brahma*, the essence of the universe, immaterial, uncreated, timeless. One Hindu man recounted that all his life he had lived in dread of the many "deaths" and "lives" that he had ahead of him, as he would reappear in different animal and human forms for an indefinite period of time.

The Bushmen of Africa attribute all sicknesses and misfortunes mainly to the spirits of the dead, and a person neglecting to propitiate and appease his ancestors may bring harm even to others. The Chamula, a Maya Indian population of Mexico, though "Christianized" as Catholics, try to get the soul of the dead to leave the house by burning red pepper. The smoke supposedly drives the soul out so that it will not linger around the house.

The Bible describes death as an *enemy*, not a friend, of man. (1 Cor. 15:26) And truly death brings shock, grief, loneliness, confusion, a sense of loss and often great hurt to the personality of the survivors. It often cuts off men and women in the prime of life, when they are in their best position to do good for their fellowmen. Aging, which is really the gradual process of dying, debilitates many long before their actual death. Death is a bitter enemy.

But why the fear of the dead or their "souls" or "spirits"? And why the fear of a prospect of "hell fire" or "purgatory"? This is all because of a teaching not found in the Bible—the belief in the immortality of the soul. And why is this so widespread, common to every language and tribe? Because it has an ancient source, ancient enough to affect all nations. When and where was this?

THE WAY OF RELEASE

Is there a way of release from this international climate of fear of death and of the dead? Yes, there is, by getting a knowledge of Bible truth, by coming to know what kind of God the Creator is and what he has provided for man. The apostle Paul states that God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to earth, was born as a man of flesh and blood—not to help angels, not to do anything for angels who had chosen a course of disobedience—but that "through his death he might bring to nothing the one having the means to cause death, that is, the Devil; and that he might emancipate all those who for fear of death were subject to slavery all through their lives."—Heb. 2:14-16; Jude 6.

So, when the nations make offerings for the dead, they are not really helping or propitiating some supposed "spirits" of dead men, for there are no such spirits. The Bible says: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead,



they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, . . . and they have no portion anymore to time indefinite in anything that has to be done under the sun.”—Eccl. 9:5, 6.

There is, therefore, nothing to fear from the dead. They have no consciousness, nothing that lives on to interfere with or trouble those still carrying on with life “under the sun.” It is futile to set out food for them, or to offer gifts in the form of weapons, clothing or special sacrifices.

The one who has held men in fear is the Devil. He had no power to cause Adam and Eve to die. It was Jehovah God who sentenced them to death and drove them out of the garden of Eden, away from the “tree of life.” However, the Devil, by inducing the ancestor of all mankind, Adam, to sin, led to sin and death by inheritance for all men. (Rom. 5:12) God’s Adversary can play upon the sinful tendencies, the weaknesses of men and women, and also on the ignorance of those who do not know the truth. He can lead men into an untimely death. Those who believe in the false idea that dead persons are yet in some way alive fall into the snare of the Devil and his associate wicked demons, who do indeed exist. A person is actually playing into the hands of the demons when he makes sacrifices and performs rites to help the dead, pays money to release souls from a “purgatory” or other imaginary place, or to appease the dead. Of such things, the apostle Paul writes: “The things which the nations sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God.”—1 Cor. 10:20.

Being an enemy, death is truly undesirable and grievous to anyone who loves life. But it should not be a cause of excessive, crushing grief to one who knows the truth about death and about God’s purpose to resurrect the dead during the thousand-year reign of his Messianic King. The Christians in the city of Thessalonica, surrounded by Grecian customs based on the Babylonian belief in the immortality of the soul, were told by the apostle: “Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant concerning those who are sleeping in death; that you may not sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope.”—1 Thess. 4:13.

This true hope God gives to relieve men of fear of what comes after death, the great enemy that has caused so much distress. It removes the pain of death to know that the Lord Jesus Christ, after emptying the grave of all mankind, will also do away with every trace of sin (which brings condemnation to death) in all obedient persons. Then Adamic death, as the last enemy of man to disappear, will itself be thrown into “the lake of fire,” the symbol of everlasting extinction. Thus the resurrection of the earthly dead during Christ’s thousand-year reign will banish the climate of fear in which mankind has lived for centuries. It will be forever removed. What a grand release!—Rev. 20:13, 14; 1 Cor. 15:26; Rom. 8:20, 21.

*** g 12/07 p. 3 Why Do We Fear Death? ***

SHE was regarded by her peers as a pious woman, a true believer. Some even called her “a pillar of her church.” She was taught that death was not really the end but, rather, a passage to the afterlife. Yet, when her own death seemed imminent, she became overwhelmed by fear. Plagued by doubts, the woman asked her spiritual counselor, “There are so many [beliefs about what happens at death]; how do you know which is the right one?”

Virtually every religion and society has embraced the notion that humans continue to exist, or will exist again, after death. Among the many beliefs, which one is true? Many people doubt the existence of an afterlife altogether. What about you? Have you been taught that human life continues after death? Do you believe that it does? Do you fear death?

*** g 12/07 p. 9 Is Death Really the End? ***

No Need for Morbid Fear

Admittedly, the hope that the Bible offers does not necessarily remove all fear of death. It is natural to be apprehensive about the pain and distress that sometimes precede death. Understandably, you may fear the loss of a loved one. And if you fear the sad consequences that your own death might have on your loved ones, that is also natural.

Still, by revealing the true condition of the dead, the Bible helps us to dispel any morbid fear of death. There is no need to fear an afterlife of torture by demons in a burning hell. No need to fear a dark ghostly realm where souls wander restlessly forever. And you need not fear that all the future has to offer is an eternal state of nonexistence. Why? Because God has a limitless memory, and he promises to bring all the dead who are in his memory back to life here on earth. The Bible guarantees this with the words: “The true God is for us a God of saving acts; and to Jehovah the Sovereign Lord belong the ways out from death.”—Psalm 68:20.



January

Jan. 11	Bible reading: 2 Chronicles 33-36
No. 1:	2 Chronicles 34:12-21
No. 2:	What Can We Learn From the Example of Jesus' Mother, Mary?
No. 3:	Was Jesus Just Another Religious Leader? (rs pág. 210¶2)

Bible reading: 2 Chronicles 33-36

***** w05 12/1 p. 21 Highlights From the Book of Second Chronicles *****

33:2-9, 12, 13, 15, 16. A person shows true repentance by abandoning a wrong course and putting forth a determined effort to do what is right. On the basis of genuine repentance, even a person who has acted as wickedly as King Manasseh can receive Jehovah's mercy.

34:1-3. Any negative circumstances of childhood need not prevent us from coming to know God and serving him. A positive influence Josiah may have had during his early years could have come from his repentant grandfather, Manasseh. Whatever positive influences Josiah might have had eventually produced fine results. So it can be with us.

36:15-17. Jehovah is compassionate and patient. However, his compassion and patience are not limitless. People must respond favorably to the Kingdom-preaching work if they are to survive when Jehovah brings an end to this wicked system of things.

36:17, 22, 23. Jehovah's word always comes true.—1 Kings 9:7, 8; Jeremiah 25:9-11.

"Josiah removed all the detestable things out of all the lands that belonged to the sons of Israel," states **2 Chronicles 34:33**, "and he had all who were found in Israel take up service, to serve Jehovah their God." What moved Josiah to do this? When Shaphan the secretary brought the newly discovered book of Jehovah's Law to King Josiah, the king had it read aloud. So touched was Josiah by what he heard that he zealously promoted pure worship throughout his life.

No. 1:	2 Chronicles 34:12-21
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No. 2:	What Can We Learn From the Example of Jesus' Mother, Mary?
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***** w09 1/1 pp. 3-9 What Mary's Example Can Teach Us *****

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by an unexpected challenge or responsibility? Do you feel worn down by the daily struggle of making ends meet? Maybe you are among the millions who feel bewildered and afraid because they have had to leave their homeland as refugees. And who of us has not experienced deep pain and emptiness after losing a loved one in death?

DID you know that Mary, the mother of Jesus, faced all those challenges? What is more, she met them successfully! What can we learn from her example?

Mary is certainly known worldwide. And no wonder, for she played a unique role in the outworking of God's purposes. Moreover, Mary is venerated by many millions of people. The Catholic Church reveres her as a beloved Mother and as a model in faith, hope, and charity. Many have been taught that Mary leads humans to God.

How do you view Jesus' mother? And more important, how does God view her?

A Unique Assignment

Mary, the daughter of Heli, belonged to the Israelite tribe of Judah. The first mention of her in the Bible is in connection with an extraordinary event. An angel visited her and said: "Good day, highly favored one, Jehovah is with you." At first, Mary was disturbed and "began to reason out what sort of greeting this might be." So the angel told her that she had been chosen for the amazing but also extremely serious assignment of conceiving, bearing, and raising God's Son.—Luke 1:26-33.

What a responsibility was placed on the shoulders of this young, unmarried woman! How did she react? Mary might well have wondered who would believe her story. Might such a pregnancy cost her the love of Joseph, her fiancé, or might it subject her to public shame? (Deuteronomy 22:20-24) She did not hesitate to accept this weighty assignment.



Mary's strong faith enabled her to submit to the will of her God, Jehovah. She was convinced that he would look after her. She thus exclaimed: "Look! Jehovah's slave girl! May it take place with me according to your declaration." Mary was willing to face the challenges that lay ahead because she valued the spiritual privilege she had been offered.—Luke 1:38.

When Mary told Joseph that she was pregnant, he intended to break off their engagement. That must have been a time of great anguish for both of them. The Bible does not say how long this difficult period lasted. However, both Mary and Joseph must have felt extremely relieved when Jehovah's angel appeared to Joseph. That spirit emissary explained Mary's extraordinary pregnancy and directed Joseph to take her home as his wife.—Matthew 1:19-24.

Hard Times

Today, many mothers-to-be spend months preparing for the arrival of a baby, and Mary may have done the same. This was to be her first child. Yet, unexpected events complicated her plans. Caesar Augustus decreed a census, requiring all to register in their town of origin. So Joseph took Mary, now in her ninth month of pregnancy, on a journey of about 90 miles [150 km], likely on a donkey's back! Bethlehem was crowded and Mary needed somewhere private to give birth, but the only place available was a stable. Giving birth in a stable must have been hard for Mary. She may well have been both embarrassed and scared.

In these critical moments of her life, Mary surely poured her heart out to Jehovah, trusting that he would care for her and her baby. Later some shepherds arrived, eager to see the baby. They reported that angels had called this child "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Then we read: "Mary began to preserve all these sayings, drawing conclusions in her heart." She meditated on these words and drew strength from them.—Luke 2:11, 16-19.

What about us? We are likely to suffer pain in life. Furthermore, the Bible shows that "time and unforeseen occurrence" can befall any of us, throwing all manner of hardships and challenges in our path. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) If that happens, do we turn bitter, blaming God? Would it not be better to imitate Mary's attitude and draw closer to Jehovah God by learning from his Word, the Bible, and then meditating on what we have learned? Doing so will surely help us to endure trials.

Poor and a Refugee

Mary faced other hardships too—including poverty and a forced flight from her homeland. Have you faced such challenges? According to one report, "half the world—nearly three billion people—live on less than two dollars a day," and millions more struggle to make ends meet even though they live in so-called wealthy countries. What about you? Does the day-to-day grind of providing your family with food, clothing, and shelter tire you out, even overwhelm you at times?

The Bible indicates that Joseph and Mary were relatively poor. How so? Among the few facts that the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—reveal about this couple is that 40 days after Mary gave birth, she and Joseph went to the temple to make the required offering—"a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." (Luke 2:22-24) This sacrifice was allowed only for those who were too poor to offer a young male sheep. Thus, making ends meet was likely a struggle for Joseph and Mary. Even so, they succeeded admirably in creating a loving family environment. Doubtless, spiritual concerns were their priority.—Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

Not long after Jesus' birth, Mary's life was once again turned upside down. An angel told Joseph to take his family and flee to Egypt. (Matthew 2:13-15) This was the second time that Mary had to leave a familiar environment, but this time she had to go to a foreign country. Egypt hosted a large Jewish community, so Mary and Joseph may have been able to live among their own people. Nonetheless, living in a foreign country can be challenging and disorienting. Are you and your family among the many millions who have left their homeland, perhaps for the welfare of their children or to escape danger? If so, you can well understand some of the hardships that Mary may have faced in Egypt.

A Devoted Wife and Mother

Apart from the accounts of the birth and infancy of Jesus, Mary is mentioned little in the Gospels. Yet, we know that Mary and Joseph had at least six other children. You may find this surprising. However, consider what the Gospels say.

Joseph had great respect for Mary's privilege of bearing God's Son. Consequently, he refrained from having sexual intercourse with her before Jesus' birth. Matthew 1:25 states that Joseph "had no intercourse with her *until* she gave birth to a son." The word "until" in this verse indicates that after Jesus' birth, Joseph and Mary had normal sexual relations as husband and wife. The Gospel accounts say that, as a result, Mary had children with Joseph, both sons and daughters. James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas were Jesus' half brothers. She had at least two daughters. (Matthew 13:55, 56) However, these children were conceived in the usual manner.

Mary was a spiritually-minded person. Although the Law did not require women to attend the Passover celebration, Mary customarily accompanied Joseph on the annual journey to Jerusalem for the festival. (Luke 2:41) That would have



involved a round-trip of nearly 190 miles [300 km] each year—with a growing family! But these trips were doubtless happy family occasions.

Many women today imitate Mary's fine example. They work hard and selflessly to fulfill their Scriptural obligations. How often these devoted wives show great patience, endurance, and humility! Reflecting on Mary's attitude helps them keep spiritual matters ahead of their own desire for comfort and pleasure. They know, as Mary doubtless did, that worshipping God together with their husband and children strengthens and unifies the family.

Once when Mary and Joseph were returning from a festival in Jerusalem—probably with several children now—they realized that 12-year-old Jesus was not with them. Can you imagine the distress Mary felt during the frantic three-day search for her son? When she and Joseph finally found him in the temple, Jesus said: "Did you not know that I must be in the house of my Father?" Again, says the account, Mary "carefully kept all these sayings in her heart." Here is another indication of Mary's depth of spirituality. She carefully meditated upon all that happened regarding Jesus. Years later, she likely recounted vivid memories concerning this and other events of Jesus' early life to the Gospel writers.—Luke 2:41-52.

Enduring in the Face of Suffering and Loss

What became of Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father? After briefly appearing in the description of that one incident from Jesus' youth, Joseph disappears from the Gospel record. Some take this absence as an indication that Joseph died sometime before Jesus' ministry began. In any case, it does seem that Mary was a widow by the end of Jesus' ministry. At the time of his death, Jesus entrusted his mother to the apostle John. (John 19:26, 27) Jesus would not likely have done so if Joseph were still living.

Mary and Joseph had been through so much together! They were visited by angels, escaped a tyrant, relocated several times, and raised a large family. How many evenings must they have sat together and talked about Jesus, wondering what he would have to face in the future, concerned about whether they were training him and preparing him in the right way? Then suddenly Mary found herself alone.

Have you lost your mate in death? Do you still feel the pain and emptiness such a loss causes, even after many years? No doubt Mary found solace in her faith and in the knowledge that there will be a resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) Such comforting thoughts, however, did not end Mary's problems. Like so many single mothers today, she faced the challenge of caring for her children without the help of a husband.

It is reasonable to believe that Jesus took over as the main breadwinner of the family when Joseph died. As Jesus' brothers grew, they would be able to accept their share of family responsibilities. When Jesus "was about thirty years old," he left home and commenced his ministry. (Luke 3:23) Most parents have mixed emotions when a grown son or daughter leaves home. So much time, effort, and emotion are invested in children that a huge void may seem to linger when they leave. Have any of your sons or daughters left home to pursue their goals? Are you proud of them, but at the same time, do you sometimes wish they were nearer? Then you can imagine how Mary may have felt when Jesus left home.

Unexpected Trials

Another of Mary's trials was one she probably never expected. As Jesus preached, many followed him—but not his own brothers. "His brothers were, in fact, not exercising faith in him," say the Scriptures. (John 7:5) Mary, no doubt, told them what the angel had told her—that Jesus was "God's Son." (Luke 1:35) Still, to James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas, Jesus was just their older brother. So Mary found herself in a family with differing religious viewpoints.

Did Mary get discouraged and give up on the situation? Absolutely not! On one occasion when Jesus was preaching in Galilee, he went to a house to eat, and a crowd gathered to listen to him. Whom do we find outside looking for him? Mary and Jesus' brothers. So when Jesus was near the family home, she followed him and evidently took her other children along with her, maybe hoping that they would change their attitude toward him.—Matthew 12:46, 47.

You may similarly be faced with the challenge of striving to follow Jesus while other members of your family do not want to do so. Do not become downhearted, and do not give up! Many, like Mary, have patiently encouraged family members for years before seeing any real change. Such endurance is precious to God, whether other humans respond or not.—1 Peter 3:1, 2.

The Hardest Challenge

Mary's last trial, as recorded in the Scriptures, was no doubt the most heart-wrenching. She watched her beloved son die in agony after he was rejected by his people. The death of a child has been described as "the ultimate loss," "the most devastating death," whether the child is still young or he is an adult. Just as had been foretold decades earlier, Mary felt as if a sword had been run through her!—Luke 2:34, 35.



Did Mary let this final test destroy her emotionally or let it weaken her faith in Jehovah? No. The next time Mary is mentioned in the Bible record, we find her with Jesus' disciples, "persisting in prayer" with them. And she was not alone. Her other sons, who by this time had begun to exercise faith in their older brother, were with her. How that must have comforted Mary!—Acts 1:14.

Mary had a full and satisfying life as a faithful woman, wife, and mother. She had many spiritually rewarding experiences. She overcame many tests and trials. When we face unexpected challenges or when we are anxious over family problems, we can certainly learn from her example of faithful endurance.—Hebrews 10:36.

No. 3: Was Jesus Just Another Religious Leader? (rs pág. 210¶2)

*** rs p. 210 - p. 211 Jesus Christ ***

Was Jesus merely a prophet whose authority was similar to that of Moses, Buddha, Muhammad, and other religious leaders?

Jesus himself taught that he was the unique Son of God (John 10:36; Matt. 16:15-17), the foretold Messiah (Mark 14:61, 62), that he had a prehuman existence in heaven (John 6:38; 8:23, 58), that he would be put to death and then would be raised to life on the third day and would thereafter return to the heavens. (Matt. 16:21; John 14:2, 3) Were these claims true, and was he thus really different from all other true prophets of God and in sharp contrast to all self-styled religious leaders? The truth of the matter would be evident on the third day from his death. Did God then resurrect him from the dead, thus confirming that Jesus Christ had spoken the truth and was indeed God's unique Son? (Rom. 1:3, 4) Over 500 witnesses actually saw Jesus alive following his resurrection, and his faithful apostles were eyewitnesses as he began his ascent back to heaven and then disappeared from their view in a cloud. (1 Cor. 15:3-8; Acts 1:2, 3, 9) So thoroughly were they convinced that he had been raised from the dead that many of them risked their lives to tell others about it.—Acts 4:18-33.



January

Jan. 17	Bible reading: Ezra 1-5
No. 1:	Ezra 3:1-9
No. 2:	Why Did the Jews in General Not Accept Jesus as the Messiah? (rs p. 211 ¶1-2)
No. 3:	How Does the Spirit Return to God? (Eccl. 12:7)

Bible reading: Ezra 1-5

*** w06 1/15 pp. 17-19 Highlights From the Book of Ezra ***

1:3-6—Were the Israelites who did not volunteer to return to their homeland weak in faith? Some may not have returned to Jerusalem because they were materialistic or lacked appreciation for true worship, but this was not true in every case. First of all, the 1,000-mile [1,600 km] journey to Jerusalem took four or five months. Moreover, settling in a land that had remained desolate for 70 years and doing the rebuilding work there would require much physical stamina. Therefore, unfavorable circumstances, such as physical ailments, advanced age, and family obligations, undoubtedly prevented some from returning.

2:43—Who were the Nethinim? These were people of non-Israelite origin who served as temple slaves or ministers. Among them were the descendants of the Gibeonites of Joshua’s day and others “whom David and the princes gave to the service of the Levites.”—Ezra 8:20.

2:55—Who were the sons of the servants of Solomon? These were non-Israelites who were given special privileges in Jehovah’s service. They may have served as scribes or copyists at the temple or in some administrative capacity.

2:61-63—Were the Urim and the Thummim, which were used when an answer was needed from Jehovah, available to the returning exiles? The claimants to priestly descent who failed to establish their genealogy could have given legitimacy to their claim by using the Urim and the Thummim. Ezra mentions this only as a possibility. The Scriptures contain no record of the use of the Urim and the Thummim then or thereafter. Jewish tradition has it that the Urim and the Thummim disappeared with the destruction of the temple in 607 B.C.E.

3:12—Why did “the old men that had seen the former house” of Jehovah weep? These men could remember how magnificent the temple built by Solomon was. The groundwork of the new temple that was before them was “as nothing in [their] eyes” in comparison. (Haggai 2:2, 3) Would their efforts bring back the glory of the former temple? They must have felt disheartened, and therefore they wept.

3:8-10; 4:23, 24; 6:15, 16—How many years did it take to rebuild the temple? The foundation of the temple was laid in 536 B.C.E.—“in the second year of their coming.” The building work stopped in the days of King Artaxerxes, in 522 B.C.E. The ban continued until 520 B.C.E., the second year of King Darius. The temple was completed in the sixth year of his reign, or 515 B.C.E. (See the box entitled “Persian Kings From 537 to 467 B.C.E.”) Thus, the temple construction took about 20 years.

4:8-6:18 (4:8, footnote)—Why were these verses written in Aramaic? This portion largely contains copies of letters from government officials to kings and their replies. Ezra copied them from public records written in Aramaic, the commercial and diplomatic language of the day. Other parts of the Bible written in this ancient Semitic language are Ezra 7:12-26, Jeremiah 10:11, and Daniel 2:4b-7:28.

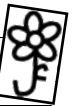
1:2. What Isaiah prophesied some 200 years earlier came true. (Isaiah 44:28) Prophecies in Jehovah’s Word never fail.

1:3-6. Like some of the Israelites who remained in Babylon, many of Jehovah’s Witnesses cannot take up the full-time ministry or serve where the need is greater. Yet, they support and encourage those who can and make voluntary donations to further the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work.

3:1-6. In the seventh month of 537 B.C.E. (Tishri, corresponding to September/October), the faithful returnees offered their first sacrifice. The Babylonians had entered Jerusalem in the fifth month (Ab, corresponding to July/August) of 607 B.C.E., and two months later the city’s desolation was complete. (2 Kings 25:8-17, 22-26) As foretold, Jerusalem’s 70-year desolation ended right on time. (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10) Anything Jehovah’s Word foretells always comes true.

4:1-3. The faithful remnant rejected an offer that would have meant forming a religious alliance with false worshippers. (Exodus 20:5; 34:12) Jehovah’s worshippers today similarly take no part in any interfaith movements.

5:1-7; 6:1-12. Jehovah can maneuver matters for the success of his people.



No. 1: Ezra 3:1-9

No. 2: Why Did the Jews in General Not Accept Jesus as the Messiah? (rs p. 211¶1-2)

*** rs p. 211 Jesus Christ ***

Why did the Jews in general not accept Jesus as the Messiah?

The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says: “The Jews of the Roman period believed [the Messiah] would be raised up by God to break the yoke of the heathen and to reign over a restored kingdom of Israel.” (Jerusalem, 1971, Vol. 11, col. 1407) They wanted liberation from the yoke of Rome. Jewish history testifies that on the basis of the Messianic prophecy recorded at Daniel 9:24-27 there were Jews who expected the Messiah during the first century C.E. (Luke 3:15) But that prophecy also connected his coming with ‘making an end of sin,’ and Isaiah chapter 53 indicated that Messiah himself would die in order to make this possible. However, the Jews in general felt no need for anyone to die for their sins. They believed that they had a righteous standing with God on the basis of their descent from Abraham. Says *A Rabbinic Anthology*, “So great is the [merit] of Abraham that he can atone for all the vanities committed and lies uttered by Israel in this world.” (London, 1938, C. Montefiore and H. Loewe, p. 676) By their rejection of Jesus as Messiah, the Jews fulfilled the prophecy that had foretold regarding him: “He was despised, and we esteemed him not.”—Isaiah 53:3, *JP*.

Before his death, Moses foretold that the nation would turn aside from true worship and that, as a result, calamity would befall them. (Read Deuteronomy 31:27-29.) The book of Judges testifies that this occurred repeatedly. In the days of the prophet Jeremiah, national unfaithfulness led to the nation’s being taken into exile in Babylon. Why did God also allow the Romans to destroy Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E.? Of what unfaithfulness had the nation been guilty so that God did not protect them as he had done when they had put their trust in him? It was shortly before this that they had rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

No. 3: How Does the Spirit Return to God? (Eccl. 12:7)

*** w01 7/15 pp. 5-6 Do You Have an Immortal Spirit? ***

The Spirit “Returns to the True God”

The Bible states that when a person dies, “the spirit itself returns to the true God who gave it.” (Ecclesiastes 12:7) Does this mean that a spirit entity literally travels through space into God’s presence? Not at all! The way in which the Bible uses the word “returns” does not require an actual movement from one place to another. For instance, unfaithful Israelites were told: “Return to me, and I will return to you,’ Jehovah of armies has said.” (Malachi 3:7) Israel’s ‘returning’ to Jehovah meant a turning around from a wrong course and again conforming to God’s righteous way. And Jehovah’s ‘returning’ to Israel meant his turning favorable attention to his people once again. In both cases the “return” involved an attitude, not a literal displacement from one geographic location to another.

Similarly, at death no actual movement from the earth to the heavenly realm occurs when the spirit “returns” to God. Once the life-force is gone from a person, only God has the ability to restore it to him. So the spirit “returns to the true God” in the sense that any hope of future life for that person now rests entirely with God.

Consider, for example, what the Scriptures say about Jesus Christ’s death. The Gospel writer Luke relates: “Jesus called with a loud voice and said: ‘Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.’ When he had said this, he expired.” (Luke 23:46) As Jesus’ spirit went out of him, he was not literally on his way to heaven. Jesus was not resurrected from the dead until the third day, and it was 40 days later that he ascended to heaven. (Acts 1:3, 9) At the time of his death, however, Jesus confidently left his spirit in his Father’s hands, fully trusting in Jehovah’s ability to bring him back to life.

Yes, God can bring a person back to life. (Psalm 104:30) What a grand prospect this opens up!

*** pe chap. 8 p. 79 par. 9 What Happens at Death? ***

⁹ As we have seen, the “spirit” is something different from our soul. The spirit is our life-force. This life-force is in each of the body cells of both humans and animals. It is sustained, or kept alive, by breathing. What does it mean, then, when the Bible says that at death “the dust returns to the earth . . . and the spirit itself returns to the true God who gave it”? (Ecclesiastes 12:7) At death the life-force in time leaves all the body cells and the body begins to decay. But this does not mean that our life-force literally leaves the earth and travels through space to God. Rather, the spirit returns to God in the sense that now our hope for future life rests entirely with God. Only by his power can the spirit, or life-force, be given back so that we live again.—Psalm 104:29, 30.



January

Jan. 24	Bible reading: Ezra 6-10
No. 1:	Ezra 7:1-17
No. 2:	How Jesus Demonstrated His Worthiness to Rule as King
No. 3:	Is Jesus Christ Actually God? (rs p. 212¶1,2)

Bible reading: Ezra 6-10

*** w06 1/15 pp. 19-20 Highlights From the Book of Ezra ***

6:14, 22. Zealously sharing in Jehovah’s work brings his approval and blessing.

6:21. Witnessing the progress of Jehovah’s work moved Samaritans who then lived in the Jewish homeland and returnees who had succumbed to pagan influences to make needed changes in their lives. Should we not enthusiastically participate in our God-assigned work, including the Kingdom-proclamation work?

7:1, 7, 11—Do all these verses refer to the Artaxerxes who brought a halt to the building work? No. Artaxerxes is a name or title applied to two Persian kings. One was either Bardiya or Gaumata, who ordered the temple work stopped in 522 B.C.E. The Artaxerxes of the time when Ezra came to Jerusalem is Artaxerxes Longimanus.

7:28–8:20—Why were many Jews in Babylon reluctant to go up to Jerusalem with Ezra? Even though more than 60 years had passed since the first group of Jews had returned to their homeland, Jerusalem was only sparsely settled. Returning to Jerusalem meant building a new life under uncomfortable and dangerous circumstances. The Jerusalem of the day did not hold out attractive material prospects to the Jews who might have been prospering in Babylon. Not to be overlooked was the dangerous journey. The returnees had to have strong faith in Jehovah, zeal for true worship, and courage to make the move. Even Ezra strengthened himself according to the hand of Jehovah upon him. With Ezra’s encouragement, 1,500 families—perhaps numbering 6,000 people—responded. After Ezra took additional initiatives, 38 Levites and 220 Nethinim responded.

9:1, 2—How serious a threat was intermarriage with the people of the land? The restored nation was to be the guardian of Jehovah’s worship until the coming of the Messiah. Intermarriage with other inhabitants was a real threat to true worship. Because some had formed marriage alliances with the idol-worshipping people, the entire nation might eventually be assimilated into the pagan nations. Pure worship could have vanished from the face of the earth. To whom, then, would the Messiah come? No wonder Ezra was stunned at seeing what had taken place!

10:3, 44—Why were the children put away along with the wives? If the children had stayed behind, the likelihood that the dismissed wives would return on account of them would have increased. Moreover, little children generally require the care of their mother.

Lessons for Us:

7:10. As a diligent student and effective teacher of God’s Word, Ezra set an example for us. He prayerfully prepared his heart to consult the Law of Jehovah. As he consulted it, Ezra gave his utmost attention to what Jehovah was saying. Ezra applied what he learned and exerted himself in teaching others.

7:13. Jehovah wants willing servants.

7:27, 28; 8:21-23. Ezra gave credit to Jehovah, made sincere entreaty to him before making a long and dangerous trip to Jerusalem, and was willing to risk personal safety for the sake of God’s glory. He thus set a fine example for us.

9:2. We must take seriously the admonition to marry “only in the Lord.”—1 Corinthians 7:39.

9:14, 15. Bad associations can lead to Jehovah’s disapproval.

10:2-12, 44. The people who had taken foreign wives humbly repented and corrected their erroneous ways. Their attitude and action were exemplary.

No. 1:	Ezra 7:1-17
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No. 2:	How Jesus Demonstrated His Worthiness to Rule as King
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*** w09 4/15 pp. 28-32 Appreciating Jesus—The Greater David and the Greater Solomon ***



HE DID not look like a king. Rather, to the prophet Samuel, he appeared to be nothing more than a young shepherd boy. Moreover, his hometown, Bethlehem, was not of great prominence. It was described as “too little to get to be among the thousands of Judah.” (Mic. 5:2) Nevertheless, this apparently insignificant young man from a small town was about to be anointed by the prophet Samuel as the future king of Israel.

² Young David was not the first son that his father, Jesse, presented to Samuel to be anointed; neither was he the second or third. David, the last of eight boys born to Jesse, was not even present when Samuel came to Jesse’s household to anoint one of that faithful man’s sons as the next king of the land. But David was Jehovah’s choice, and that was what counted.—1 Sam. 16:1-10.

³ Jehovah saw what Samuel could not see. God could discern David’s heart condition, and it was pleasing to him. With God, it is not the mere outward appearance that matters; it is what a person really is on the inside. (*Read 1 Samuel 16:7.*) So when Samuel learned that Jehovah had not chosen any of the seven older sons of Jesse, he asked that the youngest be brought in from the pastures. The account says: “Accordingly [Jesse] sent and had [David] come. Now he was ruddy, a young man with beautiful eyes and handsome in appearance. Then Jehovah said: ‘Get up, anoint him, for this is he!’ Accordingly Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the spirit of Jehovah began to be operative upon David from that day forward.”—1 Sam. 16:12, 13.

Follow the Shepherd-King

⁶ Jesus is also a shepherd. What are the characteristics of a good shepherd? He is someone who faithfully and courageously tends, feeds, and guards his flock. (Ps. 23:2-4) As a youth, David was a shepherd, and he took very good care of his father’s sheep. He was courageous when the flock was threatened and risked his life to protect the sheep from a lion and a bear.—1 Sam. 17:34, 35.

⁷ The years David spent in fields and on hills tending sheep prepared him for the demanding duties and responsibilities of shepherding the nation of Israel. (Ps. 78:70, 71) Jesus too has proved to be a model shepherd. He derives strength and guidance from Jehovah as he shepherds his “little flock” and the “other sheep.” (Luke 12:32; John 10:16) Thus Jesus proves to be the Fine Shepherd. He knows his flock so well that he calls each sheep by name. He loves his sheep so much that while on earth he willingly gave of himself for their well-being. (John 10:3, 11, 14, 15) As the Fine Shepherd, Jesus accomplishes something that David could never do. His ransom sacrifice opened the way for mankind to be rescued from death. Nothing will stop him from shepherding his “little flock” to immortal life in heaven and leading his “other sheep” to everlasting life in a righteous new world free from wolflike predators.—*Read John 10:27-29.*

Follow the Conquering King

⁸ As king, David was a resolute warrior who protected the land of God’s people, and “Jehovah kept saving David wherever he went.” Under David’s leadership, the nation’s boundaries were extended from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates. (2 Sam. 8:1-14) In Jehovah’s strength, he became a most powerful ruler. The Bible states: “David’s fame began to go out into all the lands, and Jehovah himself put the dread of him upon all the nations.”—1 Chron. 14:17.

⁹ Like King David, the man Jesus was fearless. As King-Designate, he showed his authority over the demons, rescuing victims from their clutches. (Mark 5:2, 6-13; Luke 4:36) Even the archenemy, Satan the Devil, has no hold on him. With Jehovah’s support, Jesus conquered the world, which lies in Satan’s power.—John 14:30; 16:33; 1 John 5:19.

¹⁰ Some 60 years after Jesus’ death and resurrection to heaven, the apostle John received a prophetic vision of Jesus in His role as Warrior-King in the heavens. John writes: “Look! a white horse; and the one seated upon it had a bow; and a crown was given him, and he went forth conquering and to complete his conquest.” (Rev. 6:2) The rider on the white horse is Jesus. “A crown was given him” in 1914 when he was enthroned as King in the heavenly Kingdom. After that, “he went forth conquering.” Yes, like David, Jesus is a conquering king. Shortly after he was installed as King of God’s Kingdom, he conquered Satan in battle and hurled him and his demons down to the earth. (Rev. 12:7-9) His victorious ride will continue until he will “complete his conquest,” completely destroying Satan’s wicked system.—*Read Revelation 19:11, 19-21.*

¹¹ Like David, though, Jesus is a compassionate king, and he will protect the “great crowd” through Armageddon. (Rev. 7:9, 14) Furthermore, under the rule of Jesus and his joint heirs, the resurrected 144,000, there will be “a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Acts 24:15) Those who are resurrected on earth will have the prospect of living forever. What a wonderful future awaits them! May we all be determined to continue to “do what is good,” so that we will be alive when the earth is filled with righteous, happy subjects of the Greater David.—Ps. 37:27-29.

Solomon’s Prayer for Wisdom Is Answered

¹² David’s son Solomon also prefigured Jesus. When Solomon became king, Jehovah appeared to him in a dream and said that He would give him anything he asked for. Solomon could have asked for more wealth, power, or a longer life.



Instead, he unselfishly asked Jehovah: “Give me now wisdom and knowledge that I may go out before this people and that I may come in, for who could judge this great people of yours?” (2 Chron. 1:7-10) Jehovah answered Solomon’s prayer.—*Read 2 Chronicles 1:11, 12.*

¹³ As long as Solomon was faithful to Jehovah, his words of wisdom were unmatched among his contemporaries. Solomon spoke “three thousand proverbs.” (1 Ki. 4:30, 32, 34) Many of these were written down and are still treasured by those who seek wisdom. The queen of Sheba traveled some 1,500 miles [2,400 km] to test Solomon’s wisdom with “perplexing questions.” She was impressed by what Solomon said and by the prosperity of his kingdom. (1 Ki. 10:1-9) The Bible identifies the Source of Solomon’s wisdom by stating: “All the people of the earth were seeking the face of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart.”—1 Ki. 10:24.

Follow the Wise King

¹⁴ Only one human clearly surpassed Solomon in wisdom. That was Jesus Christ, who described himself as “something more than Solomon.” (Matt. 12:42) Jesus spoke “sayings of everlasting life.” (John 6:68) For example, the Sermon on the Mount expands on the principles of some of Solomon’s proverbs. Solomon described a number of things that bring happiness to a worshipper of Jehovah. (Prov. 3:13; 8:32, 33; 14:21; 16:20) Jesus emphasized that true happiness stems from things that are related to the worship of Jehovah and the fulfillment of God’s promises. He said: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them.” (Matt. 5:3) Those who apply the principles found in Jesus’ teachings are drawn closer to Jehovah, “the source of life.” (Ps. 36:9; Prov. 22:11; Matt. 5:8) Christ embodies “the wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. 1:24, 30) As the Messianic King, Jesus Christ has “the spirit of wisdom.”—Isa. 11:2.

¹⁵ How can we, as followers of the Greater Solomon, benefit from godly wisdom? Since Jehovah’s wisdom is revealed in his Word, we must put forth the effort to find it by carefully studying the Bible, particularly the recorded words of Jesus, and by meditating on what we read. (Prov. 2:1-5) Further, we need to persevere in asking God for wisdom. God’s Word assures us that our sincere prayers for help will be answered. (Jas. 1:5) With the help of the holy spirit, we will find gems of wisdom in God’s Word that can help us to deal with challenges and make wise decisions. (Luke 11:13) Solomon was also called “the congregator” who “taught the people knowledge continually.” (Eccl. 12:9, 10) Jesus, as Head of the Christian congregation, is also a congregator of his people. (John 10:16; Col. 1:18) Therefore, we do well to attend congregation meetings, where we are ‘taught continually.’

¹⁶ Solomon was a very active king. He organized a nationwide construction program, overseeing the building of palaces, roads, waterworks, storage cities, chariot cities, and cities for the horsemen. (1 Ki. 9:17-19) The entire kingdom benefited from his building works. Jesus too is a builder. He built his congregation on the “rock-mass.” (Matt. 16:18) He will also oversee the building work to be carried out in the new world.—Isa. 65:21, 22.

Follow the King of Peace

¹⁷ The name Solomon comes from a root meaning “peace.” King Solomon ruled from Jerusalem, the name of which means “Possession of Twofold Peace.” His 40-year reign was marked by unprecedented peace in the nation of Israel. The Bible states concerning those years: “Judah and Israel continued to dwell in security, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree, from Dan to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon.” (1 Ki. 4:25) Still, Solomon, in all his wisdom, could not free his subjects from the shackles of sickness, sin, and death. The Greater Solomon, though, will free his subjects from all of that.—*Read Romans 8:19-21.*

¹⁸ Even now in the Christian congregation, we have peaceful conditions. Indeed, we are enjoying a true spiritual paradise. We have peace with God and with our fellow man. Note what Isaiah prophesied about the conditions that we are experiencing today: “They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore.” (Isa. 2:3, 4) By acting in harmony with God’s spirit, we contribute to the beauty of the spiritual paradise.

¹⁹ However, the future will be even better. As obedient humans enjoy peace to an unprecedented degree under Jesus’ rule, they will gradually be “set free from enslavement to corruption” until they reach human perfection. (Rom. 8:21) After they pass the final test at the end of the Thousand Year Reign, “the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.” (Ps. 37:11; Rev. 20:7-10) Truly, Christ Jesus’ rule will surpass Solomon’s in ways we cannot yet imagine!

²⁰ As Israel rejoiced under the oversight of Moses, David, and Solomon, we will rejoice even more under Christ’s rulership. (1 Ki. 8:66) All thanks to Jehovah for providing us with his only-begotten Son—the Greater Moses, David, and Solomon!



No. 3: Is Jesus Christ Actually God? (rs p. 212¶1,2)

*** rs p. 212 Jesus Christ ***

Is Jesus Christ actually God?

John 17:3, *RS*: “[Jesus prayed to his Father:] This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God [“who alone art truly God,” *NE*], and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” (Notice that Jesus referred not to himself but to his Father in heaven as “the only true God.”)

John 20:17, *RS*: “Jesus said to her [Mary Magdalene], ‘Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” (So to the resurrected Jesus, the Father was God, just as the Father was God to Mary Magdalene. Interestingly, not once in Scripture do we find the Father addressing the Son as “my God.”)

*** g72 3/22 pp. 5-6 Is Jesus Christ God? ***

Is Jesus Christ God?

DURING the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus Caesar, a child named Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. He grew to maturity and was finally executed during the rule of Tiberius Caesar, the successor of Augustus.

Today Jesus Christ is better known than even the Roman Caesars who ruled during his lifetime. In fact, churches commonly teach that he is God. But is this true? Is Jesus really Almighty God?

It is vital that we know. For if Jesus is not God, and yet one worships him as if he were, think what that means. One would be worshiping someone other than Almighty God. Surely that would be displeasing to the Creator! So let us examine carefully what personal acquaintances of Jesus said regarding his identity.

Testimony of Acquaintances

Showing that Jesus was clearly no ordinary person, an angel announced in advance his conception and birth, saying: “This one will be great and will be called Son of the Most High.” Notice that the angel said, not “God,” but “Son of the Most High.”—Luke 1:30-32.

At thirty years of age Jesus presented himself to be baptized. On that occasion God’s own voice said: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” And so John the Baptist, who witnessed the event, said of Jesus: “This one is the Son of God.”—Matt. 3:17; John 1:34.

Jesus’ apostles and friends repeatedly identified him in this way. Said Nathanael: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God.” (John 1:49) Peter exclaimed: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matt. 16:16) Martha confessed: “You are the Christ, the Son of God.” (John 11:27) The apostle John wrote so people might believe that “Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.” (John 20:31) And of the apostle Paul’s ministry it is said: “He began to preach Jesus, that this One is the Son of God.”—Acts 9:20.

Did Peter, Paul, John or any other of Jesus’ followers preach that he was God? No, from these scriptures it is clear that they taught he was God’s Son.

Why Many Believe that Jesus Is God

Why, then, do many religious people today believe that Jesus is God? It is due principally to the teaching of church leaders who, in the language of the fourth-century Nicene Creed, identified Jesus as ‘very God of very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father.’

Yet some persons may object that this is not so. Their belief, they claim, is based on the testimony of Jesus’ own apostles.

This matter deserves our close attention, for apostles did refer to Jesus as “God.” But did they believe him to be the Almighty God? And did Jesus describe himself as “God”? Let us see.



January

Jan. 31	Bible reading: Nehemiah1-4
No. 1:	Nehemiah 2:11-20
No. 2:	Does John 1:1 Prove That Jesus Is God? (rs p. 212¶4-6)
No. 3:	Waysin Which We Heed Jesus' Words at Matthew 22:21

Bible reading: Nehemiah1-4

*** w06 2/1 pp. 8-9 Highlights From the Book of Nehemiah ***

1:1; 2:1—Is “the twentieth year” mentioned in these two verses counted from the same reference point? Yes, the 20th year is that of the reign of Artaxerxes the king. However, the method of counting used in these verses is different. Historical evidence points to 475 B.C.E. as the year of Artaxerxes’ ascension to the throne. Since the Babylonian scribes customarily counted the years of the Persian kings’ reign from Nisan (March/April) to Nisan, Artaxerxes’ first regnal year began in Nisan of 474 B.C.E. Hence, the 20th year of rulership mentioned at Nehemiah 2:1 began in Nisan of 455 B.C.E. The month of Chislev (November/December) mentioned at Nehemiah 1:1 logically was the Chislev of the preceding year—456 B.C.E. Nehemiah refers to that month as also falling in the 20th year of Artaxerxes’ reign. Perhaps in this case, he was counting the years from the accession date of the monarch. It could also be that Nehemiah was counting time by what the Jews today call a civil year, which begins in the month of Tishri, corresponding to September/October. In any case, the year in which the word went out to restore Jerusalem was 455 B.C.E.

4:17, 18—How could a man do the work of rebuilding with just one hand? For burden bearers this would not be a problem. Once the load was placed on their head or shoulders, they could easily balance it with one hand “while the other hand was holding the missile.” The builders who needed both hands to do their work “were girded, each one with his sword upon his hip, while building.” They were ready to go into action in case of an enemy attack.

1:4; 2:4; 4:4, 5. When faced with difficult situations or when making important decisions, we should “persevere in prayer” and act in harmony with theocratic direction.—Romans 12:12.

1:11–2:8; 4:4, 5, 15, 16; 6:16. Jehovah answers the sincere prayers of his servants.—Psalm 86:6, 7.

1:4; 4:19, 20; 6:3, 15. While Nehemiah was a man of tender feelings, he set a fine example as a man of action who was firm for righteousness.

1:11–2:3. Nehemiah’s main source of joy was not his prestigious position as a cupbearer. It was the advancement of true worship. Should not Jehovah’s worship and all that promotes it be our main concern and chief source of joy?

2:4-8. Jehovah caused Artaxerxes to grant Nehemiah permission to go and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. “A king’s heart is as streams of water in the hand of Jehovah,” says Proverbs 21:1. “Everywhere that he delights to, he turns it.”

3:5, 27. We should not consider manual work done in the interests of true worship beneath our dignity, as did the “majestic ones” of the Tekoites. Rather, we can imitate the common Tekoites who willingly expended themselves.

3:10, 23, 28-30. While some are able to move where the need for Kingdom proclaimers is greater, many of us support true worship close to our home. We can do so by participating in Kingdom Hall construction work and disaster relief efforts but primarily by sharing in the Kingdom-preaching work.

4:14. When faced with opposition, we too can overcome fear by keeping in our mind “the great and the fear-inspiring One.”

No. 1:	Nehemiah 2:11-20
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No. 2:	Does John 1:1 Prove That Jesus Is God? (rs p. 212¶4-6)
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*** rs p. 212 - p. 213 Jesus Christ ***

Does John 1:1 prove that Jesus is God?

John 1:1, RS: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God [also KJ, JB, Dy, Kx, NAB].” NE reads “what God was, the Word was.” Mo says “the Logos was divine.” AT and Sd tell us “the Word was divine.” The interlinear rendering of ED is “a god was the Word.” NW reads “the Word was a god”; NTIV uses the same wording.



What is it that these translators are seeing in the Greek text that moves some of them to refrain from saying “the Word was God”? The definite article (the) appears before the first occurrence of *the-os* (God) but not before the second. The articular (when the article appears) construction of the noun points to an identity, a personality, whereas a singular anarthrous (without the article) predicate noun before the verb (as the sentence is constructed in Greek) points to a quality about someone. So the text is not saying that the Word (Jesus) was the same as the God *with whom* he was but, rather, that the Word was godlike, divine, a god. (See 1984 Reference edition of *NW*, p. 1579.)

What did the apostle John mean when he wrote John 1:1? Did he mean that Jesus is himself God or perhaps that Jesus is one God with the Father? In the same chapter, verse 18, John wrote: “No one [“no man,” *KJ, Dy*] has ever seen God; the only Son [“the only-begotten god,” *NW*], who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.” (*RS*) Had any human seen Jesus Christ, the Son? Of course! So, then, was John saying that Jesus was God? Obviously not. Toward the end of his Gospel, John summarized matters, saying: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, [not God, but] the Son of God.”—John 20:31, *RS*.

No. 3: Waysin Which We Heed Jesus' Words at Matthew 22:21

*** w09 6/15 pp. 19-20 Speak Truth With Your Neighbor ***

Speak Truth With Governmental Authorities

¹⁶ Jesus said: “Pay back, therefore, Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God.” (Matt. 22:21) What sort of “things” do we owe Caesar, that is, the governmental authorities? When Jesus uttered those words, the discussion centered on taxes. So to maintain a clean conscience before God and men, Christians obey the laws of the land, including those pertaining to the paying of taxes. (Rom. 13:5, 6) But we recognize that Jehovah is the Supreme Sovereign, the only true God, whom we love with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. (Mark 12:30; Rev. 4:11) We therefore render to Jehovah God submission without reservation.—*Read Psalm 86:11, 12.*

¹⁷ Many countries offer social programs or services to help those in need of material support. There is nothing wrong with a Christian’s receiving such assistance—provided that he qualifies. Speaking truth with our neighbor would rule out giving false or misleading information to governmental authorities in order to receive public assistance.

*** w96 5/1 pp. 16-18 Paying Back Caesar’s Things to Caesar ***

“God’s Things”

⁵ Especially since 1914, when Jehovah God, the Almighty, began ruling as king through Christ’s Messianic Kingdom, have Christians had to be sure not to give God’s things to Caesar. (Revelation 11:15, 17) As never before, God’s law now calls on Christians to be “no part of the world.” (John 17:16) Being dedicated to God, their Life-Giver, they must demonstrate clearly that they no longer belong to themselves. (Psalm 100:2, 3) As Paul wrote, “we belong to Jehovah.” (Romans 14:8) Moreover, at a Christian’s baptism, he is ordained as a minister of God, so that he can say with Paul: “God . . . has indeed adequately qualified us to be ministers.”—2 Corinthians 3:5, 6.

⁶ The apostle Paul also wrote: “I glorify my ministry.” (Romans 11:13) Surely we should do likewise. Whether we share in the ministry full-time or part-time, we keep in mind that Jehovah himself assigned us to our ministry. (2 Corinthians 2:17) Since some may challenge our position, every dedicated, baptized Christian must be ready to furnish clear and positive proof that he truly is a minister of the good news. (1 Peter 3:15) His ministry should also be evidenced in his conduct. As a minister of God, a Christian should advocate and practice clean morals, uphold family unity, be honest, and show respect for law and order. (Romans 12:17, 18; 1 Thessalonians 5:15) A Christian’s relationship with God and his divinely assigned ministry are the most important things in his life. He cannot give these up at the behest of Caesar. Clearly, they are to be counted among “God’s things.”

“Caesar’s Things”

⁷ Jehovah’s Witnesses know that they owe “subjection to the superior authorities,” the governmental rulers. (Romans 13:1) Hence, when Caesar, the State, makes legitimate demands, their Bible-trained consciences allow them to satisfy these demands. For example, true Christians are among the most exemplary taxpayers on earth. In Germany the newspaper *Münchner Merkur* said of Jehovah’s Witnesses: “They are the most honest and the most punctual tax payers in the Federal Republic.” In Italy the newspaper *La Stampa* observed: “They [Jehovah’s Witnesses] are the most loyal citizens anyone could wish for: they do not dodge taxes or seek to evade inconvenient laws for their own profit.” Jehovah’s servants do this ‘on account of their consciences.’—Romans 13:5, 6.



⁸ Are “Caesar’s things” limited to paying taxes? No. Paul listed other things, such as fear and honor. In his *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of Matthew*, German scholar Heinrich Meyer wrote: “By [Caesar’s things] . . . we are not to understand merely the *civil tax*, but everything to which Caesar was entitled in virtue of his legitimate rule.” Historian E. W. Barnes, in his work *The Rise of Christianity*, observed that a Christian would pay taxes if he owed them and “likewise accept all other State obligations, provided he was not called upon to render unto Caesar the things that belonged to God.”

⁹ What things might the State require without encroaching on the things that rightfully belong to God? Some have felt that they could legitimately give Caesar money in the form of taxes but nothing else. They certainly would not feel comfortable giving Caesar anything that might take up time that could be used for theocratic activities. Nevertheless, while it is true that we should ‘love Jehovah our God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength,’ Jehovah does expect us to spend time in things other than our sacred service. (Mark 12:30; Philippians 3:3) For example, a married Christian is counseled to devote time to pleasing his or her marriage mate. Such activities are not bad, but the apostle Paul states that they are “the things of the world” not “the things of the Lord.”—1 Corinthians 7:32-34; compare 1 Timothy 5:8.

¹⁰ Further, Christ authorized his followers to “pay back” taxes, and this certainly involves using time that is dedicated to Jehovah—since our entire lives are dedicated in this way. If the average taxation in a country is 33 percent of income (it is higher in some countries), this means that each year the average worker pays to the State Treasury four months’ worth of his earnings. Put another way, at the end of his working life, the average worker will have spent about 15 years earning the tax money that “Caesar” requires. Consider, too, the matter of schooling. In most countries the law requires that parents have their children attend school for a minimum number of years. The number of years of schooling varies from country to country. In most places it is a substantial length of time. True, such schooling is usually beneficial, but it is Caesar who decides what portion of a child’s life must be spent in this way, and Christian parents comply with Caesar’s decision.

*** it-1 p. 382 Caesar ***

God and Caesar. Jesus’ only recorded reference to Caesar is when laying down the principle: “Pay back, therefore, Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God.” (Mt 22:17-21; Mr 12:14-17; Lu 20:22-25) The question evoking this statement was with regard to the payment of “head tax” by Jews to the Roman state. It therefore dealt with an established law or regular practice and hence neither the question nor the answer was evidently intended to be restricted to Tiberius, then ruling. (Compare Mt 17:25.) “Caesar” meant, or symbolized, the civil authority, the state, represented by its duly appointed representatives, called “the superior authorities” by Paul and expressed by Peter as “the king” and his “governors.”—Ro 13:1-7; Tit 3:1; 1Pe 2:13-17; see SUPERIOR AUTHORITIES.

Caesar’s “things” were therefore the payment due for services rendered by the secular government and for which services the government levied taxes or tribute. Despite its imperialistic nature, the Roman state provided numerous services for its subject peoples, including the construction of highways, and a form of mail service, as well as the maintenance of civil order and protection from criminal elements. The people paid for these services by taxes. This is underscored by Jesus’ reference to Caesar’s coin, called “the head tax coin.”—Mt 22:19.

That “Caesar’s” authority to exact payment even from Christians could not be allowed to infringe upon the Christian’s service to God was shown by Jesus’ statement that ‘God’s things should be paid back to God.’ (Mt 22:21) Jesus’ apostles showed that they understood that their duty toward human authorities was limited, or relative, and not absolute, for when later brought before the Jewish high court they firmly declared: “We must obey God as ruler rather than men,” that is, when human laws or requirements clashed with those of God.—Ac 5:29.



February

Feb. 7	Bible reading: Nehemiah 5-8
No. 1:	Nehemiah 6:1-13
No. 2:	What Can We Learn About Hospitality From Lydia, Gaius, and Philemon?
No. 3:	Does Thomas' Exclamation at John 20:28 Prove That Jesus Is Truly God? (rs p.213¶1-3)

Bible reading: Nehemiah 5-8

*** w06 2/1 p. 9 Highlights From the Book of Nehemiah ***

5:7—In what sense did Nehemiah begin “finding fault with the nobles and the deputy rulers”? These men were exacting usury from their fellow Jews in violation of the Mosaic Law. (Leviticus 25:36; Deuteronomy 23:19) Moreover, the interest the lenders were demanding was high. If demanded monthly, “the hundredth” would be equivalent to 12 percent a year. (Nehemiah 5:11) It was cruel to impose this on people already heavily burdened with taxes and a food shortage. Nehemiah found fault with the rich in that, using God’s Law, he reproved and rebuked them and thus exposed their wrongdoing.

6:5—Since confidential letters were usually placed in a sealed bag, why did Sanballat send “an open letter” to Nehemiah? Sanballat may have intended to make public the false charges brought forth by sending them in an open letter. Perhaps he hoped that this would anger Nehemiah so much that he would leave the building work and come to defend himself. Or Sanballat may have thought that the contents of the letter would cause such alarm among the Jews that they would stop their work altogether. Nehemiah refused to be intimidated and calmly continued in his God-assigned work.

5:14-19. For Christian overseers, Governor Nehemiah is a splendid example of humility, unselfishness, and discretion. Though zealous in enforcing God’s Law, he did not domineer over others for selfish gain. Rather, he showed concern for the oppressed and the poor. In displaying generosity, Nehemiah set an outstanding example for all of God’s servants.

7:6-67—Why does Nehemiah’s list of the remnant who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel differ from Ezra’s in individual figures for each household? (Ezra 2:1-65) The reason for these variations may be that Ezra and Nehemiah used different source material. For example, the number of those who registered to return may have been different from the number who actually did return. The two records may also have differed because some Jews who were unable to establish their genealogy at the outset did so in time. Both accounts, however, agree on one point: The number of initial returnees was 42,360, apart from slaves and singers.

No. 1:	Nehemiah 6:1-13
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No. 2:	What Can We Learn About Hospitality From Lydia, Gaius, and Philemon?
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*** w96 9/15 p. 28 Lydia—Hospitable Worshiper of God ***

“She Just Made Us Come”

Before meeting Lydia, perhaps the missionaries had to be content with lodgings obtained at their own expense. But she was happy to be able to offer alternative accommodations. The fact that she had to insist, though, implies that Paul and his companions put up certain resistance. Why? Paul wanted to ‘furnish the good news without cost, to the end of not abusing his authority’ and not becoming a burden to anyone. (1 Corinthians 9:18; 2 Corinthians 12:14) But Luke adds: “Now when she and her household got baptized, she said with entreaty: ‘If you men have judged me to be faithful to Jehovah, enter into my house and stay.’ And she just made us come.” (Acts 16:15) Lydia was most concerned about being faithful to Jehovah, and offering hospitality apparently was an evidence of her faith. (Compare 1 Peter 4:9.) What an excellent example! Do we too use our possessions to promote the interests of the good news?

The Brothers in Philippi

When Paul and Silas were freed from prison after the episode involving the demon-possessed slave girl, they returned to Lydia’s home, where they found some brothers. (Acts 16:40) Believers in the newly formed Philippian congregation may have used Lydia’s home as a regular meeting place. It is logical to think that her home continued to be a center of theocratic activity in the city.

The initial warm hospitality shown by Lydia proved to be a characteristic of the whole congregation. Despite their poverty, on several occasions the Philippians sent Paul the things he needed, and the apostle was grateful.—2 Corinthians 8:1, 2; 11:9; Philippians 4:10, 15, 16.



Lydia is not mentioned in the letter sent by Paul to the Philippians about 60-61 C.E. The Scriptures do not reveal what happened to her after the events narrated in Acts chapter 16. Nonetheless, the brief mention of this dynamic woman makes us want to “follow the course of hospitality.” (Romans 12:13) How thankful we are to have Christians like Lydia in our midst! Their spirit does much to make congregations warm and friendly, to the glory of Jehovah God.

*** w96 10/1 pp. 17-18 Christian Hospitality in a Divided World ***

Share With the Holy Ones

¹¹ Among those who are truly deserving of our consideration and hospitality are mature Christians who work hard for our spiritual welfare. Jehovah made special provisions for the priests and the Levites in ancient Israel. (Numbers 18:25-29) In the first century, Christians were also urged to care for those who served them in special capacities. The account at 3 John 5-8 gives us a glimpse of the close bond of love existing among the early Christians.

¹² The aged apostle John highly valued the kindness and hospitality that Gaius had shown toward certain traveling brothers sent to visit the congregation. These brothers—including Demetrius, apparently the bearer of the epistle—were all strangers or unknown to Gaius formerly. But they were received hospitably because it was “in behalf of [God’s] name that they went forth.” John put it this way: “We, therefore, are under obligation to receive such persons hospitably, that we may become fellow workers in the truth.”—3 John 1, 7, 8.

¹³ Today, within Jehovah’s organization, there are many who are exerting themselves vigorously in behalf of the whole association of brothers. These include the traveling overseers, who spend their time and energy week after week in building up the congregations; the missionaries, who leave behind families and friends to preach in foreign lands; those serving in Bethel homes or branch offices, who volunteer their services to support the worldwide preaching work; and those in the pioneer service, who spend the major part of their time and energy in the field ministry. Basically, all of these work hard, not for any personal glory or gain, but out of love for the Christian brotherhood and for Jehovah. They are worthy of our imitation because of their whole-souled devotion and are deserving of being ‘received hospitably.’

*** w92 4/15 p. 24 ‘Exhorting on the Basis of Love’ ***

Settling Matters in Love

Paul was moved to write Philemon regarding Onesimus. He wrote the letter in his own hand, not using a secretary as was his custom. (Verse 19) Take a few minutes to read the brief letter to Philemon in its entirety. You will note that after introducing himself and wishing Philemon and his household “undeserved kindness and peace,” Paul commended Philemon for ‘his love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the holy ones.’—Verses 1-7.

Paul could easily have invoked his authority as an apostle and ‘ordered Philemon to do what is proper,’ but instead Paul ‘exhorted on the basis of love.’ He vouched for the fact that Onesimus had indeed become a Christian brother, one who had proved himself useful to Paul. The apostle admitted: “I would like to hold [Onesimus] back for myself that in place of you he might keep on ministering to me in the prison bonds I bear for the sake of the good news. But,” continued Paul, “without your consent I do not want to do anything, so that your good act may be, not as under compulsion, but of your own free will.”—Verses 8-14.

The apostle thus urged Philemon to accept his former slave back as a brother. “Receive him kindly the way you would me,” wrote Paul. Not that Onesimus would necessarily be freed from servitude. Paul was not agitating to change the existing social order of his day. (Compare Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1; 1 Timothy 6:2.) Nevertheless, the slave-master relationship would unquestionably be tempered by the Christian bond that now existed between Onesimus and Philemon. Philemon would view Onesimus “as more than a slave, as a brother beloved.”—Verses 15-17.

What, though, of the debts Onesimus may have incurred, perhaps as the result of thievery? Again, Paul appealed to his friendship with Philemon, saying: “If he did you any wrong or owes you anything, keep this charged to my account.” Paul expressed confidence that Philemon would show a forgiving spirit, going beyond the requests Paul made. Since Paul hoped to be released soon, he even arranged to enjoy Philemon’s hospitality in the near future. After giving some further greetings and wishing Philemon “the undeserved kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ,” Paul closed his letter.—Verses 18-25.

*** rs p. 213 Jesus Christ ***

No. 3: Does Thomas’ Exclamation at John 20:28 Prove That Jesus Is Truly God? (rs p.213¶1-3)

Does Thomas’ exclamation at John 20:28 prove that Jesus is truly God?

John 20:28 (RS) reads: “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’”



There is no objection to referring to Jesus as “God,” if this is what Thomas had in mind. Such would be in harmony with Jesus’ own quotation from the Psalms in which powerful men, judges, were addressed as “gods.” (John 10:34, 35, *RS*; Ps. 82:1-6) Of course, Christ occupies a position far higher than such men. Because of the uniqueness of his position in relation to Jehovah, at John 1:18 (*NW*) Jesus is referred to as “the only-begotten god.” (See also *Ro, By.*) Isaiah 9:6 (*RS*) also prophetically describes Jesus as “Mighty God,” but not as the Almighty God. All of this is in harmony with Jesus’ being described as “a god,” or “divine,” at John 1:1 (*NW, AT*).

The context helps us to draw the right conclusion from this. Shortly before Jesus’ death, Thomas had heard Jesus’ prayer in which he addressed his Father as “the only true God.” (John 17:3, *RS*) After Jesus’ resurrection Jesus had sent a message to his apostles, including Thomas, in which he had said: “I am ascending . . . to my God and your God.” (John 20:17, *RS*) After recording what Thomas said when he actually saw and touched the resurrected Christ, the apostle John stated: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31, *RS*) So, if anyone has concluded from Thomas’ exclamation that Jesus is himself “the only true God” or that Jesus is a Trinitarian “God the Son,” he needs to look again at what Jesus himself said (vs. 17) and at the conclusion that is clearly stated by the apostle John (vs. 31).

***** w92 1/15 p. 23 What Do the Scriptures Say About “the Divinity of Christ”? *****

Addressing the resurrected Jesus, the apostle Thomas exclaimed: “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28) This and other accounts were “written down that [we] may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.” And Thomas was not contradicting Jesus, who had sent His disciples the message: “I am ascending to . . . my God and your God.” (John 20:17, 30, 31) So Thomas did not think that Jesus was Almighty God. Thomas may have addressed Jesus as “my God” in the sense of Christ’s being “a god,” though not “the only true God.” (John 1:1; 17:1-3) Or by saying “my God,” Thomas may have been acknowledging Jesus as God’s Spokesman and Representative, even as others addressed an angelic messenger as though he were Jehovah.—Compare Genesis 18:1-5, 22-33; 31:11-13; 32:24-30; Judges 2:1-5; 6:11-15; 13:20-22.

According to the Bible, then, Jesus had a prehuman existence as the Word. When on the earth, he was not a divine God-man. He was wholly human, though perfect, as Adam originally was. Since Jesus’ resurrection, he has been an exalted immortal spirit ever subordinate to God. Clearly, therefore, the Scriptures do not support the idea of “the divinity of Christ.”

***** w88 6/1 p. 19 Accurate Knowledge of God and His Son Leads to Life *****

“My Lord and My God”

¹³ Trinitarians also cite John 20:28 to support their claims. There Thomas said to Jesus: “My Lord and my God!” As shown above, there is no objection to Thomas’ referring to Jesus as a god. Such would be in harmony with the fact that Jesus, in his prehuman existence, certainly was a god, that is, a powerful, divine person. And he certainly has been that since his death and resurrection to heavenly life. Jesus even quoted from the Psalms to show that powerful humans were addressed as “gods.” (Psalm 82:1-6; John 10:34, 35) The apostle Paul noted that there were “many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords.’” (1 Corinthians 8:5) Even Satan is called “the god of this system of things.”—2 Corinthians 4:4.

¹⁴ Christ occupies a position far higher than imperfect men, or Satan. If such can be referred to as “gods,” surely Jesus can be, and was, referred to as a god. Because of his unique position in relation to Jehovah, Jesus is “the only-begotten god” (John 1:18), a “Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6), and “a god” (John 1:1). So there was nothing improper about Thomas’ referring to Jesus in that way. Thomas was saying that Jesus was a god to him, a divine, powerful one. But he was not saying that Jesus was Jehovah, which is why Thomas said, “my” God and not “the” God.

¹⁵ Just three verses later, at John 20:31, the Bible states: “But these have been written down that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ *the Son of God.*” All doubt as to what Thomas may have meant is dispelled here. The Bible writer John clearly says that Jesus is the Son of God, not almighty God himself.



February

Feb. 14 Bible reading: Nehemiah 9-11

No. 1: Nehemiah 11:1-14

No. 2: Does Matthew 1:23 Indicate That Jesus When on Earth Was God? (rs pág. 214¶1-3)

No. 3: Ways in Which God's Undeserved Kindness Is Expressed (1 Pet. 4:10)

Bible reading: Nehemiah 9-11

*** w06 2/1 p. 11 Highlights From the Book of Nehemiah ***

10:34—Why were the people required to supply wood? The wood offering was not commanded in the Mosaic Law. This requirement stemmed strictly from the need. Large quantities of wood were needed in order to burn the sacrifices on the altar. Apparently, there were not enough Nethinim, who served as non-Israelite temple slaves. Hence, lots were cast to ensure a continuous supply of wood.

8:8. As teachers of God's Word, we 'put meaning into it' by using good enunciation and oral emphasis and by expounding on the Scriptures correctly, making clear their application.

8:10. "The joy of Jehovah" comes from being conscious of and satisfying one's spiritual need and from following theocratic direction. How vital that we diligently study the Bible, regularly attend Christian meetings, and zealously share in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work!

11:2. Leaving one's hereditary possession and moving into Jerusalem involved personal expense and some disadvantages. Those who volunteered to do this showed a self-sacrificing spirit. We too can show such a spirit when opportunities arise to volunteer our services in behalf of others at conventions and on other occasions.

No. 1: Nehemiah 11:1-14

No. 2: Does Matthew 1:23 Indicate That Jesus When on Earth Was God? (rs pág. 214¶1-3)

*** rs p. 214 Jesus Christ ***

Does Matthew 1:23 indicate that Jesus when on earth was God?

Matt. 1:23, *RS*: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emman'u-el' (which means, God with us ["God is with us," *NE*])."

In announcing Jesus' coming birth, did Jehovah's angel say that the child would be God himself? No, the announcement was: "He will be great, and will be called the *Son* of the Most High." (Luke 1:32, 35, *RS*; italics added.) And Jesus himself never claimed to be God but, rather, "the *Son* of God." (John 10:36, *RS*; italics added.) Jesus was sent into the world by God; so by means of this only-begotten Son, God was with mankind.—John 3:17; 17:8.

It was not unusual for Hebrew names to include within them the word for God or even an abbreviated form of God's personal name. For example, Eli'athah means "God Has Come"; Jehu means "Jehovah Is He"; Elijah means "My God Is Jehovah." But none of these names implied that the possessor was himself God.

No. 3: Ways in Which God's Undeserved Kindness Is Expressed (1 Pet. 4:10)

*** w09 1/15 pp. 12-14 pars. 1-9 Are You a 'Steward of God's Undeserved Kindness'? ***

GOD'S WORD repeatedly assures us that Jehovah will come to our aid when we are discouraged or brokenhearted. Note, for instance, these comforting words: "Jehovah is giving support to all who are falling, and is raising up all who are bowed down." "He is healing the brokenhearted ones, and is binding up their painful spots." (Ps. 145:14; 147:3) Moreover, our heavenly Father himself states: "I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, the One saying to you, 'Do not be afraid. I myself will help you.'"—Isa. 41:13.

² How, though, does Jehovah, who dwells in the invisible heavens, 'grasp our hand'? How does he 'raise us up when we are bowed down' by heartache? Jehovah God provides such support in various ways. For example, he gives his people "power beyond what is normal" by means of his holy spirit. (2 Cor. 4:7; John 14:16, 17) God's servants also feel the uplifting power that is exerted by the message found in God's inspired Word, the Bible. (Heb. 4:12) Is there still another way by which Jehovah fortifies us? We find an answer in the book of First Peter.



“God’s Undeserved Kindness Expressed in Various Ways”

³ Addressing spirit-anointed believers, the apostle Peter writes that they have good reason to be joyful because a rich reward awaits them. Then he adds: “Though for a little while at present, if it must be, you have been grieved by various trials.” (1 Pet. 1:1-6) Note the word “various.” It suggests that trials will be varied. However, Peter does not stop there, leaving his brothers to wonder if they will be able to cope with such a diversity of tests. Instead, Peter points out that Christians can be sure that Jehovah will help them to cope with each trial they encounter, no matter what its nature may be. That assurance is given in the latter part of Peter’s letter, where the apostle discusses matters related to “the end of all things.”—1 Pet. 4:7.

⁴ Peter states: “In proportion as each one has received a gift, use it in ministering to one another as fine stewards of God’s undeserved kindness expressed in various ways.” (1 Pet. 4:10) Peter again uses the word “various.” He, in effect, says, ‘Trials come in many different forms, but God’s expressions of undeserved kindness come in many different forms as well.’ Why is that statement comforting? It implies that whatever the nature of our trial may be, there will always be an expression of God’s undeserved kindness that will match it. Did you notice in Peter’s statement, though, just how Jehovah’s undeserved kindness is conveyed to us? By means of fellow Christians.

“Ministering to One Another”

⁵ In speaking to all members of the Christian congregation, Peter says: “Above all things, have intense love for one another.” He then adds: “In proportion as each one has received a gift, use it in ministering to one another.” (1 Pet. 4:8, 10) Hence, each one in the congregation is to have a share in building fellow Christians up. We have been placed in charge of something valuable belonging to Jehovah, and we are responsible for distributing it to others. So, then, with what are we entrusted? Peter says that it is “a gift.” What is the gift? How do we “use it in ministering to one another”?

⁶ God’s Word states: “Every good gift and every perfect present is from above.” (Jas. 1:17) Indeed, all gifts with which Jehovah entrusts his people are expressions of his undeserved kindness. One outstanding gift Jehovah imparts to us is the holy spirit. That gift enables us to cultivate such godly qualities as love, goodness, and mildness. Such qualities move us, in turn, to show fellow believers heartfelt affection and give them willing support. True wisdom and knowledge are also among the good gifts that we acquire with the help of the holy spirit. (1 Cor. 2:10-16; Gal. 5:22, 23) In fact, all our energies, abilities, and talents may be viewed as gifts to be used to bring praise and honor to our heavenly Father. We have the God-given responsibility to use our abilities and qualities as a means of conveying expressions of God’s undeserved kindness to our fellow believers.

“Use It in Ministering”—How?

⁷ Regarding gifts we have received, Peter also states: “*In proportion* as each one has received a gift, use it.” The qualifying term “in proportion” indicates that qualities and abilities may vary not only in nature but also in extent. Even so, each one is urged to “use *it* [that is, any particular gift he has received] in ministering to one another.” Moreover, the expression “use it . . . as fine stewards” is a command. Hence, we should ask ourselves: ‘Do I, indeed, use the gifts with which I am entrusted to fortify my fellow believers?’ (Compare 1 Timothy 5:9, 10.) ‘Or do I use the abilities that I received from Jehovah mainly to benefit myself—perhaps to acquire riches or to attain social status?’ (1 Cor. 4:7) If we use our gifts “in ministering to one another,” we will be pleasing Jehovah.—Prov. 19:17; *read Hebrews 13:16.*

⁸ God’s Word mentions various ways in which first-century Christians ministered to one another. (*Read Romans 15:25, 26; 2 Timothy 1:16-18.*) Similarly today, the command to use one’s gift in behalf of fellow believers is wholeheartedly carried out by true Christians. Consider some of the ways in which that is being done.

⁹ Many brothers spend hours each month preparing meeting parts. At the meetings, when they convey some of the spiritual gems they have found during their Bible study, their insightful words motivate all in the congregation to endure. (1 Tim. 5:17) Numerous brothers and sisters are known for their warmth and compassion toward fellow believers. (Rom. 12:15) Some regularly visit those who are depressed and pray with them. (1 Thess. 5:14) Others thoughtfully write some heartfelt words of encouragement to fellow Christians who are coping with a trial. Still others kindly help those with physical limitations to attend the congregation meetings. Thousands of Witnesses share in relief work, helping fellow believers rebuild homes that have been struck by disasters. The tender affection and practical assistance rendered by such caring brothers and sisters are all manifestations of “God’s undeserved kindness expressed in various ways.”—*Read 1 Peter 4:11.*



February

Feb. 21	Bible reading: Nehemiah 12-13
No. 1:	Nehemiah 13:15-22
No. 2:	What It Means to Give Jehovah God Exclusive Devotion (Ex. 20:5)
No. 3:	What Is the Meaning of John 5:18? (rs p.214¶4-5)

Bible reading: Nehemiah 12-13

*** w06 2/1 p. 11 Highlights From the Book of Nehemiah ***

12:31, 38, 40-42. Singing is a fine way to praise Jehovah and express our gratitude to him. We should sing wholeheartedly at Christian gatherings.

13:4-31. We must be on guard against allowing materialism, corruption, and apostasy to make inroads into our lives.

13:22. Nehemiah was well-aware that he was accountable to God. We too need to be aware of our accountability to Jehovah.

No. 1: Nehemiah 13:15-22

No. 2: What It Means to Give Jehovah God Exclusive Devotion (Ex. 20:5)

*** w05 5/15 pp. 22-23 par. 12 Coming to Know Jehovah’s Ways ***

¹² *Give Jehovah exclusive devotion.* The nation of Israel was present when Jehovah declared that he requires exclusive devotion. (Exodus 20:2-5) The Israelites had seen abundant evidence that Jehovah is the true God. (Deuteronomy 4:33-35) Jehovah made it clear that regardless of what other nations were doing, he would not tolerate any form of idolatry or spiritism among his people. Their devotion to him was to be no mere formality. All of them were to love Jehovah with their whole heart, their whole soul, and all their vital force. (Deuteronomy 6:5, 6) This would involve their speech, their conduct—indeed, every aspect of their lives. (Leviticus 20:27; 24:15, 16; 26:1) Jesus Christ also made it clear that Jehovah requires exclusive devotion.—Mark 12:28-30; Luke 4:8.

*** w09 2/1 p. 30 Why Do Jehovah’s Witnesses Not Use Images in Their Worship? ***

What Did God Require of the Israelites?

After liberating the Israelites from Egypt, Jehovah God gave them clear direction regarding how he wanted to be worshipped. The second of the so-called Ten Commandments says: “You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be induced to serve them, because I Jehovah your God am a God exacting exclusive devotion.”—Exodus 20:4, 5.

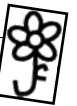
At the very time that God was giving these commandments to Moses, the Israelites were making a golden calf, likely in imitation of Egyptian animal worship. They did not call the image by the name of an Egyptian god. Instead, they associated it with the worship of Jehovah. (Exodus 32:5, 6) How did God react? His anger blazed against those who venerated the idol, and Moses destroyed it.—Exodus 32:9, 10, 19, 20.

Later, Jehovah God elaborated on the second commandment. Through Moses, he reminded the Israelites that they must not make for themselves “a carved image, the form of any symbol, the representation of male or female, the representation of any beast that is in the earth, the representation of any winged bird that flies in the heavens, the representation of anything moving on the ground, the representation of any fish that is in the waters under the earth.” (Deuteronomy 4:15-18) Clearly, the Israelites were not to use idols of any shape or form in the worship of God.

Nevertheless, Israel later fell into idolatry. To correct them, Jehovah dispatched prophets who warned of impending punishment because of their idolatrous worship. (Jeremiah 19:3-5; Amos 2:8) As a nation, Israel ignored God’s warnings. Therefore, in 607 B.C.E., Jehovah allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and take the nation into captivity.—2 Chronicles 36:20, 21; Jeremiah 25:11, 12.

*** it-1 pp. 773-774 Exclusive Devotion ***

This expression has reference to the fact that Jehovah does not tolerate any rivalry, the worship of any other gods. The Hebrew word *qan-na* is used only of God; it means “exacting exclusive devotion; jealous.”—Ex 20:5, ftn; see JEALOUS, JEALOUSY.



God will not transfer to another the honor due himself. (Isa 42:8) To depart from exclusive devotion to him would incur the heat of His zealous anger. (De 4:24; 5:9; 6:15) Israel was regarded as being married to Jehovah. As a husband, Jehovah claimed exclusive devotion, loyalty, fidelity from Israel. He would be zealous, full of ardor in her behalf, in her defense. (Eze 36:5) Conversely, disobedience, going after other gods, would be adultery, thereby meriting Jehovah's righteous anger and his jealousy for his own name.—De 32:16, 21; Eze 16:38, 42.

What is the exclusive devotion that Jehovah requires from his servants?

The word “exclusive” is from the Latin *exclusus*, meaning “altogether shut out.” Devotion means strong attachment and ardent love. Exclusive devotion, therefore, means keeping others out of, or excluded from, God’s position in our hearts and actions. Everyone and everything else stays outside this honored position that only he can hold.

No. 3: What Is the Meaning of John 5:18? (rs p.214¶4-5)

*** rs p. 214 Jesus Christ ***

What is the meaning of John 5:18?

John 5:18, RS: “This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God.”

It was the unbelieving Jews who reasoned that Jesus was attempting to make himself equal with God by claiming God as his Father. While properly referring to God as his Father, Jesus never claimed equality with God. He straightforwardly answered the Jews: “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.” (John 5:19, RS; see also John 14:28; John 10:36.) It was those unbelieving Jews, too, who claimed that Jesus broke the Sabbath, but they were wrong also about that. Jesus kept the Law perfectly, and he declared: “It is lawful to do good on the sabbath.”—Matt. 12:10-12, RS.

February

Feb. 28 Bible reading: Esther 1-5
Theocratic Ministry School Review

Bible reading: Esther 1-5

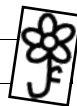
*** w06 3/1 pp. 8-10 Highlights From the Book of Esther ***

1:3-5—Did the banquet last for 180 days? The text does not state that the banquet lasted that long but that the king showed the officials the riches and the beauty of his glorious kingdom for 180 days. Perhaps the king used this lengthy event to show off the glory of his kingdom in order to impress the nobles and convince them of his ability to carry out his plans. In that case, verses 3 and 5 could refer to the 7-day banquet that took place at the end of the 180-day gathering.

1:8—In what way was there ‘no one compelling as regards the time of drinking according to the law’? On this occasion, King Ahasuerus made an exception to what appears to have been a Persian custom of urging one another to drink a certain amount at such gatherings. “They could drink as much or as little as they desired,” says one reference work.

1:10-12—Why did Queen Vashti keep refusing to come to the king? Some scholars suggest that the queen refused to obey because she chose not to degrade herself before the king’s drunken guests. Or perhaps this outwardly beautiful queen really was not submissive. While the Bible does not state her motive, the wise men of the day thought that obedience to the husband was definitely an issue and that Vashti’s bad example would influence all the wives in the provinces of Persia.

2:14-17—Did Esther have immoral sexual relations with the king? The answer is no. The account says that in the morning the other women brought to the king were returned to the second house under the charge of the king’s eunuch, “the guardian of the concubines.” The women who spent the night with the king thus became his concubines, or secondary wives. However, Esther was not taken to the house of concubines after seeing the king. When Esther was brought before Ahasuerus, “the king came to love Esther more than all the other women, so that she gained more favor and loving-kindness before him than all the other virgins.” (Esther 2:17) How did she gain Ahasuerus’ “favor and loving-kindness”? The same way she had won the favor of others. “The young woman was pleasing in [Hegai’s] eyes, so that she gained loving-kindness before him.” (Esther 2:8, 9) Hegai favored her strictly on the basis of what he observed—her



appearance and good qualities. In fact, “Esther was continually gaining favor in the eyes of everyone seeing her.” (Esther 2:15) Similarly, the king was impressed with what he saw in Esther and therefore came to love her.

3:2; 5:9—Why did Mordecai refuse to bow down to Haman? It was not wrong for the Israelites to acknowledge the superior position of an exalted personage by prostrating themselves. However, in the case of Haman, more was involved. Haman was an Agagite, probably an Amalekite, and Jehovah had marked Amalek for extermination. (Deuteronomy 25:19) For Mordecai, bowing down to Haman was an issue of integrity to Jehovah. He flatly refused, stating that he was a Jew.—Esther 3:3, 4.

2:10, 20; 4:12-16. Esther accepted direction and counsel from a mature worshipper of Jehovah. We are wise to “be obedient to those who are taking the lead among [us] and be submissive.”—Hebrews 13:17.

2:11; 4:5. We should ‘keep an eye, not in personal interest upon just our own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others.’—Philippians 2:4.

2:15. Esther showed modesty and self-control by not requesting additional jewelry or finer clothing than what was provided by Hegai. It was “the secret person of the heart in the incorruptible apparel of the quiet and mild spirit” that won Esther the king’s favor.—1 Peter 3:4.

2:21-23. Esther and Mordecai were good examples of “subjection to the superior authorities.”—Romans 13:1.

3:4. In some situations, it may be prudent to remain silent about our identity, as Esther was about hers. However, when it comes to taking a stand on important issues, such as Jehovah’s sovereignty and our integrity, we must not be afraid to make known that we are Jehovah’s Witnesses.

4:3. When faced with trials, we should prayerfully turn to Jehovah for strength and wisdom.

4:6-8. Mordecai sought a legal solution to the threat created by Haman’s conspiracy.—Philippians 1:7.

4:14. Mordecai’s confidence in Jehovah was exemplary.

4:16. With full reliance on Jehovah, Esther faithfully and courageously faced a situation that could have resulted in her death. It is vital that we learn to rely on Jehovah and not on ourselves.

5:6-8. In order to win the goodwill of Ahasuerus, Esther invited him to a second banquet. She acted with prudence, as we should.—Proverbs 14:15.



March

Mar. 7	Bible reading: Esther 6-10
No. 1:	Esther 7:1-10
No. 2:	Does the Fact That Worship Is Given to Jesus Prove That He Is God? (rs p. 214¶6-p.215¶2)
No. 3:	Why Jesus Is the Chief Agent and Perfecter of Our Faith (Heb. 12:2)

Bible reading: Esther 6-10

*** w06 3/1 p. 11 Highlights From the Book of Esther ***

7:4—How would an annihilation of the Jews bring “damage to the king”? By tactfully pointing out the possibility of selling the Jews as slaves, Esther brought to the fore the matter of damage to the king by their destruction. The 10,000 silver pieces that Haman had promised were far less profitable to the king’s treasury than the wealth that could have been generated if Haman had schemed to sell the Jews as slaves. The execution of the plot would also have meant the loss of the queen.

7:8—Why did court officials cover Haman’s face? This was likely to suggest shamefulness or impending doom. According to one reference work, “the ancients sometimes covered the heads of those about to be executed.”

8:17—In what way were ‘many of the peoples of the land declaring themselves Jews’? Many of the Persians evidently became Jewish proselytes, thinking that the counterdecree was an indication of God’s favor upon the Jews. The same principle is in operation in the fulfillment of a prophecy found in the book of Zechariah. It states: “Ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will actually take hold of the skirt of a man who is a Jew, saying: ‘We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people.’”—Zechariah 8:23.

9:10, 15, 16—Even though the decree authorized plundering of the spoil, why did the Jews refrain from doing so? Their refusal left no doubt that their purpose was self-preservation, not self-enrichment.

Lessons for Us:

6:6-10. “Pride is before a crash, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”—Proverbs 16:18.

7:3, 4. Do we courageously identify ourselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses, even though doing so may mean persecution?

8:3-6. We can and should appeal to governmental authorities and judicial courts for protection from enemies.

8:5. Esther tactfully did not mention the king’s responsibility in the decree designed to annihilate her people. Similarly, we need to be tactful when giving a witness to high officials.

9:22. We should not forget the poor among us.—Galatians 2:10.

No. 1:	Esther 7:1-10
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No. 2:	Does the Fact That Worship Is Given to Jesus Prove That He Is God? (rs p. 214¶6-p.215¶2)
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*** rs p. 214 - p. 215 Jesus Christ ***

Does the fact that worship is given to Jesus prove that he is God?

At Hebrews 1:6, the angels are instructed to “worship” Jesus, according to the rendering of *RS*, *TEV*, *KJ*, *JB*, and *NAB*. *NW* says “do obeisance to.” At Matthew 14:33, Jesus’ disciples are said to have “worshiped” him, according to *RS*, *TEV*, *KJ*; other translations say that they “showed him reverence” (*NAB*), “bowed down before him” (*JB*), “fell at his feet” (*NE*), “did obeisance to him” (*NW*).

The Greek word rendered “worship” is *pro-sky-ne’o*, which *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* says was also “used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before a person and kissing his feet, the hem of his garment, the ground.” (Chicago, 1979, Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker; second English edition; p. 716) This is the term used at Matthew 14:33 to express what the disciples did toward Jesus; at Hebrews 1:6 to indicate what the angels are to do toward Jesus; at Genesis 22:5 in the Greek *Septuagint* to describe what Abraham did toward Jehovah and at Genesis 23:7 to describe what Abraham did, in harmony with the custom of the time, toward people with whom he was doing business; at 1 Kings 1:23 in the *Septuagint* to describe the prophet Nathan’s action on approaching King David.

At Matthew 4:10 (*RS*), Jesus said: “You shall worship [from *pro-sky-ne’o*] the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.” (At Deuteronomy 6:13, which Jesus is evidently here quoting, appears the personal name of



God, the Tetragrammaton.) In harmony with that, we must understand that it is *pro-sky-ne'o* with a particular attitude of heart and mind that should be directed only toward God.

No. 3: Why Jesus Is the Chief Agent and Perfecter of Our Faith (Heb. 12:2)

*** w05 9/15 pp. 21-23 pars. 1-11 Go On Walking as Jesus Christ Walked ***

“LET us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” wrote the apostle Paul, “as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus.” (Hebrews 12:1, 2) Following the course of faithfulness requires that we look intently at Jesus Christ.

² The original-language word for “look intently,” as used in the Christian Greek Scriptures, means “to direct one’s attention without distraction,” “to look away from one thing so as to see another,” “to concentrate the gaze upon.” One reference work observes: “The minute the Greek runner in the stadium takes his attention away from the race course and the goal to which he is speeding, and turns it upon the onlooking crowds, his speed is slackened. It is so with the Christian.” Distractions can hinder our spiritual progress. We must look intently at Jesus Christ. And what are we looking for in the Chief Agent? The Greek term rendered “chief agent” means “chief leader, one that takes the lead in anything and thus furnishes the example.” Looking intently at Jesus calls for following his example.

³ “He that says he remains in union with [God] is under obligation himself also to go on walking just as that one [Jesus] walked,” states the Bible. (1 John 2:6) We must remain in union with God by observing Jesus’ commandments as he observed those of his Father.—John 15:10.

⁴ Hence, walking as Jesus walked requires that we closely observe him as the Chief Leader and that we follow his steps closely. The important questions to consider in this regard are: How does Christ lead us today? How should imitating his manner of walking affect us? What are the benefits of adhering to the pattern set by Jesus Christ?

How Christ Leads His Followers

⁵ Before ascending to heaven, the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples and assigned them an important work. He said: “Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations.” On that occasion the Chief Leader also promised to be with them as they fulfill this assignment, saying: “Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) How is Jesus Christ with his followers in this time of the conclusion of the system of things?

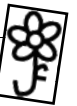
⁶ “The helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name,” said Jesus, “that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you.” (John 14:26) The holy spirit, sent in Jesus’ name, guides and strengthens us today. It enlightens us spiritually and helps us to understand “even the deep things of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:10) Moreover, the godly qualities of “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control” are “the fruitage of the spirit.” (Galatians 5:22, 23) With the help of the holy spirit, we can cultivate these qualities.

⁷ As we study the Scriptures and endeavor to apply what we learn, Jehovah’s spirit helps us to grow in wisdom, discernment, understanding, knowledge, judgment, and thinking ability. (Proverbs 2:1-11) Holy spirit also helps us to endure temptations and trials. (1 Corinthians 10:13; 2 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 4:13) Christians are exhorted to ‘cleanse themselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness.’ (2 Corinthians 7:1) Can we really measure up to God’s requirement of holiness, or cleanness, without the help of the holy spirit? One of the means Jesus uses to lead us today is the holy spirit, which Jehovah God has authorized his Son to employ.—Matthew 28:18.

⁸ Consider another means by which Christ leads the congregation today. Commenting on his presence and the conclusion of the system of things, Jesus said: “Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all his belongings.”—Matthew 24:3, 45-47.

⁹ The “master” is Jesus Christ. The “slave” is the group of anointed Christians on earth. This slave class is entrusted with caring for Jesus’ earthly interests and with providing timely spiritual food. A small group of qualified overseers from among the composite “faithful and discreet slave” form the Governing Body, serving as the representative of the slave class. They direct the worldwide Kingdom-preaching work and the supplying of spiritual nourishment at the right time. Christ thus leads the congregation by means of the spirit-anointed “faithful and discreet slave” and its Governing Body.

¹⁰ Still another manifestation of Christ’s leadership are the “gifts in men”—Christian elders, or overseers. They have been given “with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ.” (Ephesians 4:8, 11, 12) Concerning them, Hebrews 13:7 states: “Remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith.” The elders take the lead in the congregation. Since they imitate Christ Jesus, their faith becomes worthy of imitation.



(1 Corinthians 11:1) We can show our gratitude for the elder arrangement by being obedient and submissive to these “gifts in men.”—Hebrews 13:17.

¹¹ Yes, Jesus Christ leads his followers today through the holy spirit, “the faithful and discreet slave,” and the congregation elders. Our walking as Christ walked involves understanding his way of leading and submitting to it. It also requires that we imitate his manner of walking. “To this course you were called,” wrote the apostle Peter, “because even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely.” (1 Peter 2:21) In what way should following Jesus’ perfect model affect us?

*** w94 10/15 pp. 13-14 Could Jesus Have Had Faith in God? ***

The “Perfecter of Our Faith” Perfected

In the 11th chapter of his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul mentions the great cloud of faithful men and women of pre-Christian times. He concludes, pointing to the greatest and perfect example of faith: “We look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame . . . Consider closely the one who has endured such contrary talk by sinners against their own interests, that you may not get tired and give out in your souls.”—Hebrews 12:1-3.

The majority of theologians say that this verse does not speak of “Jesus’ personal faith” but, rather, of his role as “initiator or founder of faith.” The Greek term *te-lei-o-teś* that occurs in this phrase refers to someone who perfects, who realizes or completes something. As the “Perfecter,” Jesus completed faith in the sense that his coming to the earth fulfilled Bible prophecies and thus established a more solid foundation for faith. But does this mean that *he* did not have faith?

The passages from the letter to the Hebrews that you can see in the box on page 15 leave no doubt. Jesus was perfected by his sufferings and his obedience. Though already a perfect man, his experiences made him perfect and complete in all things, even in faith, in order for him to become fully qualified as High Priest for the salvation of true Christians. He supplicated his Father “with strong outcries and tears,” he was “faithful” to God, and he had “godly fear.” (Hebrews 3:1, 2; 5:7-9) He was “tested in *all* respects” exactly “like ourselves,” says Hebrews 4:15, that is, like any faithful Christian whose faith undergoes “various trials.” (James 1:2, 3) Is it reasonable to believe that Jesus could be put to the test “*like*” his followers without being tested in his faith as they are?

Supplications, obedience, suffering, trials, faithfulness, and godly fear attest to the complete faith of Jesus. They indicate that he became the “Perfecter of our faith” only after being made perfect in his own faith. Clearly, he was not God the Son, as the doctrine of the Trinity asserts.—1 John 5:5.

*** it-2 p. 72 Jesus Christ ***

The Lord Jesus Christ is thus “the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith.” By his fulfillment of prophecy and his revelation of God’s future purposes, as well as by what he said and did and was, he provided the solid foundation on which true faith must rest.—Heb 12:2; 11:1.

*** it-2 p. 606 Perfection ***

The “Perfecter of our faith.” Jesus is called “the Chief Agent [Chief Leader] and Perfecter of our faith.” (Heb 12:2) True, long before the coming of Jesus Christ, Abraham’s faith was “perfected” by his works of faith and obedience, so that he gained God’s approval and became party with God in an oath-bound covenant. (Jas 2:21-23; Ge 22:15-18) But the faith of all those men of faith living prior to Jesus’ earthly ministry was incomplete, or imperfect, in the sense of their not understanding the then unfulfilled prophecies regarding him as God’s Seed and Messiah. (1Pe 1:10-12) By his birth, ministry, death, and resurrection to heavenly life, these prophecies came to fulfillment, and the faith about Christ had a strengthened foundation, one filled out with historical facts. Thus, faith in this perfected sense “arrived” through Christ Jesus (Ga 3:24, 25), who thereby proved to be the “leader” (*AT*), “pioneer” (*Mo*), or Chief Agent of our faith. He continued to be the Perfecter of the faith of his followers from his heavenly position, by pouring down holy spirit on them at Pentecost and by imparting revelations that progressively filled out and developed their faith.—Ac 2:32, 33; Heb 2:4; Re 1:1, 2; 22:16; Ro 10:17.



March

Mar. 14 Bible reading: Job 1-5

No. 1: Job 3:1-26

No. 2: What Can We Learn From the Example of Zelophehad's Daughters? (Num. 36:10-12)

No. 3: Do the Miracles Performed by Jesus Prove That He Is God? (rs p.215¶3-p.216¶1)

Bible reading: Job 1-5

*** w06 3/15 pp. 13-14 Highlights From the Book of Job ***

1:4—Did Job's children observe birthdays? No, they did not. The original-language words for "day" and "birthday" are different, each having its own meaning. (Genesis 40:20) At Job 1:4, the word "day" is used, denoting an interval of time from sunrise to sunset. The seven sons of Job apparently held a seven-day family gathering once a year. As they made the circuit, each son was the host of the banquet held at his house on "his own day."

1:6; 2:1—Who were allowed to enter before Jehovah? Among those who took their stand before Jehovah were God's only-begotten Son, the Word; the faithful angels; and disobedient angelic 'sons of God,' including Satan the Devil. (John 1:1, 18) Satan and his demons were not ousted from heaven until shortly after the establishment of God's Kingdom in 1914. (Revelation 12:1-12) By permitting them to enter before him, Jehovah brought before all spirit creatures Satan's challenge and the issues it raised.

1:7; 2:2—Did Jehovah speak to Satan directly? The Bible does not give much detail about how Jehovah communicates with spirit creatures. However, the prophet Micaiah had a vision in which he saw an angel communicate directly with Jehovah. (1 Kings 22:14, 19-23) It would seem, then, that Jehovah talked to Satan without an intermediary.

1:21—In what way could Job return to his "mother's belly"? Since Jehovah God formed man "out of dust from the ground," the term "mother" is here used figuratively to refer to the earth.—Genesis 2:7.

2:9—What frame of mind might Job's wife have been in when she told her husband to curse God and die? Job's wife had suffered the same losses as her husband. It must have pained her to see her once active husband brought low by a loathsome disease. She had lost her beloved children. She may have been so distraught because of all of this that she lost sight of what was truly important—their relationship with God.

1:8-11; 2:3-5. As shown in Job's case, along with proper action and speech, integrity calls for the right motive for serving Jehovah.

1:21, 22. By remaining loyal to Jehovah under favorable as well as unfavorable circumstances, we can prove Satan a liar.—Proverbs 27:11.

2:9, 10. Like Job, we should remain firm in faith even if family members do not value our spiritual pursuits or pressure us to compromise or give up our faith.

2:13. Job's companions had nothing comforting to say about God and his promises because they lacked spirituality.

4:7, 8; 8:5, 6; 11:13-15. We must not quickly assume that a person in distress is reaping what he has sown and does not have God's approval.

4:18, 19; 22:2, 3. Our counsel should be based on God's Word, not on personal opinion.—2 Timothy 3:16.

No. 1: Job 3:1-26

No. 2: What Can We Learn From the Example of Zelophehad's Daughters? (Num. 36:10-12)

*** w08 2/15 pp. 4-5 Keep Jehovah Before You Constantly ***

Obey God Completely

⁹ *Keeping Jehovah in mind constantly will help us to obey him, and we will reap blessings as a consequence.* (Deut. 28:13; 1 Sam. 15:22) This calls for an obedient spirit. Consider the attitude of five fleshly sisters, the daughters of Zelophehad, who lived in Moses' day. Among the Israelites, sons customarily received the inheritance from their fathers. The man Zelophehad died without sons, and Jehovah directed that these five women were to receive the entire



inheritance—on one condition. They had to marry sons of Manasseh so that the inherited property would remain with the same tribe.—Num. 27:1-8; 36:6-8.

¹⁰ Zelophehad's daughters had faith that things would work out well if they obeyed God. "Just as Jehovah had commanded Moses, that is the way the daughters of Zelophehad did," says the Bible. "Accordingly Mahlah, Tirzah and Hoglah and Milcah and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, became the wives of the sons of their father's brothers. To some of the families of the sons of Manasseh the son of Joseph they became wives, that their inheritance might continue together with the tribe of the family of their father." (Num. 36:10-12) Those obedient women did what Jehovah commanded. (Josh. 17:3, 4) With similar faith, spiritually mature unmarried Christians obey God by marrying "only in the Lord."—1 Cor. 7:39.

No. 3: Do the Miracles Performed by Jesus Prove That He Is God? (rs p.215¶3-p.216¶1)

*** rs p. 215 - p. 216 Jesus Christ ***

Do the miracles performed by Jesus prove that he is God?

Acts 10:34, 38, *RS*: "Peter opened his mouth and said: ' . . . God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; . . . he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.'" (So Peter did not conclude from the miracles that he observed that Jesus was God but, rather, that God was *with* Jesus. Compare Matthew 16:16, 17.)

John 20:30, 31, *RS*: "Now Jesus did many other signs ["miracles," *TEV, Kx*] in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name." (So the conclusion we should properly draw from the miracles is that Jesus is "the Christ," the Messiah, "the Son of God." The expression "Son of God" is very different from "God the Son.")

Pre-Christian prophets such as Elijah and Elisha performed miracles similar to those of Jesus. Yet that certainly is no proof that they were God.



March

Mar. 21 Bible reading: Job 6-10

No. 1: Job 8:1-22

No. 2: Is Believing in Jesus Christ All That Is Required for Salvation? (rs p. 216¶3)

No. 3: * How Can We Apply the Counsel Recorded at Matthew 10:16?

Bible reading: Job 6-10

*** w06 3/15 p. 14 Highlights From the Book of Job ***

7:1; 14:14—What is meant by “compulsory labor” or “compulsory service”? Job’s distress was so severe that he thought of life as hard, arduous compulsory labor. (Job 10:17, footnote) Since the time one spends in Sheol—from the time of one’s death to the resurrection—is an enforced period, Job likened that time to compulsory service.

7:9, 10; 10:21; 16:22—Do these statements indicate that Job did not believe in the resurrection? These are comments about Job’s immediate future. What, then, did he mean? One possibility is that if he should die, none of his contemporaries would see him. From their standpoint, he would neither return to his house nor get further acknowledgment until God’s appointed time. Job might also have meant that no one can come back from Sheol on his own. That Job hoped in a future resurrection is clear from Job 14:13-15.

10:10—How did Jehovah ‘pour Job out as milk and curdle him like cheese’? This is a poetic description of how Job was formed in his mother’s womb.

10:1. Bitterness blinded Job, so that he did not consider other possible reasons for his suffering. We must not become bitter when undergoing suffering, especially since we have a clear understanding of the issues involved.

No. 1: Job 8:1-22

No. 2: Is Believing in Jesus Christ All That Is Required for Salvation? (rs p. 216¶3)

*** rs p. 216 Jesus Christ ***

Is believing in Jesus Christ all that is required for salvation?

Acts 16:30-32, RS: “Men, what must I do to be saved?’ And they [Paul and Silas] said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord [“God,” NAB, also JB and NE footnotes; “God’s message,” A7] to him and to all that were in his house.” (Was that man’s ‘believing in the Lord Jesus’ just a matter of his saying sincerely that he believed? Paul showed that more was required—namely, knowledge and acceptance of the Word of God, as Paul and Silas now proceeded to preach it to the jailer. Would a person’s belief in Jesus be genuine if he did not worship the God whom Jesus worshiped, if he did not apply what Jesus taught as to the kind of persons his disciples should be, or if he did not do the work that Jesus commanded his followers to perform? We cannot earn salvation; it is possible only on the basis of faith in the value of the sacrifice of Jesus’ human life. But our lives must be consistent with the faith that we profess, even though that may involve hardship. At Matthew 10:22 [RS] Jesus said: “He who endures to the end will be saved.”)

No. 3: * How Can We Apply the Counsel Recorded at Matthew 10:16?

*** w96 7/15 p. 22 What “Instinctively Wise” Creatures Can Teach Us ***

“Cautious as Serpents and yet Innocent as Doves”

Smith’s Bible Dictionary states: “Throughout the East the serpent was used as an emblem of the evil principle, of the spirit of disobedience.” On the other hand, “my dove” was a term of endearment. (Song of Solomon 5:2) What did Jesus have in mind, then, when he encouraged his followers to be “cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves”?—Matthew 10:16.

Jesus was giving instructions for preaching and teaching. His disciples could expect a mixed reception. A few would show interest, whereas others would reject the good news. Some would even persecute these true servants of God. (Matthew 10:17-23) How were the disciples to react to persecution?

In *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (The Gospel of Matthew), Fritz Rienecker says regarding Matthew 10:16: “Shrewdness . . . must be coupled with integrity, sincerity, and straightforwardness, lest anything should happen to give enemies valid grounds for complaint. The ambassadors of Jesus are among ruthless opponents, who show no consideration and who set upon the apostles without mercy and at the slightest opportunity. Hence, it is necessary—just



like a serpent—to keep a watchful eye on opponents, and to take stock of the situation with eyes and senses alert; to stay master of the situation without trickery or deceit, to be pure and true in word and deed and thus prove themselves dovelike.”

What can God’s modern-day servants learn from Jesus’ words found at Matthew 10:16? Today, people react to the good news in much the same way that they did in the first century. When faced with persecution, true Christians need to combine the shrewdness of the serpent with the purity of the dove. Christians never employ deceit or dishonesty but are uncorrupted, genuine, and honest in declaring the Kingdom message to others.

To illustrate: Colleagues at work, youths in school, or even members of your own family may make caustic remarks about your beliefs as a Witness of Jehovah. The immediate reaction might be to respond in kind by being equally scathing about their faith. But is that innocent? Hardly. If you show your critics that their comments have no effect on your pleasant demeanor, they just might change for the better. You would then be both shrewd and blameless—‘cautious as a serpent, yet innocent as a dove.’

*** g00 2/8 p. 21 Lying—Is It Ever Justified? ***

“Cautious as Serpents”

Of course, being truthful does not mean that we are obligated to divulge all information to anyone who asks it of us. “Do not give what is holy to dogs, neither throw your pearls before swine, that they may never . . . turn around and rip you open,” warned Jesus, at Matthew 7:6. For example, individuals with wicked intent may have no right to know certain things. Christians understand that they are living in a hostile world. Thus, Jesus advised his disciples to be “cautious as serpents” while remaining “innocent as doves.” (Matthew 10:16; John 15:19) Jesus did not always disclose the full truth, especially when revealing all the facts could have brought unnecessary harm to himself or his disciples. Still, even at such times, he did not lie. Instead, he chose either to say nothing or to divert the conversation in another direction.—Matthew 15:1-6; 21:23-27; John 7:3-10.

Faithful men and women mentioned in the Bible, such as Abraham, Isaac, Rahab, and David, were likewise shrewd and cautious when dealing with potential enemies. (Genesis 20:11-13; 26:9; Joshua 2:1-6; 1 Samuel 21:10-14) The Bible classifies such men and women as faithful worshipers whose lives were characterized by obedience. That makes them worthy of imitation.—Romans 15:4; Hebrews 11:8-10, 20, 31, 32-39.

There may be times when lying seemingly provides an easy way out. But Christians today do well to imitate Jesus’ course and follow their Bible-trained conscience when facing particularly difficult situations.—Hebrews 5:14.

The Bible encourages us to be truthful and honest. Lying is wrong, and we should follow the Bible counsel: “Speak truth each one of you with his neighbor.” (Ephesians 4:25) By doing so, we will keep a clean conscience, promote peace and love in the congregation, and continue to honor “the God of truth.”—Psalm 31:5; Hebrews 13:18.



March

Mar. 28 Bible reading: Job 11-15

No. 1: Job 13:1-28

No. 2: Why Jesus Is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt.12:8)

No. 3: Did Jesus Have a Heavenly Existence Before He Became a Human? (rs p. 216 ¶4–p. 217 ¶1)

Bible reading: Job 11-15

*** g99 7/22 p. 11 Live Longer and Feel Better ***

OLDER AND WISER?

“Is there not wisdom among the aged and understanding in length of days?” the Bible asks. (**Job 12:12**) What is the answer? Researchers studied older people to measure such qualities as “insight, sound judgment, perspective and the ability to weigh conflicting values and generate good problem-solving strategies.” According to *U.S. News & World Report*, the study showed that “older people consistently outshine younger people on all measures of wisdom, offering more-thoughtful, sophisticated advice.” Studies also show that “although it often takes older people longer than youngsters to make a decision, it is usually a better one.” Thus, as the Bible book of Job suggests, age is, indeed, sage.

*** w00 5/15 pp. 27-28 A Luxuriant Olive Tree in the House of God ***

How did Job illustrate his conviction that God would call him forth from the grave? By means of a tree, the description of which makes it likely that he was referring to the olive. “There exists hope for even a tree,” Job said. “If it gets cut down, it will even sprout again.” (**Job 14:7**) An olive tree may be chopped down, but that will not destroy it. Only if the tree is uprooted will it die. If the roots remain intact, the tree will sprout again with renewed vigor.

Even if a prolonged drought severely withers an old olive tree, the shriveled stump can come back to life. “If its root grows old in the earth and in the dust its stump dies, at the scent of water it will sprout and it will certainly produce a bough like a new plant.” (**Job 14:8, 9**) Job lived in a dry, dusty land where he had probably observed many an old olive stump that looked dried up and lifeless. When the rains came, however, such a “dead” tree returned to life and a new trunk emerged from its roots as if it were “a new plant.” This remarkable resilience led one Tunisian horticulturist to observe: “You can say that olive trees are immortal.”

No. 1: Job 13:1-28

No. 2: Why Jesus Is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Matt.12:8)

*** w08 2/15 p. 28 Highlights From the Book of Mark ***

2:28—Why is Jesus called “Lord even of the sabbath”? “The Law has a shadow of the good things to come,” wrote the apostle Paul. (Heb. 10:1) As the Law stipulated, the Sabbath came after six days of work, and Jesus performed many of his cures on that day. This foreshadowed the peaceful rest and other blessings that mankind will experience under the Thousand Year Reign of Christ after the end of Satan’s oppressive rulership. Therefore, the King of that Kingdom is also “Lord of the sabbath.”—Matt. 12:8; Luke 6:5.

*** it-2 p. 833 Sabbath Day ***

“**Lord of the Sabbath.**” While on earth, Jesus Christ referred to himself as “Lord of the sabbath.” (Mt 12:8) The literal Sabbath day, which was meant to bring the Israelites relief from their labors, was “a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ.” (Col 2:16, 17) In connection with those “things to come,” there is a sabbath of which Jesus is to be the Lord. As Lord of lords, Christ will rule all the earth for a thousand years. (Re 19:16; 20:6) During his earthly ministry, Jesus performed some of his most outstanding miraculous works on the Sabbath. (Lu 13:10-13; Joh 5:5-9; 9:1-14) This evidently shows the kind of relief that he will bring as he raises mankind to spiritual and physical perfection during his coming Millennial Rule, which thus will be like a period of sabbath rest for the earth and mankind.—Re 21:1-4.

*** gt chap. 31 Plucking Grain on the Sabbath ***

Providing another example, Jesus says: “Have you not read in the Law that on the sabbaths the priests in the temple treat the sabbath as not sacred and continue guiltless?” Yes, even on the Sabbath the priests carry on butchering and other work at the temple in preparing animal sacrifices! “But I tell you,” Jesus says, “that something greater than the temple is here.”



Admonishing the Pharisees, Jesus continues: "If you had understood what this means, 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless ones." Then he concludes: "For Lord of the sabbath is what the Son of man is." What does Jesus mean by that? Jesus is referring to his peaceful Kingdom rule of a thousand years.

For 6,000 years now, humankind has been suffering laborious enslavement under Satan the Devil, with violence and war being the order of the day. On the other hand, the great Sabbath rule of Christ will be a time of rest from all such suffering and oppression. **Matthew 12:1-8; Leviticus 24:5-9; 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Numbers 28:9; Hosea 6:6.**

No. 3: Did Jesus Have a Heavenly Existence Before He Became a Human? (rs p. 216 ¶4–p. 217 ¶1)

*** rs p. 216 - p. 217 Jesus Christ ***

Did Jesus have a heavenly existence before he became a human?

Col. 1:15-17, RS: "He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation . . . All things were created through him and for him. He is before all things."

John 17:5, RS: "[In prayer Jesus said:] Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made." (Also John 8:23)

*** w05 9/15 pp. 4-5 Who Is Jesus Christ? ***

His Origin Was "From Early Times"

Jesus' life course might be divided into three stages. The first began long before his human birth. His origin was "from early times, from the days of time indefinite," says Micah 5:2. Jesus himself said: "I am from the realms above"—that is, from heaven. (John 8:23) He had been in heaven as a mighty spirit person.

Since all created things had a beginning, there was a time when God was alone. Countless ages ago, however, God became a Creator. Who was his first creation? The last book of the Bible identifies Jesus as "the beginning of the creation by God." (Revelation 3:14) Jesus is "the firstborn of all creation." That is so "because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible." (Colossians 1:15, 16) Yes, Jesus was the only one directly created by God himself. Therefore, he is called God's "only-begotten Son." (John 3:16) The firstborn Son also bears the title "the Word." (John 1:14) Why? Because before being born as a human, he served in heaven as one who spoke for God.

"The Word" was with Jehovah God "in the beginning," when "the heavens and the earth" were created. He was the one to whom God said: "Let us make man in our image." (John 1:1; Genesis 1:1, 26) Jehovah's firstborn Son was there at his Father's side, actively working with him. At Proverbs 8:22-31, he is represented as saying: "I came to be beside [the Creator] as a master worker, and I came to be the one he was specially fond of day by day, I being glad before him all the time."

How intimately Jehovah God and his only-begotten Son must have come to know each other as they worked side by side! That close association with Jehovah for untold ages deeply affected God's Son. This obedient Son came to be just like his Father, Jehovah. In fact, Colossians 1:15 calls Jesus "the image of the invisible God." This is one reason why knowledge about Jesus is vital in satisfying our spiritual need and our natural desire to know God. Everything Jesus did while on earth is exactly what Jehovah expected him to do. Hence, getting to know Jesus also means increasing our knowledge of Jehovah. (John 8:28; 14:8-10)



April

Apr. 4	Bible reading: Job 16-20
No. 1:	Job 18:1-21
No. 2:	Does Jesus Have His Fleshly Body in Heaven? (rs p. 217¶2-5)
No. 3:	Why Enlightened Rulers Praise Jehovah's Witnesses (Rom. 13:3)

Bible reading: Job 16-20

*** w90 3/15 p. 27 How to Help Depressed Ones Regain Joy ***

The patriarch Job said: "I would strengthen you with the words of my mouth." (Job 16:5) The Hebrew word for "strengthen" is sometimes rendered "fortify" or "reinforce." It is used to describe how the temple was 'made strong' by means of structural repairs. (Isaiah 41:10; Nahum 2:1; 2 Chronicles 24:13) Your words must skillfully rebuild the depressed person's self-esteem, brick by brick, as it were. Doing this requires that you appeal to his "power of reason." (Romans 12:1) The 1903 issue of *The Watch Tower* cited earlier said regarding depressed ones: "Lacking . . . self-esteem, they need to be pushed to the front a little, in order to bring out what talents they really possess, for their own encouragement and for the blessing also of the entire household of faith."

*** w06 3/15 p. 15 Highlights From the Book of Job ***

19:20—What did Job mean by the expression "I escape with the skin of my teeth"? By saying that he escaped with the skin of something that apparently has no skin, Job might have been saying that he escaped with practically nothing.

16:5; 19:2. Our words should encourage and strengthen others, not irritate them.—Proverbs 18:21.

*** w94 11/15 p. 19 par. 17 Job's Reward—A Source of Hope ***

¹⁷ Completely humbled, Job acknowledged his wrong viewpoint and admitted that he had spoken without knowledge. Yet, he had expressed faith that he would "behold God." (Job 19:25-27) How could that happen, since no human can see Jehovah and live on? (Exodus 33:20) Actually, Job saw the manifestation of divine power, heard God's word, and had his eyes of understanding opened to see the truth about Jehovah. Job therefore 'made a retraction and repented in dust and ashes.' (Job 42:1-6) The many questions that he had been unable to answer had proved God's supremacy and had shown the smallness of man, even one as devoted to Jehovah as Job was. This helps us to see that our interests are not to be put above the sanctification of Jehovah's name and the vindication of his sovereignty. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Our prime concern should be maintaining integrity to Jehovah and honoring his name.

No. 1:	Job 18:1-21
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No. 2:	Does Jesus Have His Fleshly Body in Heaven? (rs p. 217¶2-5)
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*** rs p. 217 - p. 218 Jesus Christ ***

Does Jesus have his fleshly body in heaven?

1 Cor. 15:42-50, *RS*: "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. . . . It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. . . . Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam [Jesus Christ, who was a perfect human as Adam had been at the start] became a life-giving *spirit*. . . . I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." (Italics added.)

1 Pet. 3:18, *RS*: "Christ also died for sins once for all, . . . being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit [*in the spirit*," *NE, AT, JB, Dy*]." (See page 334.)

Illustration: If a man pays a debt for a friend but then promptly takes back the payment, obviously the debt continues. Likewise, if, when he was resurrected, Jesus had taken back his human body of flesh and blood, which had been given in sacrifice to pay the ransom price, what effect would that have had on the provision he was making to relieve faithful persons of the debt of sin?

It is true that Jesus appeared in physical form to his disciples after his resurrection. But on certain occasions, why did they not at first recognize him? (Luke 24:15-32; John 20:14-16) On one occasion, for the benefit of Thomas, Jesus appeared with the physical evidence of nail prints in his hands and a spear wound in his side. But how was it possible on that occasion for him suddenly to appear in their midst even though the doors were locked? (John 20:26, 27) Jesus



evidently materialized bodies on these occasions, as angels had done in the past when appearing to humans. Disposing of Jesus' physical body at the time of his resurrection presented no problem for God. Interestingly, although the physical body was not left by God in the tomb (evidently to strengthen the conviction of the disciples that Jesus had actually been raised), the linen cloths in which it had been wrapped were left there; yet, the resurrected Jesus always appeared fully clothed.—John 20:6, 7.

No. 3: Why Enlightened Rulers Praise Jehovah's Witnesses (Rom. 13:3)

*** w91 8/15 p. 19 Producing "Every Sort of Goodness" ***

"Keep Doing Good"

⁵ Paul referred to one of these in his letter to the Romans. Speaking of subjection to "the superior authorities," he said: "Do you, then, want to have no fear of the authority? Keep doing good, and you will have praise from it." The "good" he refers to is obedience to the laws and arrangements of secular authorities. Why should a Christian be subject to these? So as to avoid unnecessary conflict with the authorities, thus risking punishment and—more important—in order to preserve a clean conscience before God. (Romans 13:1-7) While preserving his primary obedience to Jehovah, a Christian 'honors the king,' not rebelling against authorities that Jehovah God allows to exist. (1 Peter 2:13-17) In this way, Christians are good neighbors, good citizens, and good examples.

*** w90 11/1 pp. 19-20 The Role of the Superior Authorities ***

An Object of Fear

⁹ Paul continues his discussion of the superior authorities, saying: "For those ruling are an object of fear, not to the good deed, but to the bad. Do you, then, want to have no fear of the authority? Keep doing good, and you will have praise from it." (Romans 13:3) It is not loyal Christians who should fear punishment from the authority but wrongdoers, those who commit 'bad deeds,' criminal acts. When threatened by such lawless elements, Jehovah's Witnesses may properly accept from the authority police or military protection.—Acts 23:12-22.

¹⁰ To the Christian who keeps the law of the superior authority, Paul says: "You will have praise from it." As an example of this, consider some letters received by Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil after their district conventions. From the chancellor of a municipal sports department: "The highest praise is deserved for your peaceful conduct. It is comforting in today's troubled world to know that so many still believe in and worship God." From the director of a municipal stadium: "In spite of the very large number in attendance, no incident was recorded to tarnish the event, thanks to the impeccable organization." From a mayor's office: "We want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your orderliness and marvelous, spontaneous discipline, and we wish you every success in future events."

¹¹ The term "good deed" refers to acts in obedience to the laws of the superior authorities. In addition, our preaching work, which is commanded by God, not man, is not a bad deed—a point that the political authorities should recognize. It is a public service that uplifts the moral caliber of those who respond. Therefore, it is our hope that the superior authorities will protect our right to preach to others. Paul appealed to the authorities in order to establish legally the preaching of the good news. (Acts 16:35-40; 25:8-12; Philippians 1:7) Recently, Jehovah's Witnesses have similarly sought and obtained legal recognition of their work in East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Benin, and Myanmar (Burma).



April

Apr.11	Bible reading: Job 21-27
No. 1:	Job 25:1–26:14
No. 2:	Why the Cross Should Not Be Viewed as an Object of Devotion
No. 3:	Is Jesus Christ the Same Person as Michael the Archangel? (rs p. 218 ¶1-3)

Bible reading: Job 21-27

*** w06 3/15 p. 15 Highlights From the Book of Job ***

22:5-7. Counsel given on the basis of accusations that lack solid evidence is valueless and damaging.

27:2; 30:20, 21. Maintaining integrity does not require perfection. Job wrongly criticized God.

27:5. Only Job could take away his own integrity because integrity is dependent upon one’s love for God. We should therefore cultivate strong love for Jehovah.

No. 1: Job 25:1–26:14

No. 2: Why the Cross Should Not Be Viewed as an Object of Devotion

*** w87 8/15 pp. 21-24 Is the Cross for Christians? ***

“MY MOTHER gave it to me.” “It’s manly.” “I wear it as an ornament.” “I’d feel uncomfortable without it.” “It protects me from evil.” “It’s just something to hang on the chain.”

Thus replied several people who were asked why they wore a cross. Though obviously not all do so out of religious devotion, wearing a cross is quite in vogue in some parts of the world. Even Soviet youths have been seen wearing one. Many attach deep religious significance to the cross, for, as one youth simply said, “It’s sacred.”

But is it really proper for a Christian to wear a cross? Does it accurately portray the way Christ died? And are there valid objections even to wearing it as an ornament? To see, let us first take a look at the origin of the cross.

A Christian Symbol?

You may assume that Christians were the first to use the cross. *The Encyclopedia Americana*, however, speaks of “its ancient usage by both Hindus and Buddhists in India and China, and by the Persians, Assyrians, and Babylonians.” Similarly, *Chambers’s Encyclopaedia*, (1969 edition) says that the cross “was an emblem to which religious and mystical meanings were attached long before the Christian era.”

Indeed, there is no evidence that early Christians used the cross in their worship. During the early days of Christianity, it was the pagan Romans who used the cross! Says *The Companion Bible*: “These crosses were used as symbols of the Babylonian sun-god . . . and are first seen on a coin of Julius Caesar, 100-44 B.C., and then on a coin struck by Caesar’s heir (Augustus), 20 B.C.” The Roman nature-god Bacchus was at times represented with a headband containing a number of crosses.

How, then, did the cross become the symbol of Christendom?

Constantine and the Cross

In 312 C.E., Constantine, ruling the area now known as France and Britain, headed out to war against his brother-in-law, Maxentius, of Italy. En route he reportedly saw a vision—a cross on which were the words “*Hoc vince*,” meaning, “By this conquer.” After his victory, Constantine made the cross the standard of his armies. When Christianity later became the state religion of the Roman Empire, the cross became the symbol of the church.

But did such a vision actually take place? Accounts of this legend are, at best, secondhand and full of discrepancies. Frankly, it would be difficult to find a more unlikely candidate for a divine revelation than Constantine. At the time of this supposed event, he was an avid sun-god worshiper. Constantine even dedicated Sunday as the day for sun worship. His conduct after his so-called conversion also gave little evidence of real dedication to right principles. Murder, intrigue, and political ambition ruled his life. It seems that for Constantine, Christianity was little more than a political device to unite a fragmented empire.



There is also little evidence that the type of cross Constantine “saw” really represented the instrument used to put Christ to death. Stamped on many coins Constantine subsequently had minted are X-shaped crosses with a “P” superimposed. (See illustration.) *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine, says: “As for the Chi, or X, which Constantine declared he had seen in a vision leading him to champion the Christian faith, that letter was the initial of the word ‘Christ’ [in the Greek language] and had nothing to do with ‘the Cross,’” that is, as an instrument of execution. In fact, this style of cross is nearly identical to the pagan symbol for the sun.

Why, then, was the cross so easily accepted by “Christians”? Vine’s *Dictionary* continues: “By the middle of the 3rd cent. A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ.”

The Evolution of the Cross

Was it love for Christ that caused the cross, at this late time, to become such an object of veneration? The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* says: “With the 4th cent[ury] magical belief began to take a firmer hold within the Church.” As with a magic charm, simply making the sign of the cross was thought to be “the surest defence against demons, and the remedy for all diseases.” Superstitious use of the cross continues to this day.

Over the years, some 400 different styles of crosses developed. At first, Christ himself was not portrayed. Rather, a youth holding a jeweled cross would be depicted. Later, a lamb was included. In 691 C.E., the council in Trullo made “official” a cross showing the bust of a young man, instead of a lamb, over the cross. In time this developed into the crucifix—a cross with a representation of the body of Christ.

Did Christ Die on a Cross?

‘But does not the Bible teach that Christ actually died on a cross?’ one may ask. To answer this, we must look into the meanings of the two Greek words that the Bible writers used to describe the instrument of Christ’s death: *stau·ros*’ and *xy’lon*.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1979) states under the heading “Cross”: “Originally Gk. *staurós* designated a pointed, vertical wooden stake firmly fixed in the ground. . . . They were positioned side by side in rows to form fencing or defensive palisades around settlements, or singly they were set up as instruments of torture on which serious offenders of law were publicly suspended to die (or, if already killed, to have their corpses thoroughly dishonored).”

True, the Romans did use an instrument of execution known in Latin as the *crux*. And in translating the Bible into Latin, this word *crux* was used as a rendering of *stau·ros*’. Because the Latin word *crux* and the English word *cross* are similar, many mistakenly assume that a *crux* was necessarily a stake with a crossbeam. However, *The Imperial Bible-Dictionary* says: “Even amongst the Romans the *crux* (from which our *cross* is derived) appears to have been originally an upright pole, and this always remained the more prominent part.”

The book *The Non-Christian Cross* adds: “There is not a single sentence in any of the numerous writings forming the New Testament, which, in the original Greek, bears even indirect evidence to the effect that the *stauros* used in the case of Jesus was other than an ordinary *stauros* [pole or stake]; much less to the effect that it consisted, not of one piece of timber, but of two pieces nailed together in the form of a cross.” Christ could well have been impaled on a form of *crux* (*stau·ros*’) known as the *crux simplex*. That was how such a stake was illustrated by the Roman Catholic scholar Justus Lipsius of the 16th century.

What of the other Greek word, *xy’lon*? It was used in the Greek *Septuagint* translation of the Bible at Ezra 6:11. In the *New World Translation* this reads: “And by me an order has been put through that, as for anybody that violates this decree, a timber will be pulled out of his house and he will be impaled upon it, and his house will be turned into a public privy on this account.” Clearly, a single beam, or “timber,” was involved here.

Numerous translators of the Christian Greek Scriptures (New Testament) therefore translate Peter’s words at Acts 5:30 to read: “The God of our forefathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew, hanging him upon a *stake* [or, “tree,” according to the *King James Version*, *New International Version*, *The Jerusalem Bible*, and *Revised Standard Version*].” You might also wish to check how your Bible translates *xy’lon* at: Acts 10:39; 13:29; Galatians 3:13; and 1 Peter 2:24.

Walking by Faith, Not by Sight

Even after considering such evidence that Christ really died on a stake, some may still see nothing wrong with wearing a cross. ‘It’s just an ornament,’ they may say.



Bear in mind, though, how the cross has been used down through history—as an object of pagan worship and of superstitious awe. Could wearing a cross, even as just an ornament, be harmonized with the admonition of the apostle Paul at 1 Corinthians 10:14: “Therefore, my beloved ones, flee from idolatry”?

What about true Christians today? They, too, should be conscious of the need to ‘guard themselves from idols,’ as the Bible counsels. (1 John 5:21) So they do not find the cross to be an appropriate ornament. They recall Paul’s statement: “Accursed is every man hanged upon a stake,” and therefore prefer to think of Christ as a glorious enthroned King!—Galatians 3:13; Revelation 6:2.

Though such Christians do not wear crosses, they deeply appreciate the fact that Christ died for them. They know that Christ’s sacrifice is a marvelous demonstration of “God’s power” and eternal love. (1 Corinthians 1:18; John 3:16) But they need no material object like a cross to help them worship this God of love. For, as Paul exhorted, they “are walking by faith, not by sight.”—2 Corinthians 5:7.

No. 3: Is Jesus Christ the Same Person as Michael the Archangel? (rs p. 218¶1-3)

*** rs p. 218 Jesus Christ ***

Is Jesus Christ the same person as Michael the archangel?

The name of this Michael appears only five times in the Bible. The glorious spirit person who bears the name is referred to as “one of the chief princes,” “the great prince who has charge of your [Daniel’s] people,” and as “the archangel.” (Dan. 10:13; 12:1; Jude 9, RS) Michael means “Who Is Like God?” The name evidently designates Michael as the one who takes the lead in upholding Jehovah’s sovereignty and destroying God’s enemies.

At 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (RS), the command of Jesus Christ for the resurrection to begin is described as “the archangel’s call,” and Jude 9 says that the archangel is Michael. Would it be appropriate to liken Jesus’ commanding call to that of someone lesser in authority? Reasonably, then, the archangel Michael is Jesus Christ. (Interestingly, the expression “archangel” is never found in the plural in the Scriptures, thus implying that there is only one.)

Revelation 12:7-12 says that Michael and his angels would war against Satan and hurl him and his wicked angels out of heaven in connection with the conferring of kingly authority on Christ. Jesus is later depicted as leading the armies of heaven in war against the nations of the world. (Rev. 19:11-16) Is it not reasonable that Jesus would also be the one to take action against the one he described as “ruler of this world,” Satan the Devil? (John 12:31) Daniel 12:1 (RS) associates the ‘standing up of Michael’ to act with authority with “a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time.” That would certainly fit the experience of the nations when Christ as heavenly executioner takes action against them. So the evidence indicates that the Son of God was known as Michael before he came to earth and is known also by that name since his return to heaven where he resides as the glorified spirit Son of God.

*** bh p. 218 - p. 219 Who Is Michael the Archangel? ***

THE spirit creature called Michael is not mentioned often in the Bible. However, when he is referred to, he is in action. In the book of Daniel, Michael is battling wicked angels; in the letter of Jude, he is disputing with Satan; and in Revelation, he is waging war with the Devil and his demons. By defending Jehovah’s rulership and fighting God’s enemies, Michael lives up to the meaning of his name—“Who Is Like God?” But who is Michael?

At times, individuals are known by more than one name. For example, the patriarch Jacob is also known as Israel, and the apostle Peter, as Simon. (Genesis 49:1, 2; Matthew 10:2) Likewise, the Bible indicates that Michael is another name for Jesus Christ, before and after his life on earth. Let us consider Scriptural reasons for drawing that conclusion.

Archangel. God’s Word refers to Michael “the archangel.” (Jude 9) This term means “chief angel.” Notice that Michael is called *the* archangel. This suggests that there is only one such angel. In fact, the term “archangel” occurs in the Bible only in the singular, never in the plural. Moreover, Jesus is linked with the office of archangel. Regarding the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 states: “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel’s voice.” Thus the voice of Jesus is described as being that of an archangel. This scripture therefore suggests that Jesus himself is the archangel Michael.



April

Apr.18	Bible reading: Job 28-32
No. 1:	Job 30:1-23
No. 2:	** <i>If Someone Says: "You Don't Believe in Jesus"</i> (rs p.219¶1-3)
No. 3:	* <i>Why We Should Think Before We Speak</i> (Pro. 16:23)

Bible reading: Job 28-32

*** w06 3/15 p. 15 Highlights From the Book of Job ***

28:1-28. Man knows where earth's treasures are. As he searches for them, his ingenuity takes him to underground pathways that no farsighted bird of prey can see. Godly wisdom, though, comes from fearing Jehovah.

29:12-15. We should willingly extend loving-kindness to those in need.

31:1, 9-28. Job set an example for us in that he avoided flirting, adultery, unfair and unmerciful treatment of others, materialism, and idolatry.

32:1-3—When did Elihu arrive? Since Elihu heard all the speeches, he must have taken a seat within hearing distance sometime before Job spoke and ended the seven-day silence of his three companions.—Job 3:1, 2.

32:8, 9. Wisdom does not come with age alone. It requires understanding of God's Word and the guidance of his spirit.

No. 1: Job 30:1-23

No. 2: ** *If Someone Says: "You Don't Believe in Jesus"* (rs p.219¶1-3)

*** rs p. 219 Jesus Christ ***

'You don't believe in Jesus'

You might reply: 'Evidently *you* are a person who believes in Jesus. And so do I; otherwise I would not be at your door today.' **Then perhaps add:** 'In fact, the importance of faith in Jesus is prominently featured in our publications. (Turn to an appropriate chapter in whatever book you are offering and use this as a basis for discussion, highlighting his role as King. Or read what is stated on page 2 of *The Watchtower*, regarding the purpose of the magazine.)'

Or you could say: 'Do you mind if I ask you why you feel that way?'

Another possibility: 'Apparently someone has told you that, but may I say that such is not really the case, because we have very strong faith in Jesus Christ.' **Then perhaps add:** (1) 'But we do not believe everything that people say about Jesus. For example, some say that he was just a good man, not the Son of God. We do not believe that, do you? . . . That is not what the Bible teaches.' (2) 'And we do not believe the teachings of groups that contradict what Jesus himself said about his relationship with his Father. (John 14:28) His Father has given him ruling authority that affects the lives of all of us today. (Dan. 7:13, 14)'

No. 3: * *Why We Should Think Before We Speak* (Pro. 16:23)

*** w07 7/15 pp. 9-10 "Wisdom Is for a Protection" ***

Speak With "Insight" and "Persuasiveness"

How does acquiring wisdom affect our speech? The wise king tells us: "*He that is showing insight in a matter will find good, and happy is he that is trusting in Jehovah. The one that is wise in heart will be called understanding, and he that is sweet in his lips adds persuasiveness. To its owners insight is a well of life; and the discipline of the foolish ones is foolishness. The heart of the wise one causes his mouth to show insight, and to his lips it adds persuasiveness.*"—Proverbs 16:20-23.

Wisdom helps us speak with insight and persuasiveness. Why? Because a person who is wise at heart tries to "find good" in a matter and 'trusts in Jehovah.' When we endeavor to find good in others, we are more likely to speak well of them. Rather than being harsh or confrontational, our words are sweet and persuasive. Insight into the circumstances of others helps us to understand the extent of hardship they may be experiencing and how they are coping with it.

Speech influenced by wisdom is also vital when it comes to our Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. When we teach God's Word to others, our objective is not merely to convey Scriptural information. Our goal is to reach the heart



of individuals. This calls for adding persuasiveness to our lips. The apostle Paul urged his associate Timothy to continue in the things he had been “persuaded to believe.”—2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

The Greek word for “persuade” has the meaning of “bringing about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral considerations,” says *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine. Coming up with convincing arguments that lead to a change of mind in our listener calls for insight into his or her thinking, interests, circumstances, and background. How can we gain such insight? The disciple James answers: “Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking.” (James 1:19) By drawing the listener out and carefully paying attention to what he says, we can get to know what he is at heart.

The apostle Paul was outstanding in his ability to persuade others. (Acts 18:4) Even one of his opposers, Demetrius, a silversmith, acknowledged: “Not only in Ephesus but in nearly all the district of Asia this Paul has persuaded a considerable crowd and turned them to another opinion.” (Acts 19:26) Did Paul take personal credit for his effectiveness in the preaching work? Not at all. He considered his preaching to be “a demonstration of [God’s] spirit and power.” (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5) We too have the help of Jehovah’s holy spirit. Because we trust in Jehovah, we are confident of his help as we endeavor to speak with insight and persuasiveness in our ministry.

No wonder that “the one that is wise in heart” is called “intelligent” or “discerning”! (Proverbs 16:21, *An American Translation; New International Version*) Yes, insight is “a well of life” to those who have it. But what about the foolish? They ‘despise wisdom and discipline.’ (Proverbs 1:7) What results do they reap by rejecting discipline from Jehovah? As noted above, Solomon says: “The discipline of the foolish ones is foolishness.” (Proverbs 16:22) They receive further discipline, often in the form of severe chastisement. The foolish may also bring upon themselves hardship, shame, disease, and even untimely death.

Pointing further to the wholesome effect that wisdom has on our speech, the king of Israel says: “*Pleasant sayings are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and a healing to the bones.*” (Proverbs 16:24) As honey is sweet and provides quick refreshment to a hungry person, pleasant sayings are encouraging and refreshing. Honey also has health-giving and curative properties and is good for a person. So are pleasant sayings; they are healthful spiritually.—Proverbs 24:13, 14.

*** w99 3/15 pp. 15-16 pars. 1-3 Teach With Insight and Persuasiveness ***

OUR goal as teachers of God’s Word is to illuminate not only the minds of our students but also their hearts. (Ephesians 1:18) Teaching therefore involves more than simply conveying information. Proverbs 16:23 says: “The heart of the wise one causes his mouth to show insight, and to his lips it adds persuasiveness.”

² The apostle Paul certainly applied this principle in his teaching work. When he was in Corinth, “he would give a talk in the synagogue every sabbath and would persuade Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 18:4) According to one authority, the Greek word here rendered “persuade” means “bringing about a change of mind by the influence of reason or moral considerations.” By means of convincing arguments, Paul was able to move people to change their very way of thinking. His ability to persuade was so formidable that he was feared by his enemies. (Acts 19:24-27) Nevertheless, Paul’s teaching was not a display of human ability. He told the Corinthians: “My speech and what I preached were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of spirit and power, that your faith might be, not in men’s wisdom, but in God’s power.” (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5) Since all Christians have the help of Jehovah God’s spirit, all of them may become persuasive teachers. But how? Let us look at some effective teaching techniques.

Be a Good Listener

³ The first teaching technique involves, not speaking, but listening. As noted at Proverbs 16:23, to be persuasive we must have insight. Jesus certainly had insight regarding the people he taught. John 2:25 says: “He himself knew what was in man.” But how can we know what is in the hearts of those whom we teach? One way is by being a good listener. James 1:19 says: “Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking.” True, not all people readily express their thoughts. As our Bible students become convinced of our genuine interest in them, they may be more inclined to express their true feelings. Kind but perceptive questions can often help us to reach the heart and ‘draw up’ such expressions.—Proverbs 20:5.



April

Apr. 25 Bible reading: Job 33-37
Theocratic Ministry School Review

Apr. 25 Bible reading: Job 33-37

*** w06 3/15 pp. 15-16 Highlights From the Book of Job ***

34:7—How was Job like a man “who drinks up derision like water”? In his distressed state, Job was inclined to take the ridicule of his three visitors as directed toward him, although they were really speaking against God. (Job 42:7) Thus, he was taking in derision like someone who drinks water with enjoyment.

34:36. Integrity is proved by our being ‘tested to the limit’ in some way.

35:2. Elihu listened carefully and pinpointed the real issue before speaking. (Job 10:7; 16:7; 34:5) Prior to giving counsel, Christian elders must carefully listen, get the facts, and clearly understand the pertinent issues.—Proverbs 18:13.

37:14; 38:1–39:30. Reflecting upon Jehovah’s wonderful works—expressions of his power and wisdom—humbles us and helps us to see that the vindication of his sovereignty is more important than any of our personal interests.—Matthew 6:9, 10.

May

May 2 Bible reading: Job 38-42
No. 1: Job 40:1-24
No. 2: Benefits From Being Mild-Tempered and Patient
No. 3: ** If Someone Says: “Do You Accept Jesus as Your Personal Savior (rs p 219¶4-5)

Bible reading: Job 38-42

*** w06 3/15 p. 16 Highlights From the Book of Job ***

40:1-4. When we feel inclined to complain against the Almighty, we should ‘put our hand over our mouth.’

40:15–41:34. What power Behemoth (the hippopotamus) and Leviathan (the crocodile) have! To endure in God’s service, we too need strength from the Maker of these powerful beasts, who imparts power to us.—Philippians 4:13.

42:1-6. Hearing Jehovah’s word and being reminded of the manifestation of his power helped Job to “behold God,” or see the truth about him. (Job 19:26) This adjusted his thinking. When corrected Scripturally, we should be eager to acknowledge our error and make adjustments.

No. 1: Job 40:1-24

No. 2: Benefits From Being Mild-Tempered and Patient

*** w09 2/15 p. 7 How Jesus’ Sayings Promote Happiness ***

How Happy “the Mild-Tempered Ones”!

8 “Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth.” (Matt. 5:5) “Mildness of temper,” or meekness, does not suggest weakness or hypocritical gentleness. (1 Tim. 6:11) If we are mild-tempered, we will display meekness by doing Jehovah’s will and accepting his guidance. Mildness of temper will also be evident in the way we deal with fellow believers and others. Such meekness harmonizes with the apostle Paul’s counsel.—Read Romans 12:17-19.

9 Why are the mild-tempered ones happy? Because “they will inherit the earth,” said mild-tempered Jesus. He is the principal Inheritor of the earth. (Ps. 2:8; Matt. 11:29; Heb. 2:8, 9) However, mild-tempered “joint heirs with Christ” share in his inheritance of the earth. (Rom. 8:16, 17) In the earthly realm of Jesus’ Kingdom, many other meek ones will enjoy everlasting life.—Ps. 37:10, 11.

10 Like Jesus, we should be mild-tempered. But what if we are known for having a belligerent spirit? Such an aggressive and hostile attitude may cause people to shy away from us. If we are brothers desiring to have responsibilities in the congregation, this trait disqualifies us. (1 Tim. 3:1, 3) Paul told Titus to keep reminding Christians in Crete “not to be



belligerent, to be reasonable, exhibiting all mildness toward all men.” (Titus 3:1, 2) What a blessing such mildness is to others!

*** w91 10/15 pp. 13-14 How Happy the Mild-Tempered! ***

Benefits of Mildness

¹⁵ *A mild person has calmness of heart, mind, and body.* This is so because he does not engage in strife, get upset over others’ actions, or torment himself with unrelenting anxiety. Mildness helps him keep his emotions in check, and this is beneficial mentally and physically. A proverb says: “A calm heart is the life of the fleshly organism.” (Proverbs 14:30) Lack of mildness may lead to anger that can raise blood pressure or cause digestive troubles, asthma, eye afflictions, and other problems. A mild-tempered Christian enjoys various benefits, including “the peace of God” that guards his heart and mental powers. (Philippians 4:6, 7) How wise it is to be mild-tempered!

¹⁶ *The quality of mildness improves our relationship with others.* Perhaps we once had the habit of pressing matters until we got our way. People may have become angry with us because we lacked humility and mildness. Under such circumstances, it should not have surprised us if we became embroiled in one controversy after another. However, a proverb says: “Where there is no wood the fire goes out, and where there is no slanderer contention grows still. As charcoal for the embers and wood for the fire, so is a contentious man for causing a quarrel to glow.” (Proverbs 26:20, 21) If we are mild-tempered, instead of ‘adding wood to the fire’ and provoking others, we will have a good relationship with them.

¹⁷ *A mild-tempered person is likely to have good friends.* People enjoy associating with him because he has a positive attitude, and his words are refreshing and sweet as honey. (Proverbs 16:24) That was true of Jesus, who could say: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light.” (Matthew 11:29, 30) Jesus was not harsh, and his yoke was not oppressive. Those coming to him were treated well and refreshed spiritually. The situation is similar when we associate with a mild-tempered Christian friend.

¹⁸ *Mildness endears us to fellow believers.* Undoubtedly, most Christians in Corinth were drawn to Paul because he entreated them “by the mildness and kindness of the Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:1) The Thessalonians surely must have responded to the apostle, since he was a mild, gentle teacher. (1 Thessalonians 2:5-8) There is no question that the Ephesian elders had learned much from Paul and loved him dearly. (Acts 20:20, 21, 37, 38) Do you display mildness that endears you to others?

¹⁹ *A mild temper helps Jehovah’s people to be submissive and to keep their place in his organization.* (Philippians 2:5-8, 12-14; Hebrews 13:17) Mildness restrains us from seeking glory, which is based on pride and is offensive to God. (Proverbs 16:5) A mild person does not consider himself superior to fellow believers, and he does not try to excel at their expense. (Matthew 23:11, 12) Instead, he acknowledges his sinful state and his need for God’s ransom provision.

No. 3: ** If Someone Says: “Do You Accept Jesus as Your Personal Savior (rs p 219¶4-5)

*** rs p. 219 - p. 220 Jesus Christ ***

‘Do you accept Jesus as your personal Savior?’

You might reply: ‘The Bible clearly says . . . (quote Acts 4:12). I believe that. But I have also learned that serious responsibilities go with it. How is that? Well, if I really believe in Jesus, then I can’t believe in him just as far as it seems convenient.’ **Then perhaps add:** ‘His perfect life given in sacrifice makes it possible for us to have forgiveness of sins. But I know that it is also vital to pay attention to his instructions regarding our responsibilities as Christians. (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19, 20)’

Or you could say: ‘(After confirming the fact that you do believe in Jesus as Savior, not only of yourself, but of all who exercise faith in him . . .) It is important that we respond appreciatively not only to what he did in the past but also to what he is doing now. (Matt. 25:31-33)’



May

May 9	Bible reading: Psalms 1-10
No. 1:	Psalm 7:1-17
No. 2:	** <i>If Someone Says: "I Have Accepted Jesus as My Personal Savior"</i> (rs p.220¶1)
No. 3:	Why Jesus Corrected a Man for Calling Him "Good Teacher" (Mark 10:17, 18)

Bible reading: Psalms 1-10

*** w06 5/15 pp. 17-18 Highlights From Book One of Psalms ***

2:1, 2—What “empty thing” do the nations keep muttering? The “empty thing” is the constant concern of human governments to keep perpetuating their own authority. This is empty because their purpose is doomed to failure. Can the national groups really hope to succeed when they take their stand “against Jehovah and against his anointed one”?

2:7—What is “the decree of Jehovah”? This decree is the covenant for a Kingdom, which Jehovah has made with his beloved Son, Jesus Christ.—Luke 22:28, 29.

2:12—In what way can the rulers of the nations “kiss the son”? In Bible times, kissing was an expression of friendship and faithfulness. It was a way to welcome guests. The kings of the earth are commanded to kiss the Son—that is, welcome him as the Messianic King.

3:superscription—What is the purpose of the heading given to some of the psalms? The heading sometimes identifies the writer and/or provides information about the circumstances under which the psalm was composed, as is the case with Psalm 3. The superscription may also explain the purpose or use of the particular song (Psalms 4 and 5) as well as give musical instructions (Psalm 6).

3:2—What is “Selah”? This term is generally thought to represent a pause for silent meditation, either in the singing alone or in the singing and instrumental music. The pause was used to make the thought or emotion just expressed more impressive. There is no need to read the word aloud during public reading of the Psalms.

1:1. Association with those who do not love Jehovah should be avoided.—1 Corinthians 15:33.

1:2. We must not let a day pass by without considering spiritual matters.—Matthew 4:4.

4:4. When angry or wrathful, we are wise to hold our tongue so as not to say something we will regret later.—Ephesians 4:26.

4:5. Our spiritual sacrifices are “sacrifices of righteousness” only if they stem from right motives and our conduct measures up to Jehovah’s requirements.

6:5. What better reason could there be to want to keep living?—Psalm 115:17.

9:12. Jehovah looks for bloodshed in order to punish the bloodguilty, but he remembers “the outcry of the afflicted ones.”

No. 1:	Psalm 7:1-17
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No. 2:	** <i>If Someone Says: "I Have Accepted Jesus as My Personal Savior"</i> (rs p.220¶1)
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*** rs p. 220 Jesus Christ ***

‘I have accepted Jesus as my personal Savior’

You might reply: ‘I am glad to hear that you believe in Jesus, because there are so many people today who give no thought to what Jesus did for us. You no doubt know well the scripture at John 3:16, don’t you? . . . But where will such people live forever? Some will be with Christ in heaven. But does the Bible show that all good people go there? (Matt. 6:10; 5:5)’

*** cf chap. 1 pp. 11-12 “Be My Follower”—What Did Jesus Mean? ***

What It Means to Be a Follower of Christ

¹⁴ Hundreds of millions of people today likely feel that they have accepted Christ’s invitation. After all, they choose to call themselves Christians. Perhaps they belong to the church in which their parents had them christened. Or they may



claim to have an emotional attachment to Jesus and accept him as their personal Savior. But does that make them followers of Christ? Is that what Jesus had in mind when he invited us to become his followers? There is much more to it.

¹⁵ Consider the world of Christendom—those nations whose citizens for the most part claim to be followers of Christ. Does Christendom reflect the teachings of Jesus Christ? Or do we see in those lands hatred, oppression, crime, and injustice much like that found throughout the rest of the world? The respected Hindu leader Mohandas Gandhi once said: “I know of no one who has done more for humanity than Jesus. In fact, there is nothing wrong with Christianity.” He added: “The trouble is with you Christians. You do not begin to live up to your own teachings.”

¹⁶ Jesus said that his true followers would be known not just for their words or for the label they apply to themselves but primarily for their actions. For example, he said: “Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will.” (Matthew 7:21) Why do so many who claim Jesus as their Lord fail to do his Father’s will? Remember the wealthy young ruler. All too often, “one thing is missing” among professed Christians—whole-souled love for Jesus and for the One who sent him forth.

¹⁷ How can that be? Do not millions who call themselves Christians also claim to love Christ? No doubt. But love for Jesus and for Jehovah involves far more than words. Jesus said: “If anyone loves me, he will observe my word.” (John 14:23) And again speaking as a shepherd, he said: “My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John 10:27) Yes, the true test of our love for Christ is not merely in our words or in our feelings but mainly in our actions.

¹⁸ Our actions, however, do not simply spring from nowhere. They reflect the person we are deep inside. It is here that our work must begin. Jesus said: “This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) If we take in and meditate on accurate knowledge about Jesus, our heart will be affected. We will come to love him more and more, building in ourselves an ever greater desire to follow him day by day.

No. 3: Why Jesus Corrected a Man for Calling Him “Good Teacher” (Mark 10:17, 18)

*** w08 2/15 p. 30 Highlights From the Book of Mark ***

10:17, 18—Why did Jesus correct a certain man for calling Him “Good Teacher”? By thus refusing to accept this flattering title, Jesus directed glory to Jehovah and indicated that the true God is the source of all good things. Moreover, Jesus drew attention to the fundamental truth that the Creator of all things, Jehovah God, alone has the right to set the standards of good and bad.—Matt. 19:16, 17; Luke 18:18, 19.

*** cl chap. 27 p. 271 pars. 5-7 “O How Great His Goodness Is!” ***

⁵ Jehovah is also unique in his goodness. Not long before Jesus died, a man approached him to ask a question, addressing him with the words “Good Teacher.” Jesus replied: “Why do you call me good? Nobody is good, except one, God.” (Mark 10:17, 18) Now, that response may strike you as puzzling. Why would Jesus correct the man? Was not Jesus, in fact, a “Good Teacher”?

⁶ Evidently, the man was using the words “Good Teacher” as a flattering title. Jesus modestly directed such glory to his heavenly Father, who is good in the supreme sense. (Proverbs 11:2) But Jesus was also affirming a profound truth. Jehovah alone is the standard for what is good. Only he has the sovereign right to determine what is good and what is bad. Adam and Eve, by rebelliously partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, sought to assume that right themselves. Unlike them, Jesus humbly leaves the setting of standards to his Father.

⁷ Moreover, Jesus knew that Jehovah is the source of all that is truly good. He is the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect present.” (James 1:17) Let us examine how Jehovah’s goodness is evident in his generosity.



May

May 16	Bible reading: Psalms 11-18
No. 1:	Psalm 17:1-15
No. 2:	How We Show That We Worship Jehovah Alone (Rom. 6:16, 17)
No. 3:	Are the Natural Jews Today God's Chosen People? (rs p.220¶2-p.221¶4)

Bible reading: Psalms 11-18

*** w06 5/15 pp. 18-19 Highlights From Book One of Psalms ***

11:3—What foundations are torn down? These are the very foundations on which human society rests—law, order, and justice. When these are in disarray, social disorder prevails and there is no justice. Under such conditions, “anyone righteous” must fully trust in God.—Psalm 11:4-7.

15:2, 3; 24:3-5. True worshippers must speak the truth and avoid false oaths and slander.

15:4. Unless we come to the realization that we have made an unscriptural promise, we should do all we can to fulfill our word, even if it is very difficult to do so.

15:5. As Jehovah’s worshippers, we need to guard against misuse of money.

17:14, 15. The “men of this system of things” devote themselves to making a good living, raising a family, and leaving behind an inheritance. David’s main concern in life was to make a good name with God so as to ‘behold his face,’ or to experience Jehovah’s favor. Upon “awakening” to Jehovah’s promises and assurances, David would feel ‘satisfied to see His form,’ or rejoice in Jehovah’s presence with him. Like David, should we not set our heart on spiritual treasures?

No. 1:	Psalm 17:1-15
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No. 2:	How We Show That We Worship Jehovah Alone (Rom. 6:16, 17)
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*** w98 3/15 pp. 15-17 Dedication and Freedom of Choice ***

Choosing to Be a Slave of Whom?

¹⁴ No human is totally free. Everyone is restricted in his freedom by physical laws, such as the law of gravity, which cannot be ignored with impunity. Also in a spiritual sense, no one is totally free. Paul reasoned: “Do you not know that if you keep presenting yourselves to anyone as slaves to obey him, you are slaves of him because you obey him, either of sin with death in view or of obedience with righteousness in view?”—Romans 6:16.

¹⁵ The idea of being someone’s slave strikes most people as unpleasant. Yet, in today’s world the reality is that people often let themselves be manipulated and influenced in so many subtle ways that they end up *involuntarily* doing what others want them to do. For instance, the advertising industry and the entertainment world endeavor to press people into a mold, establishing standards for them to follow. Political and religious organizations get people to support their ideas and goals, not always by means of convincing arguments, but often by appealing to a sense of solidarity or loyalty. Since Paul noted that ‘we are the slaves of those whom we obey,’ each of us does well to ask himself, ‘Of whom am I a slave? Who exercises the greatest influence on my decisions and my way of life? Do religious clergymen, political leaders, financial tycoons, or entertainment personalities? Whom do I obey—God or men?’

¹⁶ Christians do not view obedience to God as an unwarranted infringement upon personal freedom. They willingly exercise their freedom in the manner of their Exemplar, Jesus Christ, bringing personal desires and priorities into line with God’s will. (John 5:30; 6:38) They develop “the mind of Christ,” submitting themselves to him as Head of the congregation. (1 Corinthians 2:14-16; Colossians 1:15-18) This is much like a woman who marries and willingly cooperates with the man she loves. In fact, the body of anointed Christians is spoken of as a chaste virgin promised to the Christ in marriage.—2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23, 24; Revelation 19:7, 8.

¹⁷ Each of Jehovah’s Witnesses, whether he has a heavenly hope or an earthly one, has made a *personal* dedication to God to do his will and to obey him as Ruler. For each Witness, dedication has been a *personal* choice to become a slave of God in preference to remaining a slave of men. This is in harmony with the apostle Paul’s counsel: “You were bought with a price; stop becoming slaves of men.”—1 Corinthians 7:23.



Learning to Benefit Ourselves

¹⁸ Before a person can qualify to become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, he must meet Scriptural qualifications. Elders exercise care in determining if a potential Witness truly understands the implications of Christian dedication. Does he really want to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses? Is he willing to live up to what this entails? If not, he is ineligible for baptism.

¹⁹ If an individual meets all the requirements, however, why should he be criticized for voluntarily making a personal decision to let himself be influenced by God and by His inspired Word? Is it less acceptable to let oneself be influenced by God than by men? Or is this of any less benefit? Jehovah’s Witnesses do not think so. They wholeheartedly agree with God’s words written down by Isaiah: “I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk.”—Isaiah 48:17.

²⁰ Bible truth frees people from believing false religious doctrines, such as eternal torment in a fiery hell. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) Instead, it fills their hearts with gratitude for the true hope for the dead—the resurrection made possible on the basis of Jesus Christ’s ransom sacrifice. (Matthew 20:28; Acts 24:15; Romans 6:23) Bible truth frees people from the frustrations of relying on political promises that consistently fall short. Instead, it causes their hearts to overflow with joy at knowing that Jehovah’s Kingdom already rules in the heavens and will shortly rule over the entire earth. Bible truth frees people from practices that, although appealing to the fallen flesh, dishonor God and exact a heavy toll in the form of failed relationships, sickness, and premature death. In short, being a slave of God is exceedingly more beneficial than being a slave of men. In fact, dedication to God promises benefits “in this period of time . . . and in the coming system of things everlasting life.”—Mark 10:29, 30.

²¹ Jehovah’s Witnesses today did not become part of a dedicated nation by birth as did the Israelites of old. The Witnesses are part of a congregation of dedicated Christians. Each baptized Witness has become such by individually exercising freedom of choice in making a dedication. Indeed, for Jehovah’s Witnesses, dedication results in a warm personal relationship with God marked by willing service to him. This joyful relationship they wholeheartedly desire to maintain, forever holding fast to the freedom for which Jesus Christ set them free.

No. 3: Are the Natural Jews Today God’s Chosen People? (rs p.220¶2-p.221¶4)

*** rs p. 220 - p. 221 Jews ***

Are the natural Jews today God’s chosen people?

That is the belief of many Jews. Says the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971, Vol. 5, col. 498): “CHOSEN PEOPLE, a common designation for the people of Israel, expressing the idea that the people of Israel stands in a special and unique relationship to the universal deity. This idea has been a central one throughout the history of Jewish thought.”—See Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Exodus 19:5.

Many in Christendom hold similar views. The “Religion” section of the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* (January 22, 1983, p. 5-B) reported: “Contrary to the churches’ centuries-old teachings that God had ‘cast off his people Israel’ and replaced them with a ‘new Israel,’ he [Paul M. Van Buren, theologian at Temple University in Philadelphia] says churches now affirm that ‘the covenant between God and the Jewish people is eternal. This amazing reversal has been made by Protestants and Catholics, on both sides of the Atlantic.’” *The New York Times* (February 6, 1983, p. 42) added: “There is a fascination on the part of the evangelical right with Israel and a belief that everything Israel does must be supported, because God is on Israel’s side,” said Timothy Smith, a professor of theology at Johns Hopkins University and a Wesleyan evangelical.” Some in Christendom expect the conversion and ultimate salvation of all natural Israel. Others take the view that there has always been an inseparable bond between God and Israel, so they reason that it is only the Gentiles who are to be reconciled through Christ.

Consider: Following the Babylonian exile, when Israel was restored to its land, the people were to restore true worship in their God-given land. One of the first projects undertaken was the rebuilding of Jehovah’s temple in Jerusalem. However, since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E., the temple has never been rebuilt. Instead, in the former temple area stands an Islamic shrine. If the Jews, who say they are under the Mosaic Law, were today in Jerusalem as God’s chosen people, would not the temple devoted to his worship have been rebuilt?

Matt. 21:42, 43: “Jesus said to them [the chief priests and the older men of the Jews in Jerusalem]: ‘Did you never read in the Scriptures, “The stone that the builders rejected is the one that has become the chief cornerstone. From Jehovah this has come to be, and it is marvelous in our eyes”? This is why I say to you, The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits.’”



Matt. 23:37, 38: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,—how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But you people did not want it. Look! Your house is abandoned to you.”

Does God’s covenant with Abraham give assurance that the Jews continue to be the chosen people of God?

Gal. 3:27-29: “All of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one person in union with Christ Jesus. Moreover, *if you belong to Christ, you are really Abraham’s seed*, heirs with reference to a promise.” (So, from God’s standpoint, it is no longer natural descent from Abraham that determines who are Abraham’s seed.)

*** w83 8/15 p. 16 A Productive Olive Tree ***

A Symbolic Olive Tree

¹³ The apostle Paul expresses grief that “not all who spring from Israel are really ‘Israel,’” and states: “Neither because they are Abraham’s seed are they all children [part of Abraham’s spiritual seed].” Then he goes on to illustrate how Jehovah ‘raises up children to Abraham.’ (Romans 9:1, 2, 6, 7) To describe how the Abrahamic covenant produces the full number of members of the spiritual seed of promise, he uses the symbol of a specially cultivated olive tree.—Please read Romans 11:13-26.

¹⁴ Paul mentions the root before speaking of the tree itself, and he says “the root is holy.” (Romans 11:16) Jehovah God is the “Most Holy One.” (Hosea 11:12) He is frequently called “the Holy One of Israel,” particularly in the book of Isaiah. (Isaiah 10:20; 29:19; 60:9) The apostle Peter counsels anointed Christians, saying: “In accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct.” (1 Peter 1:15, 16) Jehovah God, the Greater Abraham, is the root of the symbolic olive tree.

¹⁵ As the patriarch Abraham was the root of the nation of Israel, so Jehovah gives life to spiritual Israel. As the 12 tribes of Israel stemmed from Abraham through his son Isaac, through Jacob and the 12 patriarchs, the 12 symbolic tribes of spiritual Israel stem from Jehovah through the Greater Isaac, Christ Jesus. He, as the primary Seed of Abraham, is symbolized by the olive tree’s stock, or trunk. (Galatians 3:16) Jehovah, the root, produces the full number of members of the secondary seed through his Son, Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:29) But how or in what manner does Jehovah produce the required number of symbolic branches?



May

May 23	Bible reading: Psalms 19-25
No.1:	Psalm 23:1–24:10
No. 2:	Will All the Jews Be Converted to Faith in Christ? (rs p. 222¶1-2)
No. 3:	How and When Will Romans 8:21 Be Fulfilled?

Bible reading: Psalms 19-25

*** w06 5/15 p. 19 Highlights From Book One of Psalms ***

19:1-6. If creation, which can neither speak nor reason, gives glory to Jehovah, how much more should we who can think, talk, and worship do so?—Revelation 4:11.

19:7-11. Jehovah’s requirements—how good they are for us!

19:12, 13. Mistakes and presumptuous acts are sins to guard against.

19:14. We should be concerned not only about what we do but also about what we say and think.

No.1:	Psalm 23:1–24:10
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No. 2:	Will All the Jews Be Converted to Faith in Christ? (rs p. 222¶1-2)
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*** rs p. 222 Jews ***

Will all the Jews be converted to faith in Christ and attain to eternal salvation?

Rom. 11:25, 26: “I do not want you, brothers, to be ignorant of this sacred secret, in order for you not to be discreet in your own eyes: that a dulling of sensibilities has happened in part to Israel until the full number of people of the nations has come in, and in this manner [“this is how,” *TEV*; “thus,” *CC, By*; Greek, *hou’tos*] all Israel will be saved.” (Notice that the saving of “all Israel” is accomplished, not by conversion of all the Jews, but by the ‘coming in’ of people from Gentile nations. Some translators render verse 26: “And then *after this* the rest of Israel will be saved.” But *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* [Edinburgh, 1937, G. Abbott-Smith, p. 329] defines *hou’tos* as meaning “in this way, so, thus.”)

To arrive at a correct understanding of what is recorded at Romans 11:25, 26, we should also take into account these earlier statements in Romans: “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.” (2:28, 29) “Not all who spring from Israel are really ‘Israel.’”—9:6.

No. 3:	How and When Will Romans 8:21 Be Fulfilled?
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*** w03 9/1 pp. 10-12 Make Jehovah Your Confidence ***

Why Does Jehovah Allow Suffering?

¹⁰ A passage in the apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans sheds light on this important subject. Paul wrote: “The eager expectation of the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope that the creation itself also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together until now.”—Romans 8:19-22.

¹¹ To grasp the point of these verses, we first need to resolve some key questions. For instance, Who subjected the creation to futility? Some have pointed to Satan; others to Adam. But neither could have done the subjecting. Why not? Because the one who subjects the creation to futility does so “on the basis of hope.” Yes, he offers hope that faithful ones will eventually be “set free from enslavement to corruption.” Neither Adam nor Satan could offer such a hope. Only Jehovah could. Clearly, then, it was he who subjected creation to futility.

¹² What, though, is “all creation” referred to in this passage? Some say that “all creation” refers to the entire natural world, including animals and vegetation. But do beasts and plants hope to attain “the glorious freedom of the children of God”? No. (2 Peter 2:12) “All creation,” then, can refer only to mankind. This is the creation that is affected by sin and death because of the rebellion in Eden and that lives in desperate need of hope.—Romans 5:12.



¹³ What, exactly, did that rebellion do to mankind? Paul describes its results with a single word: futility. According to one reference work, this word describes “the futility of an object which does not function as it was designed to do.” Humans were designed to live forever, working together as a perfect, united family in taking care of a paradisaic earth. Instead, they lead a short, painful, and often frustrating existence. As Job put it, “man, born of woman, is short-lived and glutted with agitation.” (Job 14:1) Futility indeed!

¹⁴ Now we come to the key question: Why did “the Judge of all the earth” subject mankind to this painful, frustrating existence? (Genesis 18:25) Was he just in doing so? Well, remember what our first parents did. In rebelling against God, they took sides with Satan, who raised a sweeping challenge to Jehovah’s sovereignty. By their actions, they supported the assertion that man is better off without Jehovah, ruling himself under the guidance of a rebel spirit creature. In sentencing the rebels, Jehovah, in effect, gave them what they asked for. He allowed man to rule himself under the influence of Satan. Under the circumstances, what decision could be more profoundly just than subjecting mankind to futility but on the basis of hope?

¹⁵ Of course, this was not creation’s “own will.” We are born as slaves to sin and corruption without any choice in the matter. But Jehovah in his mercy allowed Adam and Eve to live out their lives and bear offspring. Though we, their descendants, are subjected to the futility of sin and death, we have the opportunity to do what Adam and Eve failed to do. We can listen to Jehovah and learn that his sovereignty is righteous and ideal, while human rule apart from Jehovah brings only pain, frustration, and futility. (Jeremiah 10:23; Revelation 4:11) And Satan’s influence only makes matters worse. Human history testifies to these truths.—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

¹⁶ Clearly, Jehovah had just reasons for subjecting mankind to futility. Does that mean, though, that Jehovah is the cause of the futility and suffering that afflict each one of us today? Well, think of a judge who pronounces a just sentence upon a criminal. The convict may suffer considerably while he serves out his sentence, but can he rightly blame the judge for being the *cause* of his suffering? By no means! Furthermore, Jehovah is never the source of wickedness. James 1:13 says: “With evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone.” Let us remember, too, that Jehovah pronounced this sentence “on the basis of hope.” He has lovingly made arrangements for faithful descendants of Adam and Eve to see the end of futility and to delight in “the glorious freedom of the children of God.” Throughout eternity, faithful mankind will never have to worry that all creation might again descend into a painful state of futility. Jehovah’s just handling of things will have established the rightfulness of his sovereignty for all time.—Isaiah 25:8.

¹⁷ As we review these reasons for human suffering, do we see any basis for blaming wickedness on Jehovah or for losing our confidence in him? On the contrary, such a study gives us reason to echo these words of Moses: “The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he.” (Deuteronomy 32:4) By meditating on these matters, let us refresh our understanding of them from time to time. That way, when we face trials, we will resist Satan’s efforts to sow doubts in our minds. What, though, of the second step mentioned at the outset? What is involved in trusting in Jehovah?

***** wt chap. 21 p. 187 par. 9 Jehovah’s Purpose Attains Glorious Success *****

⁹ These with earthly hopes are now eagerly waiting for the time when the human creation will be “set free from enslavement to corruption.” (Romans 8:21) That emancipation will begin after Christ and his heavenly armies bring the great tribulation to a close by means of the Armageddon climax. This will mean the destruction of Satan’s entire wicked system of things, to be followed by the blessings of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ in Kingdom power.—Revelation 19:17-21; 20:6.



May

May 30	Bible reading: Psalms 26-33
No.1:	Psalm 31:9-24
No. 2:	Bible Examples of Genuine Humility
No. 3:	Must Jews Put Faith in Jesus to Be Saved? (rs p. 222¶3-p.223¶1)

Bible reading: Psalms 26-33

*** w06 5/15 pp. 19-20 Highlights From Book One of Psalms ***

26:6—How do we, like David, figuratively march around Jehovah’s altar? The altar represents Jehovah’s will in accepting the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the redemption of mankind. (Hebrews 8:5; 10:5-10) We march around Jehovah’s altar by exercising faith in that sacrifice.

29:3-9—What is portrayed by likening the voice of Jehovah to a thunderstorm that inspires awe as it travels? Simply this: Jehovah’s awesome power!

31:23—How is a haughty person rewarded exceedingly? The reward here is punishment. A righteous one receives his reward for his unintentional mistakes in the form of discipline from Jehovah. Since a haughty person does not turn back from his wrong course, he is rewarded exceedingly with severe punishment.—Proverbs 11:31; 1 Peter 4:18.

33:6; footnote—What is “the spirit,” or “breath,” of Jehovah’s mouth? This spirit is God’s active force, or holy spirit, which he used in creating the material heavens. (Genesis 1:1, 2) It is called the spirit of his mouth because, like a powerful breath, it can be sent forth to accomplish things at a distance.

26:4. We are wise to avoid association with those who hide their identity in Internet chat rooms, those at school or at our place of work who pretend to be our friends for devious reasons, apostates who put on a mask of sincerity, and those who live a double life.

26:7, 12; 35:18; 40:9. We must praise Jehovah publicly at Christian gatherings.

26:8; 27:4. Do we love to attend Christian meetings?

26:11. While expressing his determination to keep his integrity, David also made a request for redemption. Yes, we can maintain our integrity despite our imperfection.

29:10; footnote. By sitting upon “the deluge,” or “heavenly ocean,” Jehovah indicates that he is in full control of his power.

30:5. Jehovah’s dominant quality is love—not anger.

32:9. Jehovah does not want us to be like a mule or an ass that obeys because of a bridle or a whip. Rather, he desires that we choose to obey him because of our understanding of his will.

33:17-19. No man-made system, regardless of how strong, can bring about salvation. Our trust must be in Jehovah

No.1:	Psalm 31:9-24
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No. 2:	Bible Examples of Genuine Humility
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and his Kingdom arrangement.

*** w09 11/15 pp. 22-24 Keep Growing in Brotherly Love ***

Humility Helps Us to Make Peace

¹⁵ Euodia and Syntyche, two Christian sisters in ancient Philippi, apparently had some difficulty in resolving a problem that arose between them. (Phil. 4:2, 3) A heated dispute between Paul and Barnabas became public knowledge and resulted in their going separate ways for a while. (Acts 15:37-39) These accounts show that true worshippers are not immune to disagreements. Jehovah provides us with help to resolve conflicts and restore friendships. But he requires something of us.

¹⁶ Imagine that you and a friend are going to take a trip by automobile. Before you can begin your journey, you must put a key into the ignition and start the car’s engine. The process of resolving personal differences is also started with a



key. The key is humility. (*Read James 4:10.*) As shown by the following Scriptural example, that key allows those at odds with each other to begin applying Bible principles.

¹⁷ Twenty years had passed since Esau became bitter over losing his birthright to his twin brother, Jacob, and wanted to kill him. The twins were about to meet again after all that time, “and Jacob became very much afraid and grew anxious.” He felt that there was a strong possibility that Esau would assault him. But at that meeting, Jacob did something Esau did not expect. He “proceeded to bow down to the earth” as he approached his brother. What happened next? “Esau went running to meet him, and he began to embrace him and fall upon his neck and kiss him, and they burst into tears.” The danger of a fight was averted. Jacob’s humility helped to overcome whatever hatred Esau might have harbored.—Gen. 27:41; 32:3-8; 33:3, 4.

¹⁸ The Bible contains excellent counsel on resolving conflicts. (Matt. 5:23, 24; 18:15-17; Eph. 4:26, 27) Unless we humbly apply that counsel, however, making peace will be difficult. Waiting for the other person to show humility is not the solution when we too are holding the key in our hand.

¹⁹ If our initial attempts to make peace seem unfruitful for some reason, we should not give up hope. The other person may need time to sort out his feelings. Joseph’s brothers dealt treacherously with Joseph. It was a long time before they faced him as prime minister of Egypt. Finally, however, they had a change of heart and begged for forgiveness. Joseph pardoned them, and Jacob’s sons became a nation that had the privilege of bearing the name of Jehovah. (Gen. 50:15-21) By maintaining peace with our brothers and sisters, we contribute to the unity and joy of the congregation.—*Read Colossians 3:12-14.*

*** **w05 10/15 pp. 26-28 Cultivate Genuine Humility** ***

Cultivate Genuine Humility

“The humble people you will save.”—2 SAMUEL 22:28.

THE pyramids of Egypt bear testimony to men who once ruled that land. Others who left their mark on history were Sennacherib of Assyria, Alexander the Great of Greece, and Julius Caesar of Rome. All such rulers had one thing in common. They did not leave a record of being genuinely humble.—Matthew 20:25, 26.

² Could you imagine any of the above-mentioned rulers being in the habit of searching their realm to find lowly subjects in need of comfort? Of course not! Nor could you imagine that they would go to the humble dwellings of crushed citizens to uplift the spirits of such ones. How different their attitude toward lowly human creatures is from that of the Supreme Ruler of the universe, Jehovah God!

The Greatest Example of Humility

³ Jehovah is unsearchably great and lofty, yet “his eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him.” (2 Chronicles 16:9) And what does Jehovah do when he finds lowly worshippers who are crushed in spirit as a result of various trials? In a sense, he “is residing” with such ones by means of his holy spirit “to revive the spirit of the lowly ones and to revive the heart of the ones being crushed.” (Isaiah 57:15) Thus, his revived worshippers are better able to resume serving him with rejoicing. What humility on God’s part!

⁴ No one else in the universe has humbled himself to the same extent as the Sovereign Lord in order to help sinful humans. The psalmist could write: “Jehovah has become high above all the nations; his glory is above the heavens. Who is like Jehovah our God, him who is making his dwelling on high? He is condescending to look on heaven and earth, raising up the lowly one from the very dust; he exalts the poor one from the ashpit itself.”—Psalm 113:4-7.

⁵ Note the word “condescending.” When referring to humans, that word can have a bad connotation, ‘to assume an air of superiority to one inferior or less fortunate.’ Such a haughty attitude could never describe Jehovah God, who is pure and holy and thus devoid of “haughtiness.” (Mark 7:22, 23) But “condescend” can also carry the sense of coming down to the level of one socially lower or descending from one’s rank or dignity in dealings with an inferior. Thus, some Bibles render Psalm 113:6 as saying that God humbles himself. How well that conveys the image of our humble God giving loving attention to the needs of his imperfect human worshippers!—2 Samuel 22:36.

Why Jesus Was Humble

⁶ God’s greatest act of humility and love was that of sending his beloved firstborn Son to be born on earth and raised as a human for the salvation of mankind. (John 3:16) Jesus taught us the truth about his heavenly Father and then gave up his perfect human life to take away “the sin of the world.” (John 1:29; 18:37) Perfectly reflecting his Father, including Jehovah’s humility, Jesus was willing to do what God asked of him. That was the greatest example of humility and love



ever set by one of God's creatures. Not all appreciated Jesus' humility, his enemies even considering him to be "the lowliest one of mankind." (Daniel 4:17) Nonetheless, the apostle Paul realized that his fellow believers should imitate Jesus and thus be humble in their dealings with one another.—1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 2:3, 4.

⁷ Paul highlighted Jesus' outstanding example, writing: "Keep this mental attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake."—Philippians 2:5-8.

⁸ Some might wonder, 'How did Jesus learn to be humble?' It was a marvelous benefit of his close association with his heavenly Father for aeons of time, during which he served as God's "master worker" in the creation of all things. (Proverbs 8:30) After the rebellion in Eden, God's Firstborn was in a position to note his Father's humble dealings with human sinners. Accordingly, when on earth, Jesus reflected his Father's humility and made the appeal: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls."—Matthew 11:29; John 14:9.

⁹ Because Jesus was genuinely humble, little children were not afraid of him. Rather, they felt drawn to him. He for his part showed fondness for children and gave attention to them. (Mark 10:13-16) What was it about children that Jesus found so appealing? Certainly, they had desirable qualities that some of his adult disciples did not always display. It is a simple fact that little children view adults as being superior. You can see this by the many questions they ask. Yes, compared with many adults, children are more teachable and not as prone to pride. On one occasion, Jesus singled out a young child and said to His followers: "Unless you turn around and become as young children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens." He continued: "Whoever will humble himself like this young child is the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens." (Matthew 18:3, 4) Jesus stated the rule: "Everyone that exalts himself will be humbled and he that humbles himself will be exalted."—Luke 14:11; 18:14; Matthew 23:12.

¹⁰ That truth raises important questions. Our prospect of gaining everlasting life is in part dependent on our cultivating genuine humility, but why do Christians sometimes find it difficult to be humble? Why is it a challenge for us to swallow our pride, so to speak, and react to trials with humility? And what will help us to succeed in cultivating genuine humility?—James 4:6, 10.

No. 3: Must Jews Put Faith in Jesus to Be Saved? (rs p. 222¶3-p.223¶1)

*** rs p. 222 - p. 223 Jews ***

Is it necessary for Jews to put faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved?

Isaiah 53:1-12 foretold the death of the Messiah 'to bear the sins of many and to make intercession for the transgressors.' Daniel 9:24-27 connected the coming of the Messiah and his death with 'making an end of sin and forgiving iniquity.' (JP) Both passages show that the Jews were in need of such intercession and forgiveness. Could they expect to reject the Messiah and have the approval of the One who sent him?

Acts 4:11, 12: "[Regarding Jesus Christ, the apostle Peter was moved by holy spirit to say to the Jewish rulers and older men in Jerusalem:] This is 'the stone that was treated by you builders as of no account that has become the head of the corner.' Furthermore, 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." (Although the nation of natural Israel no longer enjoys special divine favor, the way is open to individual Jews, as it is to people of all nations, to benefit from the salvation that is made possible through Jesus the Messiah.)



June

June 6 Bible reading: Psalms34-37

No.1: Psalm 35:1-18

No. 2: Are the Events Taking Place in Israel Today in Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy? (rs p. 223¶2–p.224¶2)

No. 3: What Can We Learn From Luke 12:13-15, 21?

Bible reading: Psalms34-37

*** w06 5/15 p. 20 Highlights From Book One of Psalms ***

35:19—What is the meaning of David’s request not to let those hating him wink their eye? The winking of an eye would indicate that David’s enemies were deriving pleasure from the success of their spiteful plans against him. David requested that this not happen.

34:10. What reassurance this is to those who put Kingdom interests first in their lives!

No.1: Psalm 35:1-18

No. 2: Are the Events Taking Place in Israel Today in Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy? (rs p. 223¶2–p.224¶2)

*** rs p. 223 - p. 224 Jews ***

Are the events taking place in Israel today in fulfillment of Bible prophecy?

Ezek. 37:21, 22, *JP*: “Thus saith the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all.” (Israel today is not a nation under a king of the royal line of David. Theirs is a republic.)

Isa. 2:2-4, *JP*: “It shall come to pass in the end of days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established as the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say: ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.’ . . . And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (In Jerusalem today, where the temple was formerly located there is no “house of the God of Jacob,” but, instead, an Islamic shrine. And there is no move on the part of Israel or its neighbors to “beat their swords into plowshares.” They depend for survival on military preparedness.)

Isa. 35:1, 2, *JP*: “The wilderness and the parched land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice, even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God.” (Remarkable reforestation and irrigation projects have been successfully undertaken in Israel. But its leaders do not give credit to the Lord God. As a former premier, David Ben-Gurion, said: “Israel is determined . . . to conquer the desert and make it flourish by the power of science and the pioneering spirit, and to transform the country into a bastion of democracy.”)

Zech. 8:23, *JP*: “In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” (To what God does the prophecy refer? In the Hebrew language his name [יהוה, commonly translated Jehovah] appears over 130 times in this one book of the Holy Scriptures. Today when someone uses that name, do people conclude that the person must be a Jew? No; for many centuries, superstition has caused the Jewish people as a whole to refrain from ever uttering God’s personal name. The upsurge of religious interest concerning natural Israel today does not fit this prophecy.)

How, then, are events in modern-day Israel to be viewed? Merely as part of global developments foretold in the Bible. These include war, lawlessness, cooling off of love for God, and the love of money.—Matt. 24:7, 12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

No. 3: What Can We Learn From Luke 12:13-15, 21?

*** w07 8/1 pp. 21-23 “Guard Against Every Sort of Covetousness” ***
 “Guard Against Every Sort of Covetousness”



“Even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses.”—LUKE 12:15.

MONEY, property, prestige, high-paying jobs, family—these are among the things that most people look at as a gauge of success or as insurance for a secure future. It is evident that in lands rich and poor, many people’s interests and pursuits are focused on material gains and advancement. On the other hand, their interest in spiritual things—if there is any—is on a rapid decline.

² This is just as the Bible foretold. It says: “In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, . . . lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Living among such people day in and day out, true Christians are under constant pressure to conform to this kind of mentality and lifestyle. What can help us to resist the world’s efforts to ‘squeeze us into its own mould’?—Romans 12:2, *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J. B. Phillips.

³ As “the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith,” Jesus Christ provided us with powerful lessons in this regard. (Hebrews 12:2) On one occasion when Jesus was speaking to the crowd on some spiritually enlightening matters, a man interrupted the discussion with a request: “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” In response, Jesus provided the man—and all those listening—with some serious counsel. He sounded a strong warning against covetousness and reinforced that warning with a thought-provoking illustration. We do well to take heed of what Jesus said on that occasion and see how we can benefit by applying it in our own life.—Luke 12:13-21.

An Inappropriate Request

⁴ Prior to the man’s interruption, Jesus was speaking to his disciples and others about being on guard against hypocrisy, about having the courage to confess union with the Son of man, and about receiving help from the holy spirit. (Luke 12:1-12) Surely these are vital subjects that the disciples needed to take to heart. In the midst of such a soul-searching discourse, however, the man abruptly cut in and asked Jesus to arbitrate in what appeared to be a family squabble over material possessions. Yet, there is an important lesson that we can learn from this event.

⁵ It has been said that “the character of a man is often indicated by the direction which his thoughts take when he is listening to a religious exhortation.” While Jesus was speaking about serious spiritual matters, the man was probably thinking about what he could do to achieve certain financial advantages. Whether he had a legitimate cause for grievance in connection with the inheritance is not stated. Perhaps he was trying to capitalize on Jesus’ authority and reputation as a wise judge in human affairs. (Isaiah 11:3, 4; Matthew 22:16) In any case, his question suggested that deep down, there was a problem—a serious lack of appreciation for spiritual matters. Is this not good reason for us to examine ourselves? At Christian meetings, for example, it is easy to allow our mind to wander or to dwell on what we might do later. Instead, we should pay attention to what is said and think of ways to make personal application of the information so that we can improve our relationship with our heavenly Father, Jehovah God, and with our fellow Christians.—Psalm 22:22; Mark 4:24.

⁶ Whatever motivated the man to make the request, Jesus declined to act upon it. Instead, Jesus said to him: “Man, who appointed me judge or apportioner over you persons?” (Luke 12:14) In saying that, Jesus was referring to something that the people were well-aware of, for according to the Mosaic Law, judges in the cities were appointed to rule on just such matters. (Deuteronomy 16:18-20; 21:15-17; Ruth 4:1, 2) Jesus, on the other hand, was concerned with more important things—to bear witness to Kingdom truth and to teach people God’s will. (John 18:37) Following Jesus’ example, rather than being sidetracked by mundane issues, we use our time and energy to preach the good news and to “make disciples of people of all the nations.”—Matthew 24:14; 28:19.

Beware of Covetousness

⁷ Being able to discern the deepest intentions of the heart, Jesus was aware that something more serious was involved in the man’s request for Jesus to intervene in a personal matter. Thus, instead of simply turning down the request, Jesus got to the heart of the matter and said: “Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness, because even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses.”—Luke 12:15.

⁸ Covetousness is more than simply the desire to have money or certain things, which could have their proper use and purpose. It is the “inordinate desire for wealth or possessions or for another’s possessions,” according to one dictionary. It can involve the insatiable, greedy urge to have things—perhaps those belonging to someone else—simply for the sake of having them, without regard for one’s own needs or the effect on others. A covetous person allows the object of his desire to dominate his thinking and actions to such an extent that it in essence becomes his god. Recall that the apostle Paul equates a greedy person with an idolater, who has no share in God’s Kingdom.—Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5.



⁹ Interestingly, Jesus warned against “every sort of covetousness.” Covetousness comes in many forms. The last of the Ten Commandments enumerated some of them, stating: “You must not desire your fellowman’s house. You must not desire your fellowman’s wife, nor his slave man nor his slave girl nor his bull nor his ass nor anything that belongs to your fellowman.” (Exodus 20:17) The Bible is replete with examples of individuals who have fallen into grievous sin on account of covetousness of one kind or another. Satan was the first to covet something that belonged to someone else—the glory, honor, and authority that are Jehovah’s alone. (Revelation 4:11) Eve coveted the right of self-determination, and her being deceived in this regard started the human race down the road to sin and death. (Genesis 3:4-7) The demons were angels who became discontented with “their original position but forsook their own proper dwelling place” for something to which they were not entitled. (Jude 6; Genesis 6:2) Think, too, of Balaam, Achan, Gehazi, and Judas. Instead of being content with their lot in life, they allowed an inordinate desire for material possessions to cause them to misuse their trust, plunging them into ruin and destruction.

¹⁰ How fitting that Jesus prefaced the warning against covetousness with the words “keep your eyes open”! Why? Because it is so easy for people to see that someone else is being greedy or covetous, but it is rare that they will acknowledge that they themselves are guilty of it. Yet, the apostle Paul points out that “the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things.” (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) The disciple James explains that wrong desire, “when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin.” (James 1:15) In line with Jesus’ admonition, we should ‘keep our eyes open,’ not to observe others to see if they fit the description, but to examine ourselves to see what we have set our hearts on, so as to “guard against every sort of covetousness.”

***** w08 7/1 pp. 12-13 Do Your Plans Harmonize With God’s Purpose? *****

The man’s thinking, though, was flawed. Jesus continued: “But God said to him, ‘Unreasonable one, this night they are demanding your soul from you. Who, then, is to have the things you stored up?’” (Luke 12:20) Was Jesus contradicting Solomon’s statement that work and the good things it produces are gifts from God? No. What was Jesus’ point? “So it goes,” said Jesus, “with the man that lays up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God.”—Luke 12:21.

Jesus was teaching his audience that Jehovah wants us to take Him into account as we make our plans. The rich man could have been rich toward God by seeking ways to grow in godly devotion, wisdom, and love. That man’s words reveal no interest in such things, nor in leaving some of his crops for the poor to glean, nor in presenting gift offerings to Jehovah. Such spiritual pursuits and unselfish actions were not part of the rich man’s life. His plans revolved purely around his own desires and comforts.

Have you observed that many people today have priorities in life like those of the rich man Jesus described? Whether we are well-off or poor, it is all too easy to fall into a materialistic frame of mind, allowing the needs and desires of daily life to push aside spiritual needs. What can you do to avoid that trap?



June

June 13	Bible reading: Psalms 38-44
No.1:	Psalm 41:1–42:5
No. 2:	Bible Examples of Close Friendships and Qualities That We Can Imitate
No. 3:	Among Whom Do the Prophecies About Restoration of Israel Have Fulfillment Today? (rs p.224¶3–p.225¶1)

June 13	Bible reading: Psalms 38-44
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*** w06 5/15 p. 20 Highlights From Book One of Psalms ***

39:1, 2. When the wicked seek information to bring harm to our fellow believers, we are wise 'to set a muzzle as a guard to our mouth' and remain silent.

40:1, 2. Hoping in Jehovah can help us cope with depression and come "out of a roaring pit, out of the mire of the sediment."

40:5, 12. Neither calamities nor personal shortcomings, no matter how many, will overwhelm us if we do not lose sight of the fact that our blessings 'are more numerous than we can recount.'

No.1:	Psalm 41:1–42:5
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No. 2:	Bible Examples of Close Friendships and Qualities That We Can Imitate
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*** w09 10/15 pp. 17-20 Maintaining Friendships in a Loveless World ***

DURING his final night on earth, Jesus encouraged his loyal disciples to remain friends with one another. Earlier in the evening, he said that the love they displayed for one another would identify them as his followers. (John 13:35) The apostles needed to remain close friends if they were to endure the trials that lay ahead and to accomplish the work that Jesus would soon assign them. Indeed, first-century Christians became known for their unbreakable devotion to God and to one another.

² Today, what a pleasure it is to be associated with a worldwide organization whose members follow the pattern set by those first-century Christians! We are determined to obey Jesus' command to display genuine love for one another. However, during these last days, people in general are disloyal and fail to show natural affection. (2 Tim. 3:1-3) The friendships they do form are often shallow and self-serving. To keep our identity as true Christians, we must rise above such attitudes. Let us, then, consider the following: What is the foundation of good friendships? How can we make good friends? When might we need to end a friendship? And how can we maintain upbuilding friendships?

What Is the Basis of Good Friendships?

³ The strongest friendships are founded on a love for Jehovah. King Solomon wrote: "If somebody could overpower one alone, two together could make a stand against him. And a threefold cord cannot quickly be torn in two." (Eccl. 4:12) When Jehovah is the third cord in a friendship, that friendship will endure.

⁴ True, those who do not love Jehovah can also form rewarding friendships. But when individuals are drawn together by a mutual love for God, their friendship will be unshakable. If misunderstandings arise, true friends will treat each other in a way that pleases Jehovah. If opposers of God try to cause divisions, these enemies discover that friendships among true Christians are unbreakable. Throughout history, servants of Jehovah have proved their willingness to face death rather than betray one another.—*Read 1 John 3:16.*

⁵ Without a doubt, the most satisfying friendships we can enjoy are with those who love Jehovah. Consider the example of Ruth and Naomi. These women formed a friendship that is among the most admirable recorded in the Bible. Why was their friendship so enduring? Ruth revealed the reason when she said to Naomi: "Your people will be my people, and your God my God. . . . May Jehovah do so to me and add to it if anything but death should make a separation between me and you." (Ruth 1:16, 17) Obviously, Ruth and Naomi shared a deep love for God, and they allowed this love to influence the way they treated each other. As a result, both women were blessed by Jehovah.

How to Make Good Friends

⁶ The example of Ruth and Naomi demonstrates that good friendships are not formed by accident. A mutual love for Jehovah is the foundation. But enduring friendships are a product of hard work and self-sacrifice. Even siblings who



worship Jehovah within Christian families need to work at forming a close friendship. How, then, can you make good friends?

⁷ *Take the initiative.* The apostle Paul encouraged his friends in the congregation in Rome to “follow the course of hospitality.” (Rom. 12:13) Following a literal course involves taking a series of steps, one after the other. Likewise, being hospitable involves taking a series of small, regular actions. Nobody else can walk the path of hospitality for you. (*Read Proverbs 3:27.*) One way you can be hospitable is by inviting different ones in the congregation to share a simple meal with you. Can you make it a regular part of your routine to show hospitality to members of your congregation?

⁸ Another way you can take the initiative in making friends is by inviting different ones to share with you in the preaching work. When you stand at a stranger’s door and hear your companion speak from the heart about his or her love for Jehovah, you cannot help but be drawn closer to that individual.

⁹ *Widen out in your affections.* (*Read 2 Corinthians 6:12, 13.*) Have you ever felt that there is just no one in your congregation whom you can befriend? If so, could it be that you are restricting your view of who can be a friend? The apostle Paul set a good example in widening out in his affections. At one time, he would never have thought of forming close friendships with non-Jews. However, he became “an apostle to the nations.”—Rom. 11:13.

¹⁰ In addition, Paul did not restrict his friendships to those of his own age group. For instance, he and Timothy became close friends despite a difference in age and background. Today, many young ones treasure the friendships they have formed with older members of the congregation. “I have a very dear friend who is in her 50’s,” says Vanessa, who is in her early 20’s. “I can tell her anything that I can tell friends my age. And she cares about me so much.” How are such friendships formed? Vanessa says: “I had to seek this friendship out and not just wait for it to come to me.” Are you willing to build friendships with those outside your age bracket? Jehovah will certainly reward you for your efforts.

¹¹ *Be loyal.* “A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress,” wrote Solomon. (Prov. 17:17) When composing those words, Solomon may have had in mind the friendship that his father, David, enjoyed with Jonathan. (1 Sam. 18:1) King Saul wanted his son Jonathan to inherit the throne of Israel. But Jonathan accepted the fact that Jehovah had chosen David for this privilege. Unlike Saul, Jonathan did not become envious of David. He did not resent the praise David received, nor did he swallow the slander that Saul spread about David. (1 Sam. 20:24-34) Are we like Jonathan? When our friends receive privileges, are we happy for them? When they suffer hardships, do we comfort and support them? If we hear harmful gossip about a friend, are we quick to believe it? Or, like Jonathan, do we loyally defend our friend?

No. 3: Among Whom Do the Prophecies About Restoration of Israel Have Fulfillment Today? (rs p.224¶3–p.225¶)

*** rs p. 224 - p. 225 Jews ***

Among whom do the prophecies about restoration of Israel have fulfillment today?

Gal. 6:15, 16: “Neither is circumcision anything nor is uncircumcision, but a new creation is something. And all those who will walk orderly by this rule of conduct, upon them be peace and mercy, even upon the Israel of God.” (So “the Israel of God” is no longer determined on the basis of conforming to the requirement laid upon Abraham for all the males of his household to be circumcised. Rather, as stated at Galatians 3:26-29, those who belong to Christ and who are spirit-begotten sons of God “are really Abraham’s seed.”)

Jer. 31:31-34: “‘Look! There are days coming,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘and I will conclude with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant . . . And they will no more teach each one his companion and each one his brother, saying, “Know Jehovah!” for they will all of them know me, from the least one of them even to the greatest one of them,’ is the utterance of Jehovah.” (That new covenant was made, not with the nation of natural Israel, but with the loyal followers of Jesus Christ to whom hope of heavenly life was being extended. When instituting the Memorial of his death, Jesus gave them a cup of wine and said: “This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood.” [1 Cor. 11:25])

Rev. 7:4: “I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.” (But in the verses that follow, mention is made of “the tribe of Levi” and “the tribe of Joseph.” These were not included in lists of the 12 tribes of natural Israel. Interestingly, while it is said that people would be “sealed out of every tribe,” the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are not mentioned. [Compare Numbers 1:4-16.] Reference must here be made to the spiritual Israel of God, to those whom Revelation 14:1-3 shows will share with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom.)

Heb. 12:22: “You have approached a Mount Zion and a city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and myriads of angels.” (Thus it is not to earthly Jerusalem but to “heavenly Jerusalem” that true Christians look for fulfillment of the promises of God.)



June

<p>June 20 Bible reading: Psalms 45-51 No.1: Psalm 48:1–49:9 No. 2: Is God’s Kingdom a Real Government? (rs p. 226¶1-2) No. 3: Since Life Isa Gift, Why Must We Work Out Our Own Salvation? (Rom. 6:23, Phil. 2:12)</p>

<p>Bible reading: Psalms 45-51</p>

*** w06 6/1 pp. 8-9 Highlights From Book Two of Psalms ***

44:19—What was “the place of jackals”? The psalmist was perhaps referring to a battlefield, where those slain become food for jackals.

45:13, 14a—Who is “the king’s daughter” who “will be brought to the king”? She is the daughter of the “King of eternity,” Jehovah God. (Revelation 15:3) She represents the glorified congregation of 144,000 Christians, whom Jehovah adopts as his children by anointing them with his spirit. (Romans 8:16) This “daughter” of Jehovah, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,” will be brought to the bridegroom—the Messianic King.—Revelation 21:2.

45:14b, 15—Whom do “the virgins” represent? They are the “great crowd” of true worshippers, who join and support the anointed remnant. Since they “come out of the great tribulation” alive, they will be on earth when the marriage of the Messianic King is completed in heaven. (Revelation 7:9, 13, 14) On that occasion, they will be filled with “rejoicing and joyfulness.”

45:16—In what way will there come to be sons in place of the king’s forefathers? When Jesus was born on earth, he had earthly forefathers. They will become his sons when he resurrects them from the dead during his Thousand Year Reign. Some of them will come to be among those appointed as “princes in all the earth.”

50:2—Why is Jerusalem called “the perfection of prettiness”? This was not because of the city’s appearance. Rather, it was because Jehovah used it and bestowed splendor upon it by making it the site for his temple and the capital of his anointed kings.

42:1-3. As a hind, or female deer, in a dry region longs for water, the Levite longed for Jehovah. So intense was the man’s sadness over not being able to worship Jehovah at His sanctuary that ‘his tears became his food day and night’—he lost his appetite. Should we not cultivate deep appreciation for worshipping Jehovah in association with fellow believers?

42:4, 5, 11; 43:3-5. If for some reason beyond our control we are temporarily separated from the Christian congregation, the memory of the joys of such association in the past can sustain us. While this may at first intensify the pain of loneliness, it would also remind us that God is our refuge and that we need to wait on him for relief.

46:1-3. Whatever calamity may confront us, we must have unwavering confidence that “God is for us a refuge and strength.”

50:16-19. Anyone speaking deception and practicing vile things has no right to represent God.

50:20. Rather than eagerly publicizing the faults of others, we should overlook them.—Colossians 3:13.

51:12—With whose “willing spirit” did David ask to be supported? This refers, neither to God’s willingness to help David nor to Jehovah’s holy spirit, but to David’s own spirit—to his mental inclination. He is asking God to impart to him the desire to do what is right.

51:1-4, 17. Committing sin need not alienate us from Jehovah God. If we repent, we can have confidence in his mercy.

51:5, 7-10. If we have sinned, we can appeal to Jehovah for forgiveness on account of our inherited sinfulness. We should also pray to him to cleanse us, to restore us, to help us to remove sinful tendencies from our heart, and to give us a steadfast spirit.

51:18. David’s sins threatened the welfare of the entire nation. So he prayed for God’s goodwill toward Zion. When we commit a serious sin, it often brings reproach on Jehovah’s name and on the congregation. We need to pray to God to repair the harm we may have caused.

<p>No.1: Psalm 48:1–49:9</p>



No. 2: Is God's Kingdom a Real Government? (rs p. 226¶1-2)

*** rs p. 225 - p. 226 Kingdom ***

Definition: The Kingdom of God is the expression of Jehovah's universal sovereignty toward his creatures, or the means used by him to express that sovereignty. This term is used particularly to designate the manifestation of God's sovereignty through the royal government headed by his Son, Jesus Christ. "Kingdom" may refer to the rulership of the one anointed as King or to the earthly realm ruled by that heavenly government.

Is God's Kingdom a real government?

Or is it, instead, a condition in the hearts of men?

Luke 17:21, *KJ*: "Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you [also *TEV, Dy*; but "among you," *KJ* margin, *NE, JB*; "in the midst of you," *RS*; "in your midst," *NW*]." (Notice that, as shown by verse 20, Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, whom he also denounced as hypocrites, so he could not have meant that the Kingdom was in *their* hearts. But the Kingdom as represented by Christ was in their midst. Thus *The Emphatic Diaglott* reads: "God's royal majesty is among you.")

Does the Bible actually speak of God's Kingdom as being a government?

Isa. 9:6, 7, *RS*: "To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government [also *KJ, AT, Dy*; "dominion," *JB, NE*; "princely rule," *NW*] will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end."

No. 3: Since Life Isa Gift, Why Must We Work Out Our Own Salvation? (Rom. 6:23, Phil. 2:12)

*** w98 11/1 pp. 13-18 Keep On Working Out Your Own Salvation! ***

"Beloved ones, . . . keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling."—PHILIPPIANS 2:12.

"WERE you born that way?" Recently, that question was emblazoned on the cover of a popular magazine. Beneath the headline appeared the words: "Personality, temperament, even life choices. New studies show it's mostly in your genes." Such claims may cause some to feel that they have little control over their own life.

² Others fear that their parents' poor parenting or their teachers' poor teaching has somehow condemned them to an unhappy life. They may feel doomed to repeat their parents' mistakes, to act on their worst impulses, to prove unfaithful to Jehovah—in short, to make bad choices. Is that what the Bible teaches? There are, to be sure, religionists who insist that the Bible teaches something like this, the doctrine of predestination. According to this doctrine, God long ago foreordained every event in your life.

³ All these different notions have one message in common: You have little choice, little control over how your life turns out. That is a discouraging message, is it not, and discouragement adds to the problem. Proverbs 24:10 says: "Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty." We are encouraged to learn, though, that according to the Bible, we can 'work out our own salvation.' (Philippians 2:12) How can we bolster our confidence in this positive Scriptural teaching?

The "Building" Work We Do in Ourselves

⁴ Consider the apostle Paul's illustration found at 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. There, he speaks of a Christian building work, and the principle of his illustration can apply to the internal and external ministry. Does he imply that whether a disciple finally chooses to serve Jehovah and stays by that choice is entirely the responsibility of those who taught and trained him? No. Paul was emphasizing the importance of the teacher's doing the best possible building work. But as we learned in the preceding article, he was not saying that the student or disciple has no choice in the matter. True, Paul's illustration focuses on the work we do in others, not the building up of ourselves. This is evident because Paul speaks of slipshod building work as being destroyed while the builder himself is saved. Nonetheless, the Bible does at times apply that same figure of speech to the work that we do in ourselves.

⁵ Consider, for example, Jude 20, 21: "You, beloved ones, by building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying with holy spirit, keep yourselves in God's love." Jude here uses the same Greek word for "building" that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, but his point seems to be that we build *ourselves* up on the foundation of our faith. Luke, in recording Jesus' illustration of the man who founded his house upon a rock-mass, uses the same Greek word for



“foundation” that Paul uses in his illustration of Christian building. (Luke 6:48, 49) Furthermore, Paul uses the imagery of being established on a “foundation” when exhorting his fellow Christians to make spiritual progress. Yes, God’s Word teaches that we do “building” work in ourselves.—Ephesians 3:15-19; Colossians 1:23; 2:7.

⁶ Is building a Christian a one-man job? Well, imagine that you decide to build a house. You go to an architect for the plans. While you intend to do much of the work yourself, you hire a contractor to work with you and to advise you on the best methods. If he lays a solid foundation, helps you to understand the plans, suggests the best materials to purchase, and even teaches you much about building, you would likely agree that he has done a good job. But what if you were to ignore his advice, buy cheap or shoddy materials, and even deviate from the architect’s plans? Surely you could not blame the contractor or the architect if the house collapsed! Similarly, each Christian disciple is a result of a joint building project. Jehovah is the master architect. He supports the faithful Christian who, as one of “God’s fellow workers,” teaches and builds up a student. (1 Corinthians 3:9) Yet the student is involved too. In the final analysis, he is responsible for his own life course. (Romans 14:12) If he wants to have fine Christian qualities, he must work hard to acquire them, to build them in himself.—2 Peter 1:5-8.

⁷ Does this mean, then, that genetics, environment, and the quality of our teachers are meaningless? Far from it. God’s Word recognizes each of these as important and influential. Many sinful, negative tendencies are inborn and can be very hard to fight. (Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12; 7:21-23) Parental training and the home environment can have a tremendous impact on the young—for good or for bad. (Proverbs 22:6; Colossians 3:21) Jesus condemned the Jewish religious leaders for the bad effects their teaching had on others. (Matthew 23:13, 15) Today, such factors are at work on all of us. For example, some of God’s people face challenges as a result of difficult childhoods. These ones need our kindness and empathy. And they can take comfort from the Bible’s message that they are *not* doomed to repeat their parents’ mistakes or to prove unfaithful. Consider how some of the kings of ancient Judah illustrate this point.

Judah’s Kings—They Made Their Own Choices

⁸ Uzziah became king of Judah at the tender age of 16 and reigned for 52 years. Throughout much of this time, he “continued to do what was upright in Jehovah’s eyes, according to all that Amaziah his father had done.” (2 Kings 15:3) Jehovah blessed him with a series of stunning military victories. Sadly, though, success went to Uzziah’s head. He became haughty and rebelled against Jehovah by offering incense at the altar in the temple, a duty reserved for priests. Uzziah was rebuked but only responded with rage. Then he was humiliated—struck with leprosy and forced to live out his days in isolation. (2 Chronicles 26:16-23) How did his son Jotham react to all of this? The young man could easily have been influenced by his father and could have resented Jehovah’s correction. The people in general may have been a negative influence since they carried on wrong religious practices. (2 Kings 15:4) But Jotham made his own choice. “He kept doing what was right in Jehovah’s eyes.”—2 Chronicles 27:2.

⁹ Jotham ruled for 16 years, remaining faithful to Jehovah all the while. His son Ahaz, therefore, had the excellent example of a faithful father. And Ahaz had other good influences. He was blessed to live when the faithful prophets Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah were actively prophesying in the land. Yet, he made a bad choice. “He did not do what was right in Jehovah’s eyes like David his forefather.” He made images of Baal and worshiped them and even burned up some of his own sons in sacrificial fires to pagan gods. Despite the best of influences, he failed catastrophically as a king and as a servant of Jehovah.—2 Chronicles 28:1-4.

¹⁰ From the point of view of pure worship, it is hard to imagine a worse father than Ahaz. However, his son Hezekiah could not choose his own father! The young sons that Ahaz slaughtered in sacrifice to Baal were likely Hezekiah’s own brothers. Did this terrible background doom Hezekiah to a life of unfaithfulness to Jehovah? On the contrary, Hezekiah became one of Judah’s few truly great kings—a faithful, wise, and beloved man. “Jehovah proved to be with him.” (2 Kings 18:3-7) In fact, there is reason to believe that Hezekiah while still a young prince was the inspired writer of the 119th Psalm. If so, it is not hard to see why he would have penned the words: “My soul has been sleepless from grief.” (Psalm 119:28) Despite his grievous troubles, Hezekiah let Jehovah’s Word guide him in life. Psalm 119:105 says: “Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway.” Yes, Hezekiah made his own choice—the right choice.

¹¹ Paradoxically, though, from one of Judah’s best kings came one of the very worst. Hezekiah’s son Manasseh promoted idolatry, spiritism, and wholesale violence to an unprecedented extent. The record says that “Jehovah kept speaking to Manasseh and his people,” likely through the prophets. (2 Chronicles 33:10) Jewish tradition has it that Manasseh responded by having Isaiah sawn apart. (Compare Hebrews 11:37.) Whether that is true or not, Manasseh failed to listen to any divine warnings. In fact, he had some of his own sons burned alive as sacrifices, much as his grandfather Ahaz had done. Yet, this wicked man, in the face of severe trials late in life, repented and changed his ways. (2 Chronicles 33:1-6, 11-20) His example teaches us that a person who has made terrible choices is not necessarily beyond redemption. He can change.



¹² Manasseh's son Amon could have learned much from his father's repentance. But he made wrong choices. Amon actually "made guiltiness increase" until he was finally assassinated. His son Josiah was a refreshing contrast. Josiah evidently chose to learn from what had happened to his grandfather. He began to rule at a mere eight years of age. When he was just 16, he began to search for Jehovah and thereafter proved to be an exemplary, faithful king. (2 Chronicles 33:20–34:5) He made a choice—the right choice.

¹³ This brief examination of seven Judean kings teaches a powerful lesson. In some instances, the worst of kings had the best of sons and, conversely, the best of kings had the worst of sons. (Compare Ecclesiastes 2:18-21.) This does not diminish the importance of parental training. Parents who train their children according to Jehovah's way certainly give their offspring the best possible opportunity to become faithful servants of Jehovah. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) Still, some children, despite the best efforts of faithful parents, choose to follow a wrong course. Other children, despite the worst parental influence, choose to love and serve Jehovah. With his blessing, they make a success of their life. Do you wonder, at times, which it will be in your case? Consider, then, some of Jehovah's personal assurances that you *can* make the right choice!

Jehovah Believes in You!

¹⁴ Jehovah sees everything. Proverbs 15:3 says: "The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch upon the bad ones and the good ones." King David said of Jehovah: "Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing, as regards the days when they were formed and there was not yet one among them." (Psalm 139:16) So Jehovah knows what negative tendencies you struggle against—whether you inherited them or acquired them as a result of other influences beyond your control. He understands exactly how these have affected you. He understands your limitations even better than you yourself do. And he is merciful. He never expects more of us than we can reasonably do.—Psalm 103:13, 14.

¹⁵ On the other hand, Jehovah does not see us as helpless victims of circumstance. If we have had bad past experiences, we may find consolation in the certainty that Jehovah hates all such deliberately hurtful conduct. (Psalm 11:5; Romans 12:19) But will he then hold us exempt if we turn around and knowingly make wrong choices? Of course not. His Word says: "Each one will carry his own load." (Galatians 6:5) Jehovah dignifies each of his intelligent creatures with the responsibility to do right and serve him. It is as Moses told the nation of Israel: "I do take the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you today, that I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring." (Deuteronomy 30:19) Jehovah is confident that we too can make the right choice. How do we know that?

¹⁶ Note what the apostle Paul wrote: "Consequently, my beloved ones, . . . keep working out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is the one that, for the sake of his good pleasure, is acting within you in order for you both to will and to act." (Philippians 2:12, 13) The original Greek word rendered 'work out' here signifies bringing something to completion. So none of us is doomed to fail or to quit. Jehovah God must be confident that we can complete the work he has given us to do—the work leading to our salvation—or he would not have inspired such a statement. But how do we succeed? It is not in our own strength. If we were strong enough in and of ourselves, there would be no need for "fear and trembling." Rather, Jehovah 'acts within us,' his holy spirit working in our mind and heart, helping us "to will and to act." With that loving help, is there any reason why we should not make the right choices in life and live by them? No!—Luke 11:13.

¹⁷ We will have obstacles to overcome—perhaps a lifetime of bad habits and harmful influences that can distort our thinking. Nevertheless, with the help of Jehovah's spirit, we can overcome these! As Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, God's Word is powerful enough to overturn even "strongly entrenched things." (2 Corinthians 10:4) In fact, Jehovah can help us to make sweeping changes in ourselves. His Word urges us to "put away the old personality" and to "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Ephesians 4:22-24) Can Jehovah's spirit really help us to make such changes? Certainly! God's spirit produces fruitage in us—beautiful, precious qualities that all of us want to cultivate. The first of these is love.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

¹⁸ Herein lies a great, liberating truth. Jehovah God has a limitless capacity for love, and we are made in his image. (Genesis 1:26; 1 John 4:8) So we can choose to love Jehovah. And that love—not our earlier life, not our acquired faults, not our inherited tendency to do wrong—is the key to our future. Love of Jehovah God is what Adam and Eve needed in order to stay faithful in Eden. Such love is what each of us needs in order to survive Armageddon and pass the final test at the end of Christ's Millennial Reign. (Revelation 7:14; 20:5, 7-10) Each and every one of us, whatever our circumstances, can cultivate such love. (Matthew 22:37; 1 Corinthians 13:13) Let us be determined to love Jehovah and to build on that love for all eternity.



June

June 27 Bible reading: Psalms 52-59
Theocratic Ministry School Review

Bible reading: Psalms 52-59

*** w06 6/1 p. 10 Highlights From Book Two of Psalms ***

53:1—How is the person who denies God’s existence “senseless”? The senselessness here does not denote intellectual deficiency. That such a person is morally senseless can be seen from the resulting moral breakdown described at Psalm 53:1-4.

58:3-5—In what way are the wicked like a snake? The lies they tell about others are like a serpent’s venom. They poison the good reputation of their victims. “Like the cobra that stops up its ear,” the wicked do not listen to direction or correction.

58:7—How do the wicked “dissolve as into waters that go their way”? David may have been thinking of the waters of certain torrent valleys in the Promised Land. While a flash flood would swell water levels in such a valley, these waters quickly run off and disappear. David was praying for the speedy disappearance of the wicked.

52:8. We can be “like a luxuriant olive tree in God’s house”—close to Jehovah and productive in his service—by obeying him and by willingly accepting his discipline.—Hebrews 12:5, 6.

55:4, 5, 12-14, 16-18. The conspiracy of his own son Absalom and the betrayal of the trusted counselor Ahithophel caused David intense emotional pain. However, that did not diminish David’s confidence in Jehovah. We should not allow emotional strain to weaken our trust in God.

55:22. How do we throw our burden upon Jehovah? We do this (1) by taking a matter of concern to him in prayer, (2) by turning to his Word and organization for guidance and support, and (3) by doing what we reasonably can to relieve the situation.—Proverbs 3:5, 6; 11:14; 15:22; Philippians 4:6, 7.

56:8. Jehovah is aware not only of our situation but also of its emotional impact on us.

July

July 4 Bible reading: Psalms 60-68
No. 1: Psalm 62:1–63:5
No. 2: How Are We Involved in the Fulfillment of Haggai 2:7?
No. 3: Who Are the Rulers in the Kingdom? (rs p.226¶3-5)

Bible reading: Psalms 60-68

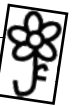
*** w06 6/1 pp. 10-11 Highlights From Book Two of Psalms ***

68:13—How were “the wings of a dove covered with silver and its pinions with yellowish-green gold”? Certain doves of a blue-gray color have an iridescent brightness on some of their feathers. Their plumage takes on a metallic appearance in the golden sunlight. David was perhaps likening the victorious Israelite warriors coming forth from a battle to such a dove—strong of wing and brilliant in appearance. As some scholars suggest, the description may also fit a work of art, a trophy, taken as spoil. In any case, David was alluding to the victories Jehovah gave his people over their enemies.

68:18—Who were the “gifts in the form of men”? These were men from among those taken captive during the conquest of the Promised Land. Such men were later assigned to assist the Levites in their work.—Ezra 8:20.

68:30—What does the request to “rebuke the wild beast of the reeds” mean? Speaking figuratively of the enemies of Jehovah’s people as wild beasts, David asked God to rebuke them, or to keep in check their power to do harm.

62:11. God does not have to depend on any external source of energy. He is the very source of power. ‘Strength belongs to him.’



63:3. God's "loving-kindness is better than life" because without it, life is meaningless and purposeless. We are wise to cultivate friendship with Jehovah.

63:6. Nighttime—quiet and devoid of distraction—can be an excellent time for meditation.

64:2-4. Harmful gossip can ruin an innocent person's good name. We should neither listen to such gossip nor spread it.

No.1: Psalm 62:1–63:5

No. 2: How Are We Involved in the Fulfillment of Haggai 2:7?

*** w07 2/1 pp. 23-24 Never Cease Growing in Your Appreciation ***

Appreciative Ones Flock to God

8 Concerning his spiritual house of worship, Jehovah foretold: "I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory." (Haggai 2:7) This amazing prophecy had a fulfillment in the time of Haggai when a restored remnant of God's people rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. Today, Haggai's words are having further fulfillment in regard to Jehovah's great spiritual temple.

9 Millions have already flocked to the figurative temple in order to worship God "with spirit and truth," and every year hundreds of thousands of "desirable things of all the nations" continue to stream in. (John 4:23, 24) For example, the worldwide report for the 2006 service year shows that 248,327 were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah. That represents an average of 680 new ones every day! Their love of the truth and their desire to serve Jehovah as Kingdom proclaimers give evidence that they truly were drawn by God.—John 6:44, 65.

10 Many of these honesthearted ones were attracted to the truth because they discerned "the distinction between a righteous one and a wicked one, between one serving God and one who has not served him." (Malachi 3:18) Consider the experience of Wayne and Virginia, a married couple who belonged to a Protestant church but who had many unanswered questions. They hated war and were confused and disturbed when they saw the clergy blessing soldiers and weapons. As the couple grew older, they felt ignored by others in the church, even though Virginia had taught Sunday school for a number of years. "No one called on us or expressed interest in our spiritual welfare," they said. "All that the church wanted was our money. We felt lost." They became even more disillusioned when their church adopted a permissive stance on homosexuality.

11 In the meantime, Wayne and Virginia's granddaughter and then their daughter became Jehovah's Witnesses. Though Wayne and Virginia were upset about this at first, they later changed their mind and accepted a Bible study. "In just three months," said Wayne, "we learned more about the Bible than we had learned over the previous 70 years! We never knew that God's name is Jehovah, and we knew nothing about the Kingdom and the Paradise earth." Before long, this sincere couple began to attend Christian meetings and to share in the ministry. "We want to tell everyone about the truth," said Virginia. Both in their 80's, they were baptized in 2005. "We have found a true Christian home," they said.

No. 3: Who Are the Rulers in the Kingdom? (rs p.226¶3-5)

*** rs p. 226 - p. 227 Kingdom ***

Who are the rulers in the Kingdom?

Rev. 15:3: "Great and wonderful are your works, Jehovah God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are your ways, King of eternity."

Dan. 7:13, 14: "With the clouds of the heavens someone like a son of man [Jesus Christ; see Mark 14:61, 62] happened to be coming; and to the Ancient of Days [Jehovah God] he gained access, and they brought him up close even before that One. And to him [to Jesus Christ] there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him."

Rev. 5:9, 10: "You [Jesus Christ] were slaughtered and with your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth." (At Revelation 14:1-3 these "bought from the earth" to be rulers with the Lamb on heavenly Mount Zion are said to number 144,000.)



July

July 11	Bible reading: Psalms 69-73
No.1:	Psalm 72:1-20
No. 2:	What Effect Will God’s Kingdom Have on Human Governments? (rs p. 227¶1-2)
No. 3:	Lessons That Youths Can Learn From Kings Hezekiah and Josiah

Bible reading: Psalms 69-73

*** w06 6/1 pp. 10-11 Highlights From Book Two of Psalms ***

69:23—What is the meaning of ‘causing enemy hips to wobble’? The muscles in the hip area are essential for performing strenuous tasks, such as picking up and carrying heavy loads. Unsteady hips suggest a loss of power. David prayed that his foes be deprived of their power.

69:4. For us to keep peace, it may sometimes be wise to “give back” by apologizing, even if we are not convinced that we are in the wrong.

70:1-5. Jehovah hears our urgent pleas for help. (1 Thessalonians 5:17; James 1:13; 2 Peter 2:9) God may allow a trial to continue, yet he will give us wisdom to deal with the situation and the strength to endure it. He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear.—1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 10:36; James 1:5-8.

71:5, 17. David developed courage and strength by making Jehovah his confidence in his youth—even before he confronted the Philistine giant Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:34-37) Young ones do well to lean on Jehovah in all that they do.

*** w06 7/15 pp. 10-12 Highlights From Books Three and Four of Psalms ***

73:9—How is it that the wicked have “put their mouth in the very heavens, and their tongue itself walks about in the earth”? Since the wicked have no regard for anyone in heaven or on earth, they do not hesitate to blaspheme God with their mouth. They also slander humans with their tongue.

73:2-5, 18-20, 25, 28. We should not become envious of the prosperity of the wicked and adopt their ungodly ways. The wicked are on slippery ground. They will surely “fall to ruins.” Moreover, since wickedness cannot be removed under imperfect human rule, our putting forth effort to eradicate it would be futile. Like Asaph, we are wise if we cope with wickedness by “drawing near to God” and by taking delight in a close relationship with Him.

73:3, 6, 8, 27. We must guard against boasting, haughtiness, scoffing, and defrauding. This is the case even though adopting such traits may seem advantageous.

73:15-17. When we are confused in our thinking, we should hold back from making our perplexing thoughts public. Telling “a story like that” would only discourage others. We ought to meditate peacefully about our concerns and resolve them in association with fellow believers.—Proverbs 18:1.

73:21-24. Becoming ‘sour at heart’ because of the seeming well-being of the wicked is likened to reacting like unreasoning animals. This reaction is impulsive, based strictly on the senses. Rather, we should be led by Jehovah’s counsel, fully confident that he will ‘hold us by the right hand’ and support us. Additionally, Jehovah ‘will take us to glory,’ that is, into a close relationship with him.

No.1:	Psalm 72:1-20
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No. 2:	What Effect Will God’s Kingdom Have on Human Governments? (rs p. 227¶1-2)
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*** rs p. 227 Kingdom ***

What effect will this Kingdom have on human governments?

Dan. 2:44: “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite.”

Ps. 2:8, 9: “Ask of me, that I may give nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your own possession. You will break them with an iron scepter, as though a potter’s vessel you will dash them to pieces.”



No. 3: Lessons That Youths Can Learn From Kings Hezekiah and Josiah

***** w09 2/1 pp. 24-25 Josiah Chose to Do What Was Right ***
Teach Your Children**

DO YOU think it's hard to do what is right?— If you say yes, most people would agree with you. Even adults find it hard to do what they know is right. Let's see why it was especially hard for Josiah to make right choices. Do you know who he was?—

Josiah was the son of Amon, a king of Judah, who was only 16 years old when Josiah was born. Amon was very bad, as his father, King Manasseh, had been. In fact, Manasseh had been a very wicked ruler for many years. But then he was captured by the Assyrians and taken prisoner to faraway Babylon. While in prison, Manasseh begged Jehovah to forgive him, and Jehovah did.

When Manasseh was released, he returned to Jerusalem and again began to rule there as king. He right away corrected the bad things he had done and helped the people serve Jehovah. It must have made him sad when his son Amon did not follow his good example. About this time Josiah was born. The Bible does not say how much contact Manasseh had with his grandson Josiah. But do you think that Manasseh might have tried to help him to serve Jehovah?—

When Josiah was only six, Manasseh died, and Josiah's father, Amon, became king. Amon ruled for only two years before his own servants killed him. So Josiah became king of Judah at eight years of age. (2 Chronicles, chapter 33) What do you think happened then? Did Josiah choose to follow the bad example of his father, Amon, or the good example of his repentant grandfather, Manasseh?—

Even though Josiah was young, he knew that he wanted to serve Jehovah. So he listened to those who loved Jehovah, rather than to those who had been friends of his father. Josiah was only eight years old, but he knew it was right to listen to people who loved God. (2 Chronicles 34:1, 2) Would you like to know something about those who advised Josiah and served as role models for him?—

Josiah was influenced by the prophet Zephaniah. He was a relative of Josiah's, for he was possibly a descendant of Manasseh's father, the good King Hezekiah. During the early part of Josiah's rule as king, Zephaniah wrote the Bible book that bears his name. Zephaniah warned of the bad things that would happen to those who did not choose to do what was right, and Josiah obviously paid attention to those warnings.

Then there was Jeremiah, whom you may have heard about before. Jeremiah and Josiah were both young men and grew up not far from each other. Jehovah inspired Jeremiah to write the book of the Bible called by his name. When Josiah died in battle, Jeremiah wrote a special song called a dirge to express his deep sorrow. (2 Chronicles 35:25) We can just imagine how they must have encouraged each other to keep faithful to Jehovah!

What do you think you can learn from studying about Josiah?— If you, like him, do not have a father who serves Jehovah, is there someone else who can help you learn about God? Maybe that person is your mother, a grandparent, or another relative. Perhaps it is someone else who serves Jehovah, someone that your mother will allow you to study the Bible with.

Whatever the case, although Josiah was only a child, he was old enough to know that he should make friends with people who serve Jehovah. May you do the same and choose to do what is right!

***** w98 11/1 pp. 16-17 pars. 10-13 Keep On Working Out Your Own Salvation! *****

¹⁰ From the point of view of pure worship, it is hard to imagine a worse father than Ahaz. However, his son Hezekiah could not choose his own father! The young sons that Ahaz slaughtered in sacrifice to Baal were likely Hezekiah's own brothers. Did this terrible background doom Hezekiah to a life of unfaithfulness to Jehovah? On the contrary, Hezekiah became one of Judah's few truly great kings—a faithful, wise, and beloved man. "Jehovah proved to be with him." (2 Kings 18:3-7) In fact, there is reason to believe that Hezekiah while still a young prince was the inspired writer of the 119th Psalm. If so, it is not hard to see why he would have penned the words: "My soul has been sleepless from grief." (Psalm 119:28) Despite his grievous troubles, Hezekiah let Jehovah's Word guide him in life. Psalm 119:105 says: "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway." Yes, Hezekiah made his own choice—the right choice.

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Manasseh responded by having Isaiah sawn apart. (Compare Hebrews 11:37.) Whether that is true or not, Manasseh failed to listen to any divine warnings. In fact, he had some of his own sons burned alive as sacrifices, much as his grandfather Ahaz had done. Yet, this wicked man, in the face of severe trials late in life, repented and changed his ways. (2 Chronicles 33:1-6, 11-20) His example teaches us that a person who has made terrible choices is not necessarily beyond redemption. He can change.

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¹³ This brief examination of seven Judean kings teaches a powerful lesson. In some instances, the worst of kings had the best of sons and, conversely, the best of kings had the worst of sons. (Compare Ecclesiastes 2:18-21.) This does not diminish the importance of parental training. Parents who train their children according to Jehovah's way certainly give their offspring the best possible opportunity to become faithful servants of Jehovah. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) Still, some children, despite the best efforts of faithful parents, choose to follow a wrong course. Other children, despite the worst parental influence, choose to love and serve Jehovah. With his blessing, they make a success of their life. Do you wonder, at times, which it will be in your case? Consider, then, some of Jehovah's personal assurances that you *can* make the right choice!

*** g92 10/22 pp. 20-21 What if My Parent Has Disgraced Us? ***

Proving Yourself to Be Different

Consider, for example, the young king of ancient Judah named Josiah. Both his father and his grandfather were notorious idolaters. Yet, Josiah himself "proceeded to do what was right in Jehovah's eyes." (2 Kings 21:19, 20; 22:1, 2) King Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, was another king who set a wretched example. Ahaz closed the doors of Jehovah's temple and offered up his own sons in sacrifice to a pagan god! (2 Chronicles 28:1-3, 24, 25) Hezekiah, though, proved to be different from his father. At age 25 he began to rule and immediately began restoring true worship in Judah.—2 Kings 18:1-5.

The sons of Korah set a similar example. Prior to the nation of Israel's entry to the Promised Land, Korah, a prominent Levite, led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. The revolt, however, was quickly squashed when Korah and his followers were executed by an earthquake and by fire from heaven. Interestingly, though, Korah's sons survived. (Numbers 26:9-11) It seems that they did not side with their father in this rebellion. No doubt these sons of Korah felt disgraced by their father's wicked course. But Jehovah blessed Korah's descendants because they stuck to his Law. Among the most beautiful expressions found in the Bible are words penned by the sons of Korah.—See Psalms 45, 48, 84, 85, 87, and 88.

Like Josiah, Hezekiah, and the sons of Korah, many Christian youths today have proved to be different from wayward parents. Consider a teenager we will call Maxwell. His parents were once faithful Witnesses of Jehovah but became apostate opposers of Christianity. On one occasion his parents carried banners and demonstrated outside the grounds of a Christian convention that Maxwell was attending. "It was very embarrassing," he explains. "Some who didn't know that they were my parents said to me, 'Have you seen those stupid apostates outside?'" However, Maxwell did not follow his parents' rebellious course. And with the support of faithful family members and other Christian associates, he has been able to cope with feelings of embarrassment and shame.

Maxwell, Jacob, and David (mentioned earlier) have indeed risen above their family situation. All currently serve as ministers at a branch office of the Watch Tower Society in Africa. "I know that I may still have to face embarrassment from my parents in the future," says Maxwell, "but I also know that if I rely on Jehovah, he will give me strength to endure."



July

July 18 Bible reading: Psalms 74-78
No.1: Psalm 77:1-20
No. 2: Ways in Which We Can Oppose the Devil (Jas. 4:7)
No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Sanctify Jehovah's Name (rs p. 227¶3-5)

Bible reading: Psalms 74-78

*** w06 7/15 pp. 11-12 Highlights From Books Three and Four of Psalms ***

74:13, 14—When did Jehovah ‘break the heads of the sea monsters in the waters and crush to pieces the heads of Leviathan’? “Pharaoh, king of Egypt,” is called “the great sea monster lying stretched out in the midst of his Nile canals.” (Ezekiel 29:3) Leviathan may represent “the strong ones of Pharaoh.” (Psalm 74:14, footnote) The crushing of their heads likely refers to the crushing defeat of Pharaoh and his army when Jehovah delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

75:4, 5, 10—What is signified by the term “horn”? The horns of an animal are a powerful weapon. Hence, the term “horn” figuratively denotes power, or strength. Jehovah raises up the horns of his people, causing them to be exalted, whereas he ‘cuts down the horns of the wicked ones.’ We are warned against ‘exalting our horn on high’ in that we should not take on a proud or arrogant attitude. Since Jehovah does the exalting, assignments of responsibility in the congregation are to be viewed as coming from him.—Psalm 75:7.

76:10—How can “the very rage of man” laud Jehovah? When God allows humans to vent their rage against us because we are his servants, a positive outcome can follow. Any hardship we may experience can discipline us in some way. Jehovah permits suffering only to the extent that it provides such training. (1 Peter 5:10) ‘The remainder of raging by man, God girds upon himself.’ What if we suffer to the point of death? This too can laud Jehovah because those who see us faithfully endure may also begin to glorify God.

78:24, 25; footnote—Why is manna called “the grain of heaven” and “the very bread of angels”? Neither expression means that manna was angels’ food. It was “the grain of heaven” in that its source was heavenly. (Psalm 105:40) Since angels, or “powerful ones,” dwell in heaven, the phrase “the very bread of angels” may simply mean that it was provided by God, who dwells in heaven. (Psalm 11:4) Jehovah may also have used angels to provide the manna for the Israelites.

77:6. Showing heartfelt concern for spiritual truths and carefully searching for them requires time for study and meditation. How vital that we make room for a measure of solitude in our lives!

No.1: Psalm 77:1-20

No. 2: Ways in Which We Can Oppose the Devil (Jas. 4:7)

*** w08 11/15 pp. 29-31 “Oppose the Devil” as Jesus Did ***

The Perfect Example in Opposing the Devil

⁸ The Devil tried to break the integrity of Jesus. In the wilderness, Satan used temptations in an effort to get Jesus to compromise His obedience to Jehovah. However, Jesus set a perfect example in opposing Satan. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus likely had a strong desire to eat. “If you are a son of God,” said Satan, “tell these stones to become loaves of bread.” But Jesus refused to make use of his God-given power for personal benefit. Instead, Jesus said: “It is written, ‘Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah’s mouth.’”—Matt. 4:1-4; Deut. 8:3.

⁹ Today, the Devil seeks to exploit the natural physical desires of Jehovah’s servants. We must therefore be resolute in resisting illicit sexual temptations, which are especially common in this immoral world. God’s Word emphatically states: “What! Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men . . . will inherit God’s kingdom.” (1 Cor. 6:9, 10) Clearly, then, people who live immoral lives and refuse to change will not be allowed to live in God’s new world.

¹⁰ Concerning one of the temptations Jesus experienced in the wilderness, the Scriptures state: “The Devil took him along into the holy city, and he stationed him upon the battlement of the temple and said to him: ‘If you are a son of God,



hurl yourself down; for it is written, “He will give his angels a charge concerning you, and they will carry you on their hands, that you may at no time strike your foot against a stone.”” (Matt. 4:5, 6) Supposedly, this would result in a spectacular display of Jesus’ Messiahship. In reality, though, it would have been an improper, arrogant act that would not have had God’s approval and support. Once more, Jesus maintained his integrity to Jehovah and responded by quoting a scripture. He said: “Again it is written, ‘You must not put Jehovah your God to the test.’”—Matt. 4:7; Deut. 6:16.

¹¹ Satan may tempt us to seek glory in various ways. He may try to induce us to imitate worldly fads in dress and grooming or to engage in questionable entertainment. But if we were to ignore Bible counsel and imitate the world, could we expect the angels to shield us from the bad effects of such a course? Although King David repented of his sins involving Bath-sheba, he was not shielded from the consequences of his actions. (2 Sam. 12:9-12) Let us not put Jehovah to the test in improper ways, perhaps by cultivating friendship with the world.—*Read James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17.*

¹² Still another temptation that the Devil used in the wilderness involved an offer to give Jesus political power. Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said: “All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me.” (Matt. 4:8, 9) What an unscrupulous attempt to get the worship belonging to Jehovah and to induce Jesus to prove unfaithful to God! By meditating on the desire to be worshipped, that once loyal angel had become the sinful, covetous, and grossly evil tempter Satan the Devil. (Jas. 1:14, 15) In stark contrast, however, Jesus was determined to remain faithful to his heavenly Father and therefore declared: “Go away, Satan! For it is written, ‘It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is *to him alone* you must render sacred service.’” Thus Jesus again opposed the Devil in clear and definite terms. God’s Son wanted no part of Satan’s world and would never worship that wicked one!—Matt. 4:10; Deut. 6:13; 10:20.

“Oppose the Devil, and He Will Flee From You”

¹³ By showing Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, the Devil was offering him unprecedented human power. Satan hoped that what Jesus saw would appeal to him and convince him that he could become the earth’s most powerful political leader. Today, the Devil does not offer us kingdoms, but he does attempt to corrupt our hearts through our eyes, ears, and minds.

¹⁴ The Devil is in control of this world. Hence, he controls its media. It is not surprising, therefore, that the world’s viewing, listening, and reading material is saturated with immorality and violence. This world’s advertising elements try to build in us a desire for a flood of consumer goods that we do not need. By such means, the Devil constantly tempts us with materialistic attractions that can appeal to our eyes, ears, and minds. But when we refuse to view, listen to, and read Scripturally unacceptable material, we are in effect saying: “Go away, Satan!” We thus imitate Jesus in being firm and decisive in our rejection of Satan’s unclean world. The fact that we are no part of Satan’s world is also seen in how we courageously identify ourselves as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Christ’s followers at work, at school, in the neighborhood, and among our relatives.—*Read Mark 8:38.*

¹⁵ After the Devil’s third unsuccessful attempt to get Jesus to compromise His integrity to God, “the Devil left him.” (Matt. 4:11) However, Satan did not intend to stop tempting Jesus, for we are told: “So the Devil, having concluded all the temptation [in the wilderness], retired from him until another convenient time.” (Luke 4:13) When we succeed in opposing the Devil, we should thank Jehovah. But we should also seek God’s continued help, for the Devil will return to tempt us at another time convenient for him—and not necessarily when we may be expecting a temptation. Hence, we must remain alert at all times, ready to persevere in rendering sacred service to Jehovah regardless of the tests we must face.

¹⁶ To help us in our efforts to oppose the Devil, we should pray for and will receive the most powerful force in the universe—God’s holy spirit. It will enable us to do things that would be impossible for us to do in our own strength. Jesus assured his followers of the availability of God’s spirit by saying: “If you, although being [imperfect and thus comparatively] wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!” (Luke 11:13) Let us continue praying to Jehovah for his holy spirit. With this most powerful force backing us up in our determination to oppose the Devil, we will be able to come off victorious. In addition to regular and fervent prayer, we need to put on the complete suit of spiritual armor from God in order ‘to stand firm against the machinations, or crafty acts, of the Devil.’—Eph. 6:11-18, ftn.

¹⁷ Something else helped Jesus to oppose the Devil, and it can help us too. The Bible states: “For the joy that was set before [Jesus] he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Heb. 12:2) We can have similar joy by upholding Jehovah’s sovereignty, honoring his holy name, and keeping the reward of everlasting life before us. What joy we will experience when Satan and all his works are obliterated forever and ‘the meek ones themselves possess the earth and find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace!’ (Ps. 37:11) Therefore, keep on opposing the Devil, as Jesus did.—*Read James 4:7, 8.*



*** rs p. 227 - p. 228 Kingdom ***

What will God's Kingdom accomplish?

Sanctify Jehovah's name and uphold his sovereignty

Matt. 6:9, 10: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come.'" (Here the sanctifying of God's name is closely associated with the coming of his Kingdom.)

Ezek. 38:23: "I shall certainly magnify myself and sanctify myself and make myself known before the eyes of many nations; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah." (God's name will be cleansed of all reproach; it will be treated as holy and deserving of respect, and all who live will be persons who willingly uphold Jehovah's sovereignty, delighting to do his will. Upon such sanctification of Jehovah's name the peace and well-being of all the universe depend.)

Put an end to Satan's tolerated rulership over the world

Rev. 20:2, 3: "He [the heavenly King, Jesus Christ] seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not mislead the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After these things he must be let loose for a little while." (Thus mankind will be freed from the satanic influence that has made life very difficult for people who want to do what is right. Gone will be the diabolic influence that has caused acts of extreme inhumanity and the demonic influence that has filled the lives of many with fear.)



July

July 25	Bible reading: Psalms 79-86
No.1:	Psalm84:1–85:7
No. 2:	God’s Kingdom Will Unify All Creation in Pure Worship (rs p. 228¶1-2)
No. 3:	Why None of the Demons Are Atheist (Jas. 2:19)

July 25	Bible reading: Psalms 79-86
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*** w06 7/15 pp. 11-12 Highlights From Books Three and Four of Psalms ***

82:1, 6—Who are called “gods” and “sons of the Most High”? Both expressions refer to human judges in Israel. This is appropriate, since they were to serve as God’s spokesmen and representatives.—John 10:33-36.

83:2—What does the ‘raising of one’s head’ denote? The gesture signifies readiness to exercise power or to take action, usually to oppose, fight, or oppress.

79:9. Jehovah listens to our prayers, especially when they are concerning the sanctification of his name.

81:13, 16. Listening to Jehovah’s voice and walking in his ways lead to rich blessings.—Proverbs 10:22.

82:2, 5. Injustices cause “the foundations of the earth” to totter. Unjust acts disturb the stability of human society.

84:1-4, 10-12. The psalmists’ appreciation for the place of Jehovah’s worship and their feeling of contentment with their service privileges furnish examples for us.

86:5. How grateful we can be that Jehovah is “ready to forgive”! He is on the lookout for any evidence that would provide a basis for him to show mercy to a repentant wrongdoer.

No.1:	Psalm84:1–85:7
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No. 2:	God’s Kingdom Will Unify All Creation in Pure Worship (rs p. 228¶1-2)
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*** rs p. 228 Kingdom ***

Unify all creation in worship of the one true God

Rev. 5:13; 15:3, 4: “And every creature that is in heaven and on earth and underneath the earth and on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying: ‘To the One sitting on the throne [Jehovah God] and to the Lamb [Jesus Christ] be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever and ever.’” “Great and wonderful are your works, Jehovah God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are your ways, King of eternity. Who will not really fear you, Jehovah, and glorify your name, because you alone are loyal? For all the nations will come and worship before you, because your righteous decrees have been made manifest.”

Bring mankind back into harmonious relationship with God

Rom. 8:19-21: “The eager expectation of the creation [humankind] is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God [the evidence that those raised to heavenly life with Jesus Christ have gone into action as rulers]. For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope that the creation itself [mankind in general] also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God.”

No. 3:	Why None of the Demons Are Atheist (Jas. 2:19)
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*** g89 1/8 p. 23 Should You Fear the Evil Eye? ***

‘The Demons Shudder’—Why?

In Noah’s day, Jehovah dismissed disobedient angels from their positions of favor by restraining them ‘in a prison’ of spiritual darkness. (1 Peter 3:19; Genesis 6:1-4) Then, in the first century, Jesus, acting as God’s representative, expelled powerful demons at will. (Matthew 8:31, 32; Mark 1:39) And again, during this 20th century, Jesus used his God-given power to oust Satan and his demons from heaven. (Revelation 12:7-9) Hence, the demons learned the hard way that their power is nothing compared with God’s power. Yet, Jehovah is about to add another page to this record. Soon, Satan and these cast-out rebels will be thrown into an abyss for a thousand years.—Revelation 20:1-3.



How does this knowledge affect them? The Bible reveals: “The demons believe and *shudder*.” (James 2:19) Then, how does this knowledge affect you? Will you still fear those ‘shuddering’ demons and their human henchmen? Or will you “only fear Jehovah” by trusting fully in his invisible protection against the evil eye?—1 Samuel 12:24.

Truly, if faith moves you to untie your amulets and to strengthen your bond with Jehovah’s Witnesses in your community, you will soon join them in echoing the words of the ancient sons of Korah. They proclaimed: “God is for us a refuge and strength, a help that is readily to be found during distresses. *That is why we shall not fear.*”—Psalm 46:1, 2; compare Romans 8:31.

*** cj chap. 2 pp. 82-83 Chapter 2 ***

19 You believe there is one God, do you? You are doing quite well. And yet the demons believe and shudder.

19 You believe there is one God, do you? You are doing quite well

James selects the most obvious, basic truth of all worship, namely, that there is only one God, the Almighty. Clearly, this one God in whom James’ readers believed was the God who identifies himself in the inspired Scriptures. In having this faith a Christian would be doing well as far as he went, for it is a teaching that ought to be held by everyone. Even this faith or belief, if it went no further, would produce some effects. Yet unless it produced fine works, it would be valueless and would not lead to salvation. James proves his point when he next says:

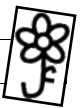
And yet the demons believe and shudder

Here James shows that mere belief in itself is not genuine faith, even though it may have some emotional effects. The demons, spirit creatures, angels disobedient to God, have actually seen God and know that he exists, and that he is one God. Their knowledge of and belief in this fact have effects on them—they shudder, knowing that they are sentenced to destruction. (Mark 1:24; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) But certainly they will not be saved, for not only do they perform no good works, but their efforts are all works *against* God. So would anyone say to the demons, Your belief in God is enough, without good works; it will save you? It is of interest to note that none of the spirit creatures, not even demons, are atheists or agnostics. Atheism and agnosticism are doctrines found only on earth, among those who say that they would have to see God with their literal eyes to believe or to have faith in him.

*** w75 4/15 pp. 237-238 pars. 19-20 The Reason for Choosing to Worship Jehovah ***

¹⁹ Jesus knew Jehovah God his Father better than the invisible spirit demons did. And yet the demons believe there is a God. Unbelieving men may smile sophisticatedly at this, but the earthly half brother of Jesus Christ named James said to those who professed to be Christ’s disciples: “You believe there is one God, do you? You are doing quite well. And yet the demons believe and shudder.” (Jas. 2:19) According to that, the superhuman demons are doing better than the vast majority of men and women who do not at all believe in Jehovah God. In this respect, whose example shall we be safe in following? That of unbelieving men and women? Or that of demons who do believe and yet do nothing more about it than shudder? Or that of Jesus Christ whose personal life on earth is testified to by the twenty-seven books of the inspired Christian Greek Scriptures?

²⁰ Jesus Christ believed; but, more than that, he did things in proof of his belief. Did he fare worse than unbelieving men and women or than the demons? Whose life of belief and works has resulted in more good for mankind, even thus far only, in human history, not to speak of the future? The true-to-fact answer to those questions will have to name Jesus Christ as the one who fared best and did the most good. He is where he is today because of a life of faith and works on earth down to a martyr’s death for loyally upholding God’s kingdom. He today occupies the topmost position in all heaven and earth with the one exception of his heavenly Father, Jehovah God himself. (Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Pet. 3:21, 22) And he would not be in that highly exalted position today if there were no God and if Jehovah were not that God, the God able to resurrect the dead to heavenly life.—Eph. 1:19-22.



August

Aug.1	Bible reading: Psalms 87-91
No.1:	Psalm 89:26-52
No. 2:	Reasons Why Jehovah's Faithful Servants Are Happy
No. 3:	God's Kingdom Will Eliminate War and Corruption (rs p. 228¶3-p.229¶2)

Bible reading: Psalms 87-91

*** w06 7/15 pp. 12-13 Highlights From Books Three and Four of Psalms ***

87:5, 6. Will those who receive life in the earthly Paradise ever know the names of those resurrected to heavenly life? These verses indicate that this is a likely possibility.

88:13, 14. A delay in receiving an answer to our prayers about a certain problem may well mean that Jehovah wants us to demonstrate the genuineness of our devotion to him.

91:1, 2—What is “the secret place of the Most High,” and how may we ‘dwell’ there? This is a figurative place of spiritual safety and security—a condition or state of protection from being harmed spiritually. The place is secret because it is unknown to those who do not trust in God. We make Jehovah our dwelling by looking to him as our refuge and stronghold, by lauding him as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and by preaching the good news of the Kingdom. We feel spiritually secure because we know that Jehovah is always ready to help us.—Psalm 90:1.

90:7, 8, 13, 14. Our wrongdoing always damages our relationship with the true God. And hidden sins cannot be concealed from him. However, if we truly repent and abandon our wrong course, Jehovah will restore us to his favor, ‘satisfying us with his loving-kindness.’

90:10, 12. Since life is short, we should “count our days.” How? By bringing “a heart of wisdom in,” or by exercising wisdom so that our remaining days are not wasted but are spent in a way that pleases Jehovah. This requires that we set spiritual priorities and use our time wisely.—Ephesians 5:15, 16; Philippians 1:10.

90:17. It is proper to pray that Jehovah “firmly establish . . . the work of our hands” and bless our efforts in the ministry.

No.1:	Psalm 89:26-52
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No. 2:	Reasons Why Jehovah's Faithful Servants Are Happy
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*** w94 10/1 pp. 12-15 God's Servants—An Organized and Happy People ***

Organized yet Happy

¹² While Jehovah is a prodigious worker and superb organizer, he is not cold, rigid, or mechanical. Instead, he is a very warm, happy Personage who is concerned with our happiness. “He cares for you,” declares 1 Peter 5:7. We can see his care and his desire for his servants to be happy in what he has made for humans. For example, when God created the perfect man and woman, he placed them in a paradise of pleasure. (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:8, 9) He gave them everything they needed to make them supremely happy. But they lost all of it through rebellion. As a result of their sin, we inherited imperfection and death.—Romans 3:23; 5:12.

¹³ Although imperfect now, we humans can still find happiness in what God has made. There are many things that bring us enjoyment—majestic mountains; beautiful lakes, rivers, oceans and beaches; colorful, fragrant flowers and other vegetation in endless variety; an abundance of tasty foods; spectacular sunsets that we never tire of; the starry heavens that we enjoy contemplating at night; the animal creation with its vast variety and appealing young with their playful antics; inspiring music; interesting and useful work; good friends. It is apparent that the One who arranged such things is a happy individual who enjoys making others happy.

¹⁴ Thus, mere organized efficiency is not what Jehovah wants. He also wants his servants to be happy, just as he is happy. He does not want them fanatically organizing things at the expense of their happiness. God's servants must balance organizational skills with happiness, as he does, for where his powerful holy spirit is, there is joy. Indeed, Galatians 5:22 shows that the second fruit of God's holy spirit operating on his people is “joy.”

Love Generates Happiness

¹⁵ It is of great interest to note that the Bible states: “God is love.” (1 John 4:8, 16) It never says: “God is organization.” Love is God's chief quality, and it must be imitated by his servants. That is why the first fruit of God's spirit listed at



Galatians 5:22 is “love,” with “joy” next. Love generates joy. When we imitate Jehovah’s love in our dealings with others, happiness follows, for loving people are happy people.

¹⁶ The importance of imitating godly love is made prominent in the teachings of Jesus. He said: “Just as the Father taught me I speak these things.” (John 8:28) What, especially, was Jesus taught that he, in turn, taught others? It was that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love neighbor. (Matthew 22:36-39) Jesus exemplified such love. He said: “I love the Father,” proving it by doing God’s will to the death. And he showed his love for people by dying for them. The apostle Paul told the Christians in Ephesus: ‘Christ loved you and delivered himself up for you.’ (John 14:31; Ephesians 5:2) Thus, Jesus told his followers: “This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you.”—John 15:12, 13.

¹⁷ Paul expressed how vital this godly love is by saying: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become a sounding piece of brass or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophesying and am acquainted with all the sacred secrets and all knowledge, and if I have all the faith so as to transplant mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my belongings to feed others, and if I hand over my body, that I may boast, but do not have love, I am not profited at all. . . . There remain faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”—1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13.

¹⁸ When we imitate Jehovah’s love, we can count on his love toward us, even when we make mistakes, for he is “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth.” (Exodus 34:6) If we sincerely repent when we make mistakes, God does not keep account of these but lovingly forgives us. (Psalm 103:1-3) Yes, “Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful.” (James 5:11) Knowing this contributes to our happiness.

Relative Happiness Now

¹⁹ However, is it possible to be happy today, living as we do in the last days of this crime-filled, violent, immoral world under Satan, where sickness and death confront us? Of course, we cannot now expect the degree of happiness that will exist in God’s new world, such as his Word foretells: “Here I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart. But *exult*, you people, and be *joyful forever* in what I am creating.”—Isaiah 65:17, 18.

²⁰ What God’s servants can have now is relative happiness because they know his will and have accurate knowledge of the marvelous blessings soon to come in his paradisaic new world. (John 17:3; Revelation 21:4) That is why the Bible can say: “O Jehovah of armies, happy is the man that is trusting in you,” “happy is everyone fearing Jehovah, who is walking in his ways,” “happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth.” (Psalm 84:12; 128:1; Matthew 5:5) Thus, in spite of the present difficult circumstances we have to contend with, we can have a substantial measure of happiness. Even when bad things happen to us, we do not become saddened as do those who do not know Jehovah and who do not have the hope of eternal life.—1 Thessalonians 4:13.

²¹ Happiness also comes to Jehovah’s servants because they expend time, energy, and resources teaching Bible truths to others, especially people who are ‘sighing and crying over all the abominations’ committed in Satan’s world. (Ezekiel 9:4) The Bible says: “Happy is anyone acting with consideration toward the lowly one; in the day of calamity Jehovah will provide escape for him. Jehovah himself will guard him and preserve him alive. He will be pronounced happy in the earth.” (Psalm 41:1, 2) As Jesus said, “there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.”—Acts 20:35.

²² So while God’s servants cannot expect supreme happiness at this present time, they can obtain happiness that is not enjoyed by those who do not serve God. Jehovah declares: “Look! My own servants will cry out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart, but you yourselves will make outcries because of the pain of heart and you will howl because of sheer breakdown of spirit.” (Isaiah 65:14) Also, those who serve God have a very special reason for happiness now—they have his holy spirit that “God has given to those obeying him as ruler.” (Acts 5:32) And remember, where God’s spirit is, there happiness is.—Galatians 5:22.

²³ In the organization of God’s servants today, an important part is played by the “older men,” the elders, who take the lead in the congregations, contributing to the happiness of Jehovah’s people. (Titus 1:5)

*** w92 5/15 pp. 16-17 True Happiness in Serving Jehovah ***

The Basis for Real Happiness

⁵ The source of true happiness is not found in material wealth. Wise King Solomon said: “The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it.” (Proverbs 10:22) For creatures who acknowledge Jehovah’s universal sovereignty, happiness is inseparably related to God’s blessing. The dedicated person who *has* and *feels*



Jehovah's blessing upon him or her is truly happy. Viewed Biblically, happiness involves a sense of contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment in Jehovah's service.

⁶ True happiness is contingent upon a right relationship with Jehovah. It is based on love of God and faithfulness to him. Jehovah's dedicated servants subscribe wholeheartedly to Paul's words: "None of us, in fact, lives with regard to himself only . . . We live to Jehovah . . . We belong to Jehovah." (Romans 14:7, 8) Therefore, true happiness cannot be achieved apart from obedience to Jehovah and joyful submission to his will. Jesus said: "Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!"—Luke 11:28.

Variable Happiness Factors

⁷ The foregoing happiness factors might be termed "basics," or "constants," because they are valid for Jehovah's dedicated servants at all times. Additionally, there are what might be called variables, factors that may result in happiness at one time but little or none of it at another. In the patriarchal and pre-Christian periods, marriage and childbearing were considered indispensable for happiness. This is reflected in Rachel's poignant appeal to Jacob: "Give me children or otherwise I shall be a dead woman." (Genesis 30:1) This attitude toward childbearing suited Jehovah's purpose for that period.—Genesis 13:14-16; 22:17.

⁸ Marriage and childbearing were considered to be God-given blessings among Jehovah's people of early times. However, distress was associated with these and other circumstances during calamitous periods in their history. (Compare Psalms 127, 128 with Jeremiah 6:12; 11:22; Lamentations 2:19; 4:4, 5.) It is, therefore, evident that marriage and childbearing are not permanent happiness-factors.

No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Eliminate War and Corruption (rs p. 228¶3-p.229¶2)

*** rs p. 228 - p. 229 Kingdom ***

Free mankind from all threat of war

Ps. 46:8, 9: "Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth."

Isa. 2:4: "They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."

Rid the earth of corrupt rulers and oppression

Ps. 110:5: "Jehovah himself at your right hand will certainly break kings to pieces on the day of his anger."

Ps. 72:12-14: "He [Jehovah's Messianic King] will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper. He will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be precious in his eyes."



August

Aug. 8 Bible reading: Psalms 92-101

No.1: Psalm 94:1-23

No. 2: God's Kingdom Will Provide Food for All and Do Away With Sickness (rs p.229¶3-5)

No. 3: Guard Against the Deceptive Power of Riches (Matt. 13:22)

Bible reading: Psalms 92-101

*** w06 7/15 p. 13 Highlights From Books Three and Four of Psalms ***

92:12—In what way do the righteous “blossom forth as a palm tree does”? The palm tree is noted for its productivity. A righteous person is like a palm tree in that he is upright in Jehovah's eyes and keeps bearing “fine fruit,” which includes good works.—Matthew 7:17-20.

92:14, 15. By being diligent students of God's Word and by regularly associating with Jehovah's people, elderly ones continue to be “fat and fresh”—spiritually vigorous—and prove to be valuable assets to the congregation.

94:19. Whatever the cause of our “disquieting thoughts” may be, reading and meditating on the “consolations” found in the Bible will comfort us.

95:7, 8. Listening to Scriptural counsel, paying attention to it, and readily obeying it will prevent us from becoming hard-hearted.—Hebrews 3:7, 8.

No.1: Psalm 94:1-23

No. 2: God's Kingdom Will Provide Food for All and Do Away With Sickness (rs p. 229¶3-5)

*** rs p. 229 Kingdom ***

Provide an abundance of food for all mankind

Ps. 72:16: “There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow.”

Isa. 25:6: “Jehovah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples, in this mountain [in heavenly Mount Zion, the seat of God's Kingdom, provision for its earthly subjects will be made], a banquet of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow, of wine kept on the dregs, filtered.”

Remove sickness and disabilities of all kinds

Luke 7:22; 9:11: “Go your way, report to John what you saw and heard: the blind are receiving sight, the lame are walking, the lepers are being cleansed and the deaf are hearing, the dead are being raised up, the poor are being told the good news.” “He [Jesus Christ] received them kindly and began to speak to them about the kingdom of God, and he healed those needing a cure.” (Thus Jesus demonstrated what he as heavenly King will do for mankind.)

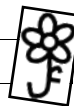
No. 3: Guard Against the Deceptive Power of Riches (Matt. 13:22)

*** w86 6/15 pp. 11-12 The Blessing of Jehovah Makes Rich ***

“Deceptive Power of Riches”

¹² In his illustration of seeds falling on different soils, Jesus said that some “fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them.” He explained: “As for the one sown among the thorns, this is the one hearing the word, but the anxiety of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.” (Matthew 13:7, 22) Almost all people experience some of “the anxiety of this system of things.” It is easy to see why that is so for a person who is impoverished, unemployed, or handicapped. The financially secure person might not have the same anxieties, yet even he or she could be quite anxious over the effect of inflation, changes in taxation, or the danger of theft. So wealthy and poor alike may have anxieties.—Matthew 6:19-21.

¹³ Jesus showed that some would be hindered also by “the deceptive power of riches.” Becoming a financial success can be all-consuming. The millionaire Aristotle Onassis once commented: “After you reach a certain point, money becomes unimportant. What matters is success. The sensible thing would be for me to stop now. But I can't. I have to keep aiming higher and higher—just for the thrill.” Similarly, a Christian could find it thrilling to struggle up the corporate



ladder. Or he could be seduced to expand his business long after reaching what earlier in life he would have viewed as “enough.” Rather than reduce his work (or retire) so as to become a full-time minister, he ‘tears down his storehouses [or homes] and builds bigger ones.’ (See Luke 12:15-21.) Could that happen to you? Do you think that God would judge anyone in that situation as serving him whole-souled?—Matthew 22:37.

¹⁴ There are yet other ways in which riches (or the passion to gain them) can hinder a Christian from ‘inheriting everlasting life.’ One is that love of riches might move him to adopt worldly tactics, such as underreporting profits or using other dishonest but common tactics. Or if he employs fellow Christians who are honest and hardworking, he might put his own personal gain ahead of their spirituality. For instance, in order to lock them to their job, he might encourage them to develop a more expensive life-style (or even to go into debt for luxuries). And since he is their boss, this relationship might tend to carry over into congregational dealings.

¹⁵ Some wealthy Christians in the first century may have been among those who fell victim to “the deceptive power of riches.” James wrote of ‘the miseries coming upon you rich men.’ They owned costly garments, had accumulated gold and silver by underpaying employees, and had grown fat in luxury. (James 5:1-5) It is similar today. Wealth often permits a person to have rich food and drink that may damage his body. It may also allow for constant travel that separates him from the local congregation. This is not to say that nice clothes, jewelry, food, and travel are in themselves harmful. However, the “rich men” that James wrote about were not helped by such; with their low spirituality and standing before God, they had reason to ‘weep, howling over the miseries that were coming.’

¹⁶ Jesus certainly knew of the pain and the obstacles to spirituality that the wealthy often experience. He knew also that valuables may rot literally or turn out to be worthless, which will never happen to Christian riches. (Proverbs 11:28; Mark 10:29, 30) Hence, Jesus was doing all of us a genuine service by warning: “How difficult a thing it will be for those having money to make their way into the kingdom of God!” (Luke 18:24) His warning can benefit us even if we have very limited resources. How? By our stifling any ambition that we have to become wealthy now. Christians believe that Jesus spoke truth. We believe and live by what Jesus said about his Father, about the end of this system, and about cultivating love. This Truth-Speaker also said: “It is easier for a camel to get through a needle’s eye than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of God.” (Matthew 19:24) Do you truly believe that? Do your actions, life-style, and attitudes prove that you do?

***** w98 5/15 pp. 4-5 Can Riches Make You Happy? *****

King Solomon knew the value of money. He wrote: “Bread is for the laughter of the workers, and wine itself makes life rejoice; but money is what meets a response in all things.” (Ecclesiastes 10:19) Dining with friends can be most enjoyable, but to obtain bread or wine, you need money. Since money is the means by which material things are obtained, it “meets a response in all things.”

THOUGH Solomon was fabulously wealthy, he knew that riches have their limitations. He recognized that a materialistic way of life does not unlock the door to happiness. He wrote: “A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver, neither any lover of wealth with income.”—Ecclesiastes 5:10.

Suppose a wealthy person obtains even greater wealth. Solomon says: “When good things become many, those eating them certainly become many.” (Ecclesiastes 5:11) As a person’s “good things,” or possessions, increase, more people are needed to care for them. Repairmen, caretakers, servants, security people, and others—all must be paid for their services. In turn, this requires ever more money.

Such a situation has a direct bearing on a person’s happiness. The Greek historian Xenophon, who lived in the fourth century B.C.E., wrote down the comments of a poor man who had become rich:

“Why, do you actually suppose . . . that the more I own, the more happily I live? You are not aware,” he went on, “that it gives me not one whit more pleasure to eat and drink and sleep now than it did when I was poor. My only gain from having so much is that I am obliged to take care of more, distribute more to others, and have the trouble of looking after more than I used to have. For now many domestics look to me for food, many for drink, and many for clothes, while some need doctors; and one comes to me with a tale about sheep attacked by wolves, or of oxen killed by falling over a precipice, or to say that some disease has broken out among the cattle. And so it looks to me . . . as if I had more trouble now through possessing much than I used to have from possessing little.”

Another reason why people pursue ever more wealth is that they are beguiled by what Jesus Christ called “the deceptive power of riches.” (Matthew 13:22) They are deceived because in these riches that they so ardently seek, they never find the satisfaction or happiness they expected to find. They reason that what limited wealth fails to do, greater wealth will do. So there is a constant striving for more.



August

Aug. 15	Bible reading: Psalms 102-105
No.1:	Psalm 105:1-24
No. 2:	Why We Should Not Look Back Longingly at What We Have Forsaken to Serve Jehovah (Luke 9:62)
No. 3:	God's Kingdom Will Provide Homes, Employment, and Security for All (rs p.229¶6-p.230¶2)

Lectura de la Biblia: 2 Reyes 1 a 4

*** w86 12/15 p. 29 "Bless Jehovah"—Why? ***

"Praise Jah, You People!"

Read Psalms 101 to 106. David here describes his manner of administering affairs of state. (Psalm 101) An afflicted one prays to Jehovah to "build up Zion." (Psalm 102) Calls to "bless Jehovah" follow in psalms calling attention to God's mercy, grandeur, and creative works. Here, too, is the first of over 20 occurrences in the Psalms of the expression, "Praise Jah, you people!" (Psalms 103, 104) Finally, two historical psalms bless Jehovah for his deeds in behalf of his people.—Psalms 105, 106.

♦ 102:25—Who "laid the foundations of the earth"?

The psalmist was talking about God, but the apostle Paul applied these words to Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 1:10, 11) As it turns out, these words also apply to Jesus, for he acted as Jehovah's Agent in creating the universe. (Colossians 1:15, 16) So Jesus, too, could be said to have "laid the foundations of the earth."

♦ 103:14—What does "formation" signify?

The word here rendered "formation" is related to the verb "to form," used at Genesis 2:7, and to the noun "potter," used with reference to one who forms clay. (Isaiah 29:16; Jeremiah 18:2-6) So the psalmist reminds us that Jehovah, the Great Potter, handles us tenderly, knowing that we are as fragile as earthen vessels.—Compare 2 Corinthians 4:7.

♦ 104:4—How does Jehovah 'make his angels spirits'?

Since angels are already spirit creatures, this could not refer to their spirit bodies. The word "spirit," though, can also mean "wind" or "active force." God can thus use his angels as powerful forces to carry out his will. They can also be used as executorial agents—as "a devouring fire." It is reassuring to Christians to know that their preaching work is backed by such powerful angelic creatures.—Compare Revelation 14:6, 7.

Lesson for Us: Psalm 106 helps us to appreciate that rebellious Korah, Dathan, and Abiram envied Moses' position as administrator of God's nation. (Psalm 106:16; Numbers 16:2-11) In the end, the rebellion was crushed when "a fire went burning" among the rebels. (Psalm 106:18) Certainly the dangers of pride and envy are here made manifest. Speaking out against appointed servants of Jehovah today can likewise bring his displeasure.—Hebrews 13:17; Jude 4, 8, 11.

No.1:	Psalm 105:1-24
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No. 2:	Why We Should Not Look Back Longingly at What We Have Forsaken to Serve Jehovah (Luke 9:62)
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*** w98 5/15 pp. 19-20 The Quality of Your Faith—Tested Now ***

Benefit From Tested Faith

¹³ If we have truly fled from Babylon the Great and have also come out of the world, let us not look at the things behind. In line with the principle found at Luke 9:62, for any of us to look back could mean losing out on being a subject of God's Kingdom. Jesus said: "No man that has put his hand to a plow and looks at the things behind is well fitted for the kingdom of God."

¹⁴ But some who became Christians in the past have since then allowed themselves to be fashioned after this system of things. They have not resisted the spirit of the world. (2 Peter 2:20-22) Worldly distractions have absorbed their interest and time, thus impeding their progress. Instead of keeping their minds and hearts fixed firmly on God's Kingdom and his righteousness, putting such first in life, they have turned aside to pursue materialistic goals. Unless they are moved to acknowledge their weak faith and lukewarm state and to change their course by seeking divine counsel, they are in danger of losing their precious relationship with Jehovah and his organization.—Revelation 3:15-19.



¹⁵ Our being found approved and in line for surviving the fast-approaching great tribulation depends on our keeping clean, having our robes ‘washed in the blood of the Lamb.’ (Revelation 7:9-14; 1 Corinthians 6:11) If we do not maintain a clean, righteous standing before God, our sacred service will not be acceptable. Surely, each one of us should realize that the tested quality of faith will help us to endure and to avoid incurring God’s displeasure.

¹⁶ At times, the news media and secular authorities pin false labels on God’s people, misrepresenting our Christian beliefs and way of life. This should not surprise us, for Jesus clearly shows that the ‘world would hate us because we are no part of it.’ (John 17:14) Will we allow those who are blinded by Satan to intimidate and dishearten us and make us feel ashamed of the good news? Will we permit lies about the truth to affect our regular meeting attendance and our preaching activity? Or will we stand fast and be courageous and more determined than ever to continue declaring the truth about Jehovah and his Kingdom?

***** bw chap. 2 pp. 15-16 pars. 1-4 Encouraging Aid to Stick to Our Decision *****

“NO MAN that has put his hand to a plow and looks at the things behind is well fitted for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62) To plow effectively, to make the furrows line up, a plowman has to keep his eyes on a fixed point at the other end of the field. How much more important it is to keep our eyes on our life’s goal! Then the precious days and years of our life-span will display a pattern that is consistent with the goal for which we are aiming.

² The words of God’s Son quoted above show that, once we make a commitment to serve our Creator, we should be determined to stick to that decision, come what may. The world may offer what seems to be a more alluring course—the pursuit of pleasures, popularity or material possessions. But to look back longingly to any of these things—worse, to let them become the focal point of our lives—could mean the loss of the prize we seek. It could result in a wasted life.

³ “Better is the end afterward of a matter than its beginning,” says Ecclesiastes 7:8. So, while making a start in our chosen course is essential, it is the finish that really counts. That is why, in God’s Word, so much stress is placed on proving faithful to the end. (Matthew 24:13) Our faith has as a basic objective, purpose or goal, the securing of salvation or everlasting life.—1 Peter 1:9.

⁴ What can help us to persevere as loyal disciples of God’s Son? For one thing, we need to see clearly, feel deeply, the precious worth of the salvation we seek. The inspired words of the apostle Peter, a close associate of Jesus Christ, can greatly aid us in this regard. His admonition can help us to see that our final salvation is something for which we should gladly endure all the pressure of opposition, no matter how severe. It is something for which we should be willing to work, to sacrifice, yes, to die if need be. (Luke 14:26-33)

No. 3: God’s Kingdom Will Provide Homes, Employment, and Security for All (rs p.229¶6-p.230¶2)

***** rs p. 229 - p. 230 Kingdom *****

Provide suitable homes for everyone

Isa. 65:21, 22: “They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating.”

Assure satisfying employment for all

Isa. 65:23: “They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance; because they are the offspring made up of the blessed ones of Jehovah, and their descendants with them.”

Guarantee security, freedom from danger to one’s person or property

Mic. 4:4: “They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble; for the very mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken it.”

Ps. 37:10, 11: “Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”



August

Aug. 22 Bible reading: Psalms 106-109
No.1: Psalm 109:1-20
No. 2: God's Kingdom Will Cause Righteousness and Justice to Prevail (rs p.230¶3-5)
No. 3: * Follow the Examples of Jehovah and Jesus in Displaying Good Manners

Bible reading: Psalms 106-109

*** w06 9/1 pp. 13-14 Highlights From Book Five of Psalms ***

109:23—What did David mean when he said: “Like a shadow when it declines, I am obliged to go away”? David was poetically saying that he felt that his death was very near.—Psalm 102:11.

107:27-31. The wisdom of the world will ‘prove confused’ when Armageddon strikes. (Revelation 16:14, 16) It cannot save anyone from destruction. Only those who look to Jehovah for salvation will live to “give thanks to [him] for his loving-kindness.”

109:30, 31; 110:5. The sword-wielding right hand of a soldier normally lacks the protection of the shield, which was held on the left. Metaphorically, Jehovah is “at the right hand” of his servants, to fight for them. Thus he gives them protection and help—a fine reason for us to “laud [him] very much”!

No.1: Psalm 109:1-20

No. 2: God's Kingdom Will Cause Righteousness and Justice to Prevail (rs p.230¶3-5)

*** rs p. 230 Kingdom ***

Cause righteousness and justice to prevail

2 Pet. 3:13: “There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.”

Isa. 11:3-5: “He [the Messianic King] will not judge by any mere appearance to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears. And with righteousness he must judge the lowly ones, and with uprightness he must give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth. . . . And righteousness must prove to be the belt of his hips, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”

Safeguard mankind from any injury due to natural forces

Mark 4:37-41: “Now a great violent windstorm broke out, and the waves kept dashing into the boat, so that the boat was close to being swamped. . . . With that he [Jesus] roused himself and rebuked the wind and said to the sea: ‘Hush! Be quiet!’ And the wind abated, and a great calm set in. . . . But they felt an unusual fear, and they would say to one another: ‘Who really is this, because even the wind and the sea obey him?’” (Thus Christ demonstrated the power that he as heavenly King will exercise over such natural elements.)

No. 3: * Follow the Examples of Jehovah and Jesus in Displaying Good Manners

*** w09 11/15 pp. 24-27 Displaying Good Manners as Ministers of God ***

Displaying Good Manners as Ministers of God

“Become imitators of God.”—EPH. 5:1.

CONCERNING respectful conduct, author Sue Fox writes: “There’s no such thing as a vacation from good manners. Politeness works everywhere, all the time.” When people make a habit of being courteous, problems with others are minimized and often disappear. But the opposite is also true. Treating others in an ill-mannered fashion leads to conflict, resentment, and sadness.

² Good manners generally flourish in the true Christian congregation. Still, we must guard against adopting the bad manners that are common in the world today. Let us see how applying Bible principles in the matter of courtesy can protect us in this regard and draw people to true worship. To understand what displaying good manners entails, consider the examples of Jehovah God and his Son.



Jehovah and His Son—Examples of Good Manners

³ Jehovah God sets the perfect example of courtesy. Despite his high position as Sovereign of the universe, he treats humans with great kindness and respect. In addressing both Abraham and Moses, Jehovah used a Hebrew term often translated “please.” (Gen. 13:14; Ex. 4:6) When his servants commit errors, Jehovah is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and trueness.” (Ps. 86:15) He is far different from some humans who explode with fury when others do not meet their expectations.

⁴ God’s good manners are also evident in the way he listens to humans. When Abraham raised questions regarding the people of Sodom, Jehovah patiently answered each one. (Gen. 18:23-32) He did not view Abraham’s concern as a drain on His time. Jehovah listens to the prayers of his servants and to the cries of repentant sinners. (*Read Psalm 51:11, 17.*) Should we not imitate Jehovah by listening when others speak to us?

⁵ Among the many things that Jesus Christ learned from his Father was courtesy. Although his ministry at times placed great demands on his time and energy, Jesus was always patient and kind. Lepers, blind people reduced to begging, and others in need found Jesus ready and willing to help them. He did not ignore them, although they came to him without an appointment. He often stopped what he was doing in order to help a distraught individual. Jesus was extraordinarily considerate toward those who put their faith in him. (Mark 5:30-34; Luke 18:35-41) As Christians, we follow Jesus’ example by being kind and helpful. Such conduct does not go unnoticed by our relatives, neighbors, and others. Moreover, such conduct glorifies Jehovah and brings us happiness.

⁶ Jesus also showed people respect by using their names. Did the Jewish religious leaders dignify others in that way? No. They viewed those who did not know the Law as “accursed people” and treated them as such. (John 7:49) It was not so with the Son of God. Martha, Mary, Zacchaeus, and many others heard him call them by their name. (Luke 10:41, 42; 19:5) While cultural norms and circumstances may dictate how we address people today, Jehovah’s servants cultivate warmth toward others. They do not allow class distinctions to curtail the respect their fellow believers and others deserve.—*Read James 2:1-4.*

⁷ The gracious way that God and his Son treat people of all nations and ethnic groups dignifies such individuals and attracts those rightly disposed to the truth. Of course, what constitutes good manners varies from place to place. Hence, we do not follow rigid protocol in regard to manners. Rather, we allow Bible principles to give us flexibility in dignifying fellow humans everywhere. Let us examine how treating people with courtesy can lead to our being more productive in the Christian ministry.

Greeting People and Talking to Them

⁸ In the fast-paced life that is common in many places today, two people often pass each other without saying “hello” or “how are you?” Of course, no one is expected to speak to everyone passing by on a crowded sidewalk. In many other situations, however, it is appropriate and desirable to greet others. Is it your custom to greet people? Or do you often walk by without a smile or a pleasant word? With no bad intention, a person could develop a habit that is in reality ill-mannered.

⁹ Jesus gave us a reminder when he said: “If you greet your brothers only, what extraordinary thing are you doing? Are not also the people of the nations doing the same thing?” (Matt. 5:47) In this regard, consultant Donald Weiss wrote: “People resent it when others look through or past them. There’s really no excuse you can make that will appease those who have been ignored. The remedy is simple: Greet people. Talk to them.” If we do not let aloofness or coldness on our part chill our contact with others, we will have good results.

¹⁰ Consider the case of a Christian couple named Tom and Carol, who live in a large North American city. They have made pleasant conversation with their neighbors a part of their ministry. How do they do it? Referring to James 3:18, Tom says: “We try to be friendly and peaceable with people. We approach those we see outside their homes and those who work in the area. We smile and greet them. We talk about what interests them—their children, their dogs, their homes, their jobs. In time, they view us as their friends.” Carol adds: “On a later visit, we give them our names and ask for theirs. We let them know what we are doing in the neighborhood but keep the conversations brief. Eventually, we can give them a witness.” Tom and Carol have won the confidence of many of their neighbors. A good number have accepted Bible-based publications, and a few have shown greater interest in learning the truth.



August

Aug. 29 Bible reading: Psalms 110-118
Theocratic Ministry School Review

Bible reading: Psalms 110-118

*** w06 9/1 pp. 13-14 Highlights From Book Five of Psalms ***

110:1, 2—What did “[David’s] Lord,” Jesus Christ, do while sitting at God’s right hand? Following his resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven and waited at God’s right hand until 1914 to begin ruling as King. During that time, Jesus ruled over his anointed followers, guiding them in their preaching and disciple-making work as well as preparing them to rule with him in his Kingdom.—Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 22:28-30.

110:4—To what has Jehovah ‘sworn without feeling regret’? This oath is the covenant that Jehovah made with Jesus Christ to serve as King and High Priest.—Luke 22:29.

113:3—In what way is Jehovah’s name to be praised “from the rising of the sun until its setting”? This involves more than a group of individuals worshipping God every day. From the sun’s rising in the east to its setting in the west, the rays of the sun illuminate the entire globe. Likewise, Jehovah is to be praised earth wide. This cannot be accomplished without an organized effort. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we have the cherished privilege to praise God and share zealously in the Kingdom proclamation work.

116:15—How ‘precious in Jehovah’s eyes is the death of his loyal ones’? Jehovah’s worshippers are so precious to him that he considers their death as a body, or a group, too costly to permit. If Jehovah were to allow that to happen, it would be as if his enemies were more powerful than he is. Moreover, no one would be left on the earth as a foundation for the new world.

107:27-31. The wisdom of the world will ‘prove confused’ when Armageddon strikes. (Revelation 16:14, 16) It cannot save anyone from destruction. Only those who look to Jehovah for salvation will live to “give thanks to [him] for his loving-kindness.”

113:4-9. Jehovah is so high that he has to condescend even “to look on heaven.” Yet, he is compassionate to the lowly one, the poor one, and the barren woman. The Sovereign Lord Jehovah is humble and wants his worshippers to be that way too.—James 4:6.

114:3-7. Learning about the wonderful works that Jehovah performed in behalf of his people at the Red Sea, at the Jordan River, and at Mount Sinai ought to affect us deeply. Mankind, represented by “earth,” should be in awe—figuratively “in severe pains”—because of the Lord.

September

Sept. 5 Bible reading: Psalm 119

No.1: Psalm 119:49-72

No. 2: Why the Scriptures Encourage the Fear of Jehovah (Deut. 5:29)

No. 3: God’s Kingdom Will Resurrect the Dead (rs p. 230¶6–p.231¶3)

Bible reading: Psalm 119

*** w06 9/1 p. 14 Highlights From Book Five of Psalms ***

119:71—What could be good about suffering affliction? Hardship can teach us to rely more fully on Jehovah, to pray to him more earnestly, and to be more diligent in studying the Bible and applying what it says. Moreover, our response to affliction can reveal personality flaws that can be corrected. Suffering will not make us bitter if we allow it to refine us.

119:96—What is meant by ‘an end to all perfection’? The psalmist is speaking about perfection from a human viewpoint. He likely had in mind that man’s concept of perfection is limited. In contrast, God’s commandment has no such limit. Its guidance applies to all aspects of life. “To all perfection I see a limit,” reads the *New International Version*, “but your commands are boundless.”



119:164—What is significant about praising God “seven times in the day”? The number seven often denotes completeness. Therefore, the psalmist is stating that Jehovah is deserving of all praise.

119:97-101. Gaining wisdom, insight, and understanding from God’s Word protects us from spiritual harm.

119:105. God’s Word is a lamp to our foot in that it can help us to deal with current problems. It also figuratively lights up our roadway, since it foretells God’s purpose for the future.

No.1: Psalm 119:49-72

No. 2: Why the Scriptures Encourage the Fear of Jehovah (Deut. 5:29)

***** w01 12/1 pp. 14-18 Develop Your Heart to Fear Jehovah *****

“If only they would develop this heart of theirs to fear me and to keep all my commandments always.”—
DEUTERONOMY 5:29.

FEAR has haunted mankind for centuries. Fear of hunger, disease, crime, or war keeps millions of people in constant anxiety. For this reason the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights expresses the desire to bring about a world where all humans will enjoy freedom from fear. Happily, God himself assures us that such a world will come—although not by human efforts. Through his prophet Micah, Jehovah promises us that in his new world of righteousness, ‘no one will make his people tremble.’—Micah 4:4.

² On the other hand, fear can also be a positive force. In the Scriptures, God’s servants are repeatedly urged to fear Jehovah. Moses told the Israelites: “Jehovah your God you should fear, and him you should serve.” (Deuteronomy 6:13) Centuries later Solomon wrote: “Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13) Through our witnessing work, carried out under angelic supervision, we likewise urge all people to “fear God and give him glory.” (Revelation 14:6, 7) In addition to fearing Jehovah, Christians must love him with their whole heart. (Matthew 22:37, 38) How can we love God and at the same time fear him? Why is it necessary to fear a loving God? What benefits do we derive from cultivating godly fear? To answer these questions, we must first understand what the fear of God means and how this type of fear forms a fundamental part of our relationship with Jehovah.

Awe, Reverence, and Fear

³ Fear of God is a feeling Christians should have toward their Maker. One definition of this fear is “an awe and a profound reverence for the Creator and a wholesome dread of displeasing him.” Thus, fear of God influences two important aspects of our lives: our attitude toward God and our attitude toward conduct that he hates. Obviously, both aspects are crucial and deserve careful consideration. As Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* points out, for Christians this reverential fear is ‘a controlling motive of life, in matters both spiritual and moral.’

⁴ How can we develop feelings of awe and reverence for our Creator? We stand in awe when we see a beautiful landscape, an impressive waterfall, or a spectacular sunset. This feeling is heightened when we discern, with eyes of faith, the hand of God behind such creative works. Furthermore, like King David, we perceive our own insignificance in comparison with Jehovah’s awesome creation. “When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared, what is mortal man that you keep him in mind?” (Psalm 8:3, 4) This profound awe leads to reverence, which moves us to thank and praise Jehovah for all that he does for us. David also wrote: “I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, as my soul is very well aware.”—Psalm 139:14.

⁵ Feelings of awe and reverence engender a wholesome and respectful fear of God’s power as Creator and of his authority as the rightful Ruler of the universe. In a vision that the apostle John saw, “those who come off victorious from the wild beast and from its image”—the anointed followers of Christ in their heavenly position—proclaim: “Great and wonderful are your works, Jehovah God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are your ways, King of eternity. Who will not really fear you, Jehovah, and glorify your name?” (Revelation 15:2-4) Fear of God, derived from a profound reverence for his majesty, leads these conquerors with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom to honor God as the ultimate authority. When we consider all that Jehovah has accomplished and the righteous way in which he governs the universe, do we not have ample reason to fear him?—Psalm 2:11; Jeremiah 10:7.

⁶ In addition to awe and reverence, however, fear of God must include a wholesome dread of displeasing him or being disobedient to him. Why? Because while Jehovah is “slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness,” we must remember that “by no means will he give exemption from punishment.” (Exodus 34:6, 7) Though loving and merciful, Jehovah does not tolerate unrighteousness and willful wrongdoing. (Psalm 5:4, 5; Habakkuk 1:13) Those who deliberately and unrepentantly practice what is wicked in Jehovah’s eyes and who set themselves in opposition to him cannot do so with



impunity. As the apostle Paul said, “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” Having a wholesome dread of falling into such a situation is ultimately a protection for us.—Hebrews 10:31.

“To Him You Should Cling”

⁷ Reverential fear of God and acute awareness of his awesome power are precursors of trust and confidence in Jehovah. Just as a young child feels protected when his father is near, so we feel secure and confident under Jehovah’s guiding hand. Note how the Israelites reacted after Jehovah led them out of Egypt: “Israel also got to see the great hand that Jehovah put in action against the Egyptians; and the people began to fear Jehovah and to put faith in Jehovah.” (Exodus 14:31) Elisha’s experience also testifies to the fact that “the angel of Jehovah is camping all around those fearing him, and he rescues them.” (Psalm 34:7; 2 Kings 6:15-17) The modern-day history of Jehovah’s people and likely our own personal experience confirm that God does exercise his power in behalf of those who serve him. (2 Chronicles 16:9) Thus we come to appreciate that “in the fear of Jehovah there is strong confidence.”—Proverbs 14:26.

⁸ Wholesome fear of God not only fosters trust and confidence in him but also motivates us to walk in his ways. When Solomon inaugurated the temple, he prayed to Jehovah: “May [Israel] fear you by walking in your ways all the days that they are alive upon the surface of the ground that you gave to our forefathers.” (2 Chronicles 6:31) Earlier, Moses urged the Israelites: “After Jehovah your God you should walk, and him you should fear, and his commandments you should keep, and to his voice you should listen, and him you should serve, and to him you should cling.” (Deuteronomy 13:4) As these verses clearly show, the desire to walk in Jehovah’s ways and to “cling” to him comes from trust and confidence in God. Yes, godly fear leads us to obey Jehovah, to serve him, and to cling to him, just as a young child may literally cling to his father in whom he has implicit trust and confidence.—Psalm 63:8; Isaiah 41:13.

To Love God Is to Fear Him

⁹ From a Scriptural standpoint, fearing God does not in any way rule out loving him. On the contrary, the Israelites were instructed to “fear Jehovah . . . so as to walk in all his ways and to love him.” (Deuteronomy 10:12) Thus, fear of God and love of God are closely connected. Fear of God moves us to walk in his ways, and this in turn gives proof of our love for him. (1 John 5:3) This is logical because when we love someone, we rightly fear to hurt him. The Israelites hurt Jehovah by their rebellious course in the wilderness. Surely we would not want to do anything to bring such sorrow to our heavenly Father. (Psalm 78:40, 41) On the other hand, since “Jehovah is finding pleasure in those fearing him,” our obedience and faithfulness make his heart rejoice. (Psalm 147:11; Proverbs 27:11) Love of God moves us to please him, and fear of God holds us back from hurting him. They are complementary, not contradictory, qualities.

¹⁰ The life course of Jesus Christ clearly illustrates how we can love and fear God at the same time. Of Jesus the prophet Isaiah wrote: “Upon him the spirit of Jehovah must settle down, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of mightiness, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah; and there will be enjoyment by him in the fear of Jehovah.” (Isaiah 11:2, 3) According to this prophecy, God’s spirit moved Jesus to fear his heavenly Father. Furthermore, we note that this fear, far from being restrictive, was a source of satisfaction. Jesus found delight in doing God’s will and in pleasing him, even in the most difficult circumstances. When faced with impending execution on the torture stake, he told Jehovah: “Not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39) Because of this godly fear, Jehovah listened favorably to his Son’s supplications, strengthened him, and saved him out of death.—Hebrews 5:7.

Learning to Fear Jehovah

¹¹ Unlike the instinctive awe we feel when confronted by the power and majesty of nature, fear of God does not come automatically. That is why the Greater David, Jesus Christ, prophetically extends to us the invitation: “Come, you sons, listen to me; the fear of Jehovah is what I shall teach you.” (Psalm 34:11) How can we learn from Jesus to fear Jehovah?

¹² Jesus teaches us to fear Jehovah by helping us to understand the wonderful personality of our heavenly Father. (John 1:18) Jesus’ own example reveals how God thinks and how he deals with others, for Jesus reflects his Father’s personality perfectly. (John 14:9, 10) Furthermore, through Jesus’ sacrifice, we gain access to Jehovah when we pray for forgiveness of our sins. This outstanding expression of God’s mercy is in itself a powerful reason to fear him. The psalmist wrote: “There is the true forgiveness with you, in order that you may be feared.”—Psalm 130:4.

¹³ The book of Proverbs outlines a series of steps that enable us to develop godly fear. “My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, so as to pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment; if, moreover, you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, . . . in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God.” (Proverbs 2:1-5) To fear God, therefore, we must study his Word, earnestly endeavor to understand its instruction, and then pay careful attention to its counsel.



¹⁴ Every king of ancient Israel was instructed to make a copy of the Law and 'read in it all the days of his life, in order that he might learn to fear Jehovah his God so as to keep all the words of the law.' (Deuteronomy 17:18, 19) Bible reading and study are just as vital for us if we would learn to fear Jehovah. As we apply Bible principles in our life, we gradually acquire divine wisdom and knowledge. We come to "understand the fear of Jehovah" because we see the good results it produces in our life, and we treasure our relationship with God. Furthermore, by congregating regularly with fellow believers, both young and old can listen to divine teaching, learn to fear God, and walk in his ways.—Deuteronomy 31:12.

Happy Is Everyone Fearing Jehovah

¹⁵ From the foregoing, we can see that fear of God is a wholesome attitude that all of us should cultivate, since it is a fundamental part of our worship of Jehovah. It leads us to trust in him implicitly, to walk in his ways, and to cling to him. As was true of Jesus Christ, fear of God can also move us to fulfill our dedication vow now and for all eternity.

¹⁶ Godly fear is never morbid or unduly restrictive. "Happy is everyone fearing Jehovah, who is walking in his ways," the Bible assures us. (Psalm 128:1) Jehovah encourages us to fear him because he knows that this quality will protect us. We note his loving concern in his words to Moses: "If only they [the Israelites] would develop this heart of theirs to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, in order that it might go well with them and their sons to time indefinite!"—Deuteronomy 5:29.

¹⁷ Similarly, if we develop our heart to fear God, it will go well with us. In what ways? First of all, such an attitude will please God and will draw us close to him. David knew from personal experience that "the desire of those fearing him he will perform, and their cry for help he will hear, and he will save them." (Psalm 145:19) Second, godly fear will benefit us because it will affect our attitude toward what is bad. (Proverbs 3:7) The following article will examine how this fear safeguards us from spiritual danger, and it will review some Scriptural examples of men who feared God and turned aside from bad.

No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Resurrect the Dead (rs p. 230¶6–p.231¶3)

*** rs p. 230 - p. 231 Kingdom ***

Resurrect the dead

John 5:28, 29: "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice [the voice of Christ the King] and come out."

Rev. 20:12: "I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds [those done following their resurrection; compare Romans 6:7]."

Remove all death due to inheritance of Adamic sin

Isa. 25:8: "He will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces."

Rev. 21:4: "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."



September

Sept. 12 Bible reading: Psalms 120-134

No.1: Psalm 124:1–126:6

No. 2: God’s Kingdom Will Provide a World of Love and Harmony (rs p. 231¶4-6)

No. 3: How Can We Keep a ‘Simple Eye’ (Matt. 6:22, 23)

Bible reading: Psalms 120-134

*** w06 9/1 pp. 15-16 Highlights From Book Five of Psalms ***

122:3—How was Jerusalem a city “joined together in oneness”? As was usually the case in cities of ancient times, houses in Jerusalem were built close together. The city was compact and therefore easy to defend. Moreover, the physical proximity of homes made it possible for city dwellers to rely upon one another for assistance and protection. This suggests the spiritual unity of the 12 tribes of Israel when they came together for worship.

123:2—What is the point of the illustration about the eyes of servants? Servants and maidservants look toward the hand of a master or a mistress for two reasons: to determine his or her wishes and to receive protection and life’s necessities. Similarly, we look to Jehovah in order to discern his will and to gain his favor.

131:1-3—How did David ‘soothe and quiet his soul like a weanling upon his mother’? As a weaned child learns to find solace and satisfaction in his mother’s arms, David learned to soothe and calm his soul “like a weanling upon his mother.” How? By not being haughty at heart and lofty in eyes and by not going after things that were too great for him. Rather than seeking prominence, David usually recognized his limitations and manifested humility. We are wise to imitate his attitude, particularly when reaching out for privileges in the congregation.

120:1, 2, 6, 7. Slanderous and cutting speech can cause unbearable distress to others. Keeping our tongue in check is one way to show that we “stand for peace.”

120:3, 4. If we have to put up with someone having a “tricky tongue,” we can take comfort in knowing that Jehovah will set matters straight in his due time. Slanderers will suffer calamity at the hands of “a mighty man.” They will surely be recipients of Jehovah’s fiery judgment symbolized by “burning coals of the broom trees.”

127:1, 2. In all our endeavors, we should look to Jehovah for guidance.

133:1-3. The unity of Jehovah’s people is soothing, wholesome, and refreshing. We should not disrupt it by engaging in faultfinding, quarreling, or complaining.

No.1: Psalm 124:1–126:6

No. 2: God’s Kingdom Will Provide a World of Love and Harmony (rs p. 231¶4-6)

*** rs p. 231 - p. 232 Kingdom ***

Provide a world in which people genuinely love one another

John 13:35: “By this all will know that you are my disciples [hence, in line to be Jesus’ associates in the heavenly Kingdom or earthly subjects of that Kingdom], if you have love among yourselves.”

Bring animals and humans into harmonious relationship with one another

Isa. 11:6-9: “The wolf will actually reside for a while with the male lamb, and with the kid the leopard itself will lie down, and the calf and the maned young lion and the well-fed animal all together; and a mere little boy will be leader over them. And the cow and the bear themselves will feed; together their young ones will lie down. And even the lion will eat straw just like the bull. And the sucking child will certainly play upon the hole of the cobra; and upon the light aperture of a poisonous snake will a weaned child actually put his own hand. They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain.” (Also Isaiah 65:25)

Hos. 2:18: “For them I shall certainly conclude a covenant in that day in connection with the wild beast of the field and with the flying creature of the heavens and the creeping thing of the ground, . . . and I will make them lie down in security.”



No. 3: How Can We Keep a 'Simple Eye' (Matt. 6:22, 23)

*** Iv chap. 5 pp. 58-59 How to Keep Separate From the World ***

KEEPING OUR EYE "SIMPLE"

¹⁶ The spirit of the world is deceptive and impels millions to look to money and material things for happiness. However, Jesus said: "Even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15) While not endorsing asceticism, or extreme self-denial, Jesus taught that life and genuine happiness come to those who are "conscious of their spiritual need" and those who maintain a "simple" eye, one that is sincere and in sharp focus spiritually. (Matthew 5:3; 6:22, 23) Ask yourself: 'Do I truly believe what Jesus taught, or am I being influenced by "the father of the lie"?' (John 8:44) What do my words, my goals, my priorities, and my way of life reveal?—Luke 6:45; 21:34-36; 2 John 6.

¹⁷ "Wisdom is proved righteous by its works," said Jesus. (Matthew 11:19) Consider just some of the benefits enjoyed by those who maintain a simple eye. They find true refreshment in Kingdom service. (Matthew 11:29, 30) They avoid undue anxieties and thus spare themselves much mental and emotional pain. (1 Timothy 6:9, 10) Content with having life's necessities, they have more time for their family and Christian companions. They may sleep better as a result. (Ecclesiastes 5:12) They experience the greater joy of giving, doing so in whatever way they can. (Acts 20:35) And they "abound in hope" and have inner peace and contentment. (Romans 15:13; Matthew 6:31, 32) These blessings are truly priceless!

*** Iv chap. 15 p. 181 par. 20 See Good for Your Hard Work ***

²⁰ *Keep your eye simple.* (Matthew 6:22, 23) Having a simple eye means keeping our life uncomplicated. A Christian's simple eye focuses on a single purpose—the doing of God's will. If our eye is properly focused, we will not be obsessed with chasing after a high-paying job and a more elaborate lifestyle. Neither will we get caught up in the never-ending quest for the latest and best material things that advertisers would have us believe we need in order to be happy. How can you maintain a simple eye? Avoid burdening yourself with unnecessary debt. Do not clutter your life with possessions that consume inordinate amounts of time and attention. Heed the Bible's counsel to be content with "sustenance and covering." (1 Timothy 6:8) Seek to simplify your life as much as possible.

*** w06 10/1 p. 29 Hope in Jehovah, and Be Courageous ***

"I Will By No Means Leave You"

¹³ People who rest their hope on the present system of things must think about tomorrow with a deep sense of foreboding as the world suffers ever increasing "pangs of distress." (Matthew 24:8) But those who hope in Jehovah have no such fears. They will continue to "reside in security and be undisturbed from dread of calamity." (Proverbs 1:33) Because their hope is not in the present system, they joyfully heed Paul's counsel: "Let your manner of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things. For he has said: 'I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.'"—Hebrews 13:5.

¹⁴ "By no means," "nor by any means"—these emphatic expressions leave no doubt that God will care for us. Jesus also assured us of God's loving concern, saying: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things [the material necessities of life] will be added to you. So, never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties." (Matthew 6:33, 34) Jehovah knows that it is a challenge for us to be zealous for his Kingdom and at the same time to bear the full weight of the responsibility to provide for our physical needs. So let us put full confidence in his ability and desire to care for our needs.—Matthew 6:25-32; 11:28-30.

¹⁵ We show our reliance on Jehovah when we keep a 'simple eye.' (Matthew 6:22, 23) A simple eye is sincere, pure in motive, and free from greed and selfish ambition. Having a simple eye does not mean living in abject poverty or being negligent in caring for our Christian responsibilities. Rather, it means showing "soundness of mind" as we keep Jehovah's service in first place.—2 Timothy 1:7.

¹⁶ Maintaining a simple eye calls for faith and courage. For example, if an employer insists that you regularly work at a time scheduled for Christian meetings, will you courageously stick to your spiritual priorities? If a person has doubts that Jehovah will fulfill His promise to care for His servants, then Satan simply needs to keep up the pressure and such a person might stop attending meetings altogether. Yes, a lack of faith on our part can give Satan a hold on us so that he, not Jehovah, sets our priorities. What a tragedy that would be!—2 Corinthians 13:5.



September

Sept. 19 Bible reading: Psalms 135-141

No. 1: Psalm 137:1–138:8

No. 2: Why We Find Comfort in Paul’s Words at Romans 14:7-9

No. 3: God’s Kingdom Will Make the Earth a Paradise (rs p.232 ¶1-3)

Bible reading: Psalms 135-141

*** w06 9/1 p. 16 Highlights From Book Five of Psalms ***

137:1, 5, 6. Exiled worshippers of Jehovah felt attached to Zion, which had represented God’s organization. What about us? Have we formed a loyal attachment to the organization that Jehovah is using today?

138:2. Jehovah ‘magnifies his saying even above all his name’ in that the fulfillment of all that he has promised in his name will far exceed whatever expectations we may have. Truly, grand prospects lie ahead of us.

139:1-6, 15, 16. Jehovah knows our activities, our thoughts, and our words even before we speak them. He knows us from when the embryo was formed, before each body part became distinct. God’s knowledge of us as individuals is “too wonderful” to fathom. How comforting it is to know that Jehovah not only sees a trialsome situation we may be facing but also understands its effect on us!

139:7-12. No place that we might go to is too remote for God to strengthen us.

139:17, 18. Has knowledge of Jehovah become pleasurable to us? (Proverbs 2:10) If so, we have found an inexhaustible fountain of delight. Jehovah’s thoughts “are more than even the grains of sand.” There will always be more to learn about him.

139:23, 24. We should want Jehovah to examine our inner person for ‘painful ways’—improper thoughts, desires, and inclinations—and to help us root them out.

No. 1: Psalm 137:1–138:8

No. 2: Why We Find Comfort in Paul’s Words at Romans 14:7-9

*** w78 3/15 pp. 12-13 Living as Belonging to Jehovah ***

“Both if we live and if we die, we belong to Jehovah.”—Rom. 14:8

TRUE Christians are interested in living at peace with others. (Rom. 12:18) Members of the Christian congregation do this by giving attention to the more important things and minimizing the things that are not essential for promoting faith. (1 Tim. 1:4) Among the important things, they seek to have unity of faith and action. As an illustration of this unity, the apostle Paul points to the human body. Just as the members of a healthy body operate in a unified way in the interests of the whole body, which enables it to get a worthwhile work done, so it is in the Christian congregation. There should be no division in this “body,” but “its members should have the same care for one another.”—1 Cor. 12:25.

² However, this unity is not uniformity. The fact that Christians all believe in the one Almighty God and in his Son Jesus Christ, who is Head over the congregation, does not make them like “peas in a pod,” nor does it cause them to speak mechanically, as would robots. No, each has his unique personality, his own viewpoint on matters not essential to salvation. Each differs from the others, more or less, in his way of arranging affairs and of doing things, even in daily routines of work, in relaxation and amusement. This is to a large extent because circumstances and backgrounds of individuals vary greatly.

³ Nevertheless, whatever Christians do, they are to do wholeheartedly as to Jehovah God. One Christian may not fully understand why another one sees or does things in a certain way. But he realizes that God is the Judge of his servants. And, just as the Christian tries to do all things to the best of his understanding and ability in order to please Jehovah, so he attributes the same conscientious motives to his brothers. The apostle says on this:

“None of us, in fact, lives with regard to himself only, and no one dies with regard to himself only; for both if we live, we live to Jehovah, and if we die, we die to Jehovah. Therefore both if we live and if we die, we belong to Jehovah.”—Rom. 14:7, 8.

⁴ Even the most sincere, conscientious Christian has imperfections and faults and therefore does not always stay free from selfish acts. But it is *not his great object in life* to become rich or to indulge in a life of pleasure and ease. He is not



living with regard to himself or for himself only. His main pursuit in life is to please God by doing His will. He is willing to die at any time if his death can serve God's purpose. And just as he lived his life as belonging to God, so in death Jehovah counts him as His. In fact, in facing death he is sure of a resurrection, because Jehovah views as living, not as dead, those who make him their God.—Matt. 22:31, 32; Rom. 4:17.

*** w07 5/15 pp. 29-30 The Resurrection—Is It Real to You? ***

Your Hope and Your Life Now

¹⁴ How can the resurrection hope affect the way you live right now? You can draw strength from this hope when facing hardships, challenges, persecution, or danger. Satan wants you to be so terrified of death that you would willingly barter your integrity for some hollow promise of safety. Remember that Satan said to Jehovah: "Everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul." (Job 2:4) In making such a statement, Satan maligned all of us, including you. Is it true that you will quit serving God if you face danger? By contemplating the hope of the resurrection, you can make firm your determination to keep on doing the will of your heavenly Father.

¹⁵ Jesus said: "Do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." (Matthew 10:28) We need not be in dread of Satan or his human agents. True, some may have the power to cause harm, even death. However, the worst they can do is still only temporary. Jehovah can and will undo any damage done to his faithful servants, even resurrecting them. It is Jehovah alone who is worthy of our fear, our profound awe and respect. He alone has the power to take away life and all prospects for future life, destroying both body and soul in Gehenna. Happily, Jehovah does not want that to happen to you. (2 Peter 3:9) Because of the resurrection hope, we as God's servants can always be sure that we are safe. Everlasting life lies ahead of us as long as we are faithful, and there is nothing that Satan or his minions can do about that.—Psalm 118:6; Hebrews 13:6.

¹⁶ If the resurrection hope is real to us, it can shape our attitude about life. We realize that 'whether we live or we die, we belong to Jehovah.' (Romans 14:7, 8) In setting priorities, we therefore apply Paul's counsel: "Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) Many people are in a frantic rush to gratify every desire, every ambition, every impulse. Because they view life as being short, they seem almost desperate in their pursuit of pleasure, and if they have a form of worship, it certainly does not harmonize with the "perfect will of God."

¹⁷ True, life *is* short. "It must quickly pass by, and away we fly," perhaps in some 70 or 80 years. (Psalm 90:10) Humans come and go like green grass, like a passing shadow, like an exhalation. (Psalm 103:15; 144:3, 4) But God did not purpose that we spend a few decades growing up and gaining some wisdom and experience, only to spend the next few decades breaking down and descending into illness and death. Jehovah created humans with the desire to live forever. "Time indefinite he has put in their heart," the Bible tells us. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) Is God cruel, giving us such a desire and then making it impossible to fulfill it? No, indeed, for "God is love." (1 John 4:8) He will use the resurrection to make everlasting life possible for people who have died.

¹⁸ Thanks to the resurrection hope, we can have a secure future. We need not be frantic, driven to reach our full potential right now. We need not make use of this dying world "to the full." (1 Corinthians 7:29-31; 1 John 2:17) Unlike those with no real hope, we have the wonderful gift of knowing that if we remain faithful to Jehovah God, we will have all eternity to laud him and enjoy life. By all means, then, let us daily praise Jehovah, who makes the resurrection hope a certainty!

No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Make the Earth a Paradise (rs p.232¶1-3)

*** rs p. 232 Kingdom ***

Make the earth a paradise

Luke 23:43: "Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise."

Ps. 98:7-9: "Let the sea thunder and that which fills it, the productive land and those dwelling in it. Let the rivers themselves clap their hands; all together let the very mountains cry out joyfully before Jehovah, for he has come to judge the earth. He will judge the productive land with righteousness and the peoples with uprightness."

Compare Genesis 1:28; 2:15; Isaiah 55:11.



September

Sept. 26 Bible reading: Psalms 142-150

No. 1: Psalm 144:1–145:4

No. 2: Did God’s Kingdom Begin to Rule in the First Century? (rs p. 232¶4-6)

No. 3: * Why Must We Avoid “Acts of Favoritism”? (Jas. 2:1-4)

Bible reading: Psalms 142-150

*** w06 9/1 p. 16 Highlights From Book Five of Psalms ***

143:4-7. How can we endure even severe hardships? The psalmist gives us the key: Meditate on Jehovah’s activity, keep ourselves concerned with his doings, and pray to him for help.

*** w96 12/15 p. 11 par. 9 What Is Paramount in Your Life? ***

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

No. 1: Psalm 144:1–145:4

No. 2: Did God’s Kingdom Begin to Rule in the First Century? (rs p. 232¶4-6)

*** rs p. 232 - p. 233 Kingdom ***

When was God’s Kingdom to begin to rule?

Was it in the first century?

Col. 1:1, 2, 13: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through God’s will, and Timothy our brother to the holy ones [those who were heirs of the heavenly Kingdom] . . . He [God] delivered us from the authority of the darkness and transferred us [the holy ones, members of the Christian congregation] into the kingdom of the Son of his love.” (So Christ had, indeed, begun to rule over the Christian congregation in the first century, before this was written, but the establishment of the Kingdom to rule over all the earth was yet future.)

1 Cor. 4:8: “You men already have your fill, do you? You are rich already, are you? You have begun ruling as kings without us, have you? And I wish indeed that you had begun ruling as kings, that we also might rule with you as kings.” (It is obvious that the apostle Paul is reproving them for having the wrong viewpoint.)

Rev. 12:10, 12: “Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been hurled down, who accuses them day and night before our God! On this account be glad, you heavens and you who reside in them! Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time.” (The establishment of God’s Kingdom is here associated with the hurling of Satan out of heaven. This had not occurred at the time of the rebellion in Eden, as is shown in Job chapters 1, 2. Revelation was recorded in 96 C.E., and Revelation 1:1 shows that it deals with events then future.)

No. 3: * Why Must We Avoid “Acts of Favoritism”? (Jas. 2:1-4)

*** w02 11/15 pp. 15-16 Keep On Serving Shoulder to Shoulder ***

No Place for Partiality

3 As Christians, we are grateful for the multilingual cooperation that exists among us. Although we preach the good news of the Kingdom in many human languages, we are serving God in unity. (Psalm 133:1) This is possible because, wherever we live on earth, we speak the one pure language to Jehovah’s praise.

4 There must be no partiality among God’s people. The apostle Peter made that clear when he preached at the home of the Gentile army officer Cornelius in 36 C.E. and was moved to say: “For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial,



but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34, 35) Since that is true, the Christian congregation is no place for partiality, cliques, or favoritism.

⁵ Regarding her visit to the Kingdom Hall, one college student said: “Usually, churches draw in members of a certain race or ethnic group. . . . Jehovah’s Witnesses were all sitting together and not in certain cliques.” However, some members of the congregation in ancient Corinth were creating factions. By thus causing dissension, they were opposing the operation of God’s holy spirit, for it promotes unity and peace. (Galatians 5:22) If we were to foster cliques in the congregation, we would be working against the leadings of the spirit. Therefore, let us bear in mind the apostle Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “I exhort you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you should all speak in agreement, and that there should not be divisions among you, but that you may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought.” (1 Corinthians 1:10) Paul also stressed unity in his letter to the Ephesians.—Ephesians 4:1-6, 16.

⁶ Impartiality has always been required of Christians. (Romans 2:11) Because some in the first-century congregation were showing favoritism toward wealthy individuals, the disciple James wrote: “My brothers, you are not holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, our glory, with acts of favoritism, are you? For, if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in splendid clothing enters into a gathering of you, but a poor man in filthy clothing also enters, yet you look with favor upon the one wearing the splendid clothing and say: ‘You take this seat here in a fine place,’ and you say to the poor one: ‘You keep standing,’ or: ‘Take that seat there under my footstool,’ you have class distinctions among yourselves and you have become judges rendering wicked decisions, is that not so?”—James 2:1-4.

⁷ If rich unbelievers with gold rings and splendid garments came to a Christian meeting as well as poor unbelievers in filthy clothing, the wealthy got special treatment. They were given seats “in a fine place,” while the poor were told to stand or to sit on the floor at someone’s feet. But God impartially provided Jesus’ ransom sacrifice for rich and poor alike. (Job 34:19; 2 Corinthians 5:14) So if we are going to please Jehovah and serve him shoulder to shoulder, we must not show favoritism or ‘admire personalities for our own benefit.’—Jude 4, 16.

*** w97 11/15 pp. 13-14 Faith Moves Us to Action! ***

Favoritism Not Compatible With Faith

³ If we have genuine faith in God and Christ, we will not show favoritism. (James 2:1-4) Some to whom James wrote were not displaying the impartiality required of true Christians. (Romans 2:11) Hence, James asks: “You are not holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, our glory, with acts of favoritism, are you?” If a rich unbeliever with gold rings and splendid garments came to a meeting as well as an unbelieving “poor man in filthy clothing,” both of them should have been well received, but special attention was being shown to the wealthy. They were given seats “in a fine place,” whereas poor unbelievers were told to stand or to sit on the floor at someone’s feet.

⁴ Jehovah provided the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ for rich and poor alike. (2 Corinthians 5:14) If we were to cater to the rich, therefore, we would be departing from the faith of Christ, who ‘became poor that we might become rich through his poverty.’ (2 Corinthians 8:9) Let us never judge people in such a way—with the wrong motive of honoring humans. God is not partial, but if we showed partiality, we would be “rendering wicked decisions.” (Job 34:19) With a desire to please God, surely we will not succumb to the temptation to show favoritism or to ‘admire personalities for the sake of our own benefit.’—Jude 4, 16.

⁵ James identifies the truly rich and urges that love be shown to all impartially. (James 2:5-9) ‘God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.’ This is so because the poor are often more responsive to the good news. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29) As a class, the materially rich oppress others with regard to debts, wages, and legal actions. They speak evil of Christ and persecute us because we bear his name. But let it be our determination to obey “the kingly law,” which requires neighbor love—being equally loving toward rich and poor. (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40) Since God requires this, showing favoritism is “working a sin.”



October

Oct. 3	Bible reading: Proverbs 1-6
No. 1:	Proverbs 6:1-19
No. 2:	How Are We Assured of God's Love for Us at Romans 8:26, 27?
No. 3:	Must the Coming of God's Kingdom Await the Conversion of the World (rs p.233¶1-2)

Bible reading: Proverbs 1-6

*** w06 9/15 pp. 17-18 Highlights From the Book of Proverbs ***

1:7; 9:10—In what way is the fear of Jehovah “the beginning of knowledge” and “the start of wisdom”? Without the fear of Jehovah, there can be no knowledge, for he is the Creator of all things and the Author of the Scriptures. (Romans 1:20; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) He is the very Source of all true knowledge. Hence, knowledge begins with the reverential fear of Jehovah. Godly fear is also the start of wisdom because there can be no wisdom without knowledge. Moreover, a person who lacks the fear of Jehovah will not use whatever knowledge he has to honor the Creator.

5:3—Why is a prostitute called “a strange woman”? Proverbs 2:16, 17 describes a “strange woman” as someone “who has forgotten the very covenant of her God.” Anyone who worshipped false gods or made himself or herself a stranger to the Mosaic Law, including a prostitute, was called a stranger.—Jeremiah 2:25; 3:13.

1:10-14. We should guard against being lured into the bad ways of sinners by their promises of riches.

3:3. We should highly value loving-kindness and trueness and visibly display them as we would a priceless necklace. We also need to inscribe these qualities on our heart, making them an integral part of us.

4:18. Spiritual knowledge is progressive. To remain in the light, we must continue to manifest humility and meekness.

5:8. We ought to keep far away from all immoral influences, whether they come through music, entertainment, the Internet, or books and magazines.

5:21. Would a lover of Jehovah exchange his good relationship with the true God for a few moments of pleasure? Of course not! The strongest incentive for maintaining moral purity is the awareness that Jehovah sees our ways and holds us accountable.

6:1-5. In these verses, what fine advice we have against ‘going surety,’ or making an unwise financial commitment, in behalf of others! If, upon closer scrutiny, the action we have taken seems unwise, without delay we should ‘storm our fellowman’ with persistent requests and do all we can to set matters straight.

6:16-19. Herein are seven basic categories involving almost every type of wrongdoing. We should develop a hatred of them.

6:20-24. A Scriptural upbringing can protect one from getting caught in the trap of sexual immorality. Parents should not be negligent about providing such training.

No. 1: Proverbs 6:1-19

No. 2: How Are We Assured of God's Love for Us at Romans 8:26, 27?

*** w08 6/15 p. 30 Highlights From the Letter to the Romans ***

8:26, 27. When we are faced with situations so perplexing that we do not know what to pray for, “the spirit itself pleads for us.” Then Jehovah, the “Hearer of prayer,” accepts appropriate prayers recorded in his Word as coming from us.—Ps. 65:2.

*** w05 4/15 pp. 18-19 Let God's Word Light Your Roadway ***

Pray in Faith

¹³ We can pray in faith that God will act in our behalf. (Psalm 119:121-128) Like the psalmist, we are sure that our prayers will be answered. Why? Because we love divine commandments “more than gold, even refined gold.” Moreover, ‘we consider all of God's orders regarding all things to be right.’—Psalm 119:127, 128.



¹⁴ Jehovah hears our petitions because we pray in faith and also carefully comply with his orders. (Psalm 65:2) But what if we sometimes have such bewildering problems that we do not know what to say in prayer? Then “the spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unuttered.” (Romans 8:26, 27) At such times, God accepts expressions found in his Word as prayers covering our needs.

¹⁵ The Scriptures are full of prayers and thoughts that would tie in with our ‘unuttered groanings.’ For example, consider Psalm 119:121-128. The way things are expressed here may fit our circumstances. If we fear being defrauded, for instance, we might ask for God’s help in the way the psalmist did. (Verses 121-123) Suppose we need to make a very difficult decision. Then we might pray that Jehovah’s spirit help us to recall and apply his reminders. (Verses 124, 125) Although we ‘hate every false path,’ we may need to ask God to act in our behalf so that we do not succumb to some temptation to break his law. (Verses 126-128) If we read the Bible daily, such helpful passages may come to mind when we supplicate Jehovah.

*** w92 9/15 pp. 16-17 Jehovah’s Spirit Leads His People ***

“With Groanings Unuttered”

¹¹ If a Christian is beset by a trial that seems overwhelming, what should he do? Why, pray for holy spirit, and let it do its work! “The spirit also joins in with help for our weakness,” said Paul, “for the problem of what we should pray for as we need to we do not know, but the spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unuttered. Yet he who searches the hearts knows what the meaning of the spirit is, because it is pleading in accord with God for holy ones.”—Romans 8:26, 27.

¹² Those holy ones for whom God’s spirit pleads are Jesus’ anointed followers, with a heavenly hope. But whether you have a heavenly calling or an earthly hope, as a Christian you can have the help of God’s holy spirit. Jehovah sometimes gives a direct answer to a specific prayer. At times, however, you may be so distressed that you are unable to put your feelings into words and may only be able to beseech Jehovah with unspoken groanings. In fact, you may not know what is best for you and might even ask for the wrong thing unless you pray for holy spirit. God knows that you want his will to be done, and he is aware of what you really need. Moreover, by means of his holy spirit, he caused many prayers to be recorded in his Word, and these deal with trying situations. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:21) Hence, Jehovah can look upon certain sentiments expressed in such inspired prayers as being expressions you would like to make as one of his servants, and he can answer them in your behalf.

¹³ Paul and his associates may not have known what to pray for when experiencing tribulation in the district of Asia. Being ‘under extreme pressure beyond their strength, they felt within themselves that they had received the sentence of death.’ But they sought the supplications of others and trusted in God, who can raise the dead, and he did rescue them. (2 Corinthians 1:8-11) How comforting it is that Jehovah God hears and acts on the prayers of his faithful servants!

¹⁴ God’s people are often beset by trials as an organization. As noted earlier, they were persecuted during World War I. Though they did not then have a clear understanding of their position and therefore did not know exactly what to pray for, Jehovah’s Word contained prophetic prayers that he answered in their behalf. (Psalms 69, 102, 126; Isaiah, chapter 12) But what if Jehovah permits a trial to continue for some time? This may result in a witness, may move some to embrace the truth, and affords Christians opportunity to show brotherly love by praying for or otherwise helping suffering fellow believers. (John 13:34, 35; 2 Corinthians 1:11) Remember that Jehovah leads his people by means of his holy spirit, does what is best for them, and always works matters out in a way that will honor and sanctify his holy name.—Exodus 9:16; Matthew 6:9.

No. 3: Must the Coming of God’s Kingdom Await the Conversion of the World (rs p.233¶1-2)

*** rs p. 233 Kingdom ***

Must the coming to power of God’s Kingdom await the conversion of the world?

Ps. 110:1, 2: “The utterance of Jehovah to my Lord [Jesus Christ] is: ‘Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.’ The rod of your strength Jehovah will send out of Zion, saying: ‘Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.’” (So there would be enemies for him to subdue; not all would submit to his rule.)

Matt. 25:31-46: “When the Son of man [Jesus Christ] arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. . . . And these [who showed no love for his anointed brothers] will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life.” (Obviously, not all mankind were to be converted before Christ would take his throne; not all would prove to be righteous ones.)



October

Oct. 10	Bible reading: Proverbs 7-11
No. 1:	Proverbs 8:1-21
No. 2:	** <i>If Someone Says: "God's Kingdom Won't Come in My Lifetime"</i> (rs p.233¶4–p.234¶1)
No. 3:	* <i>Why the Scriptures Warn Against Becoming "Righteous Overmuch"</i> (Eccl. 7:16)

Bible reading: Proverbs 7-11

*** w06 9/15 pp. 17-19 Highlights From the Book of Proverbs ***

7:1, 2—What is included in “my sayings” and “my own commandments”? In addition to Bible teachings, these include family rules, or regulations, set by parents for the good of the family members. Young ones need to abide by these as well as by the Scriptural teachings they receive from their parents.

8:30—Who is the “master worker”? Personified wisdom calls itself a master worker. More than serving as a literary device to explain the characteristics of wisdom, this personification figuratively refers to God’s firstborn Son, Jesus Christ, in his prehuman existence. Long before his birth as a human on earth, he was ‘produced as the beginning of God’s way.’ (Proverbs 8:22) As “a master worker,” he actively worked with his Father during the creation of all things.—Colossians 1:15-17.

9:17—What are “stolen waters,” and why are they “sweet”? Since the Bible likens enjoying sexual intimacy within marriage to drinking refreshing water drawn out of a well, stolen waters represent secretive immoral sexual relations. (Proverbs 5:15-17) The idea of getting away with something gives such waters their apparent sweetness.

7:4. We should develop an affection for wisdom and understanding.

10:6; footnote—How does ‘the mouth of the wicked ones cover up violence’? This may be so in the sense that by sweet talk the wicked cover up their malicious intent to harm others. Or it could be that since the wicked are generally treated with animosity, the hostility they receive from others silences them.

10:10—How does “the one winking his eye” cause pain? “A good-for-nothing man” may not only resort to “crookedness of speech” but also try to hide his motives with body language, such as “winking his eye.” (Proverbs 6:12, 13) This kind of deception can become a source of much mental distress to his victim.

10:29—What is “the way of Jehovah”? The reference here is to the way Jehovah deals with mankind and not to the course of life we should follow. God’s dealings with humans spell security for the blameless but ruin for the wicked.

11:31—Why should the wicked one be rewarded more than the righteous one? The reward here is measured in terms of the degree of chastisement each receives. When the righteous person errs, the reward he receives for his errors is discipline. The wicked one sins deliberately and refuses to turn to doing good. He therefore deserves and receives a severe punishment.

10:11-14. For our words to be upbuilding, our mind should be filled with accurate knowledge, our heart ought to be motivated by love, and wisdom should dictate what comes out of our mouth.

10:19; 12:18; 13:3; 15:28; 17:28. May our words be few and thoughtful.

11:1; 16:11; 20:10, 23. Jehovah wants us to be honest in our business dealings.

11:4. It is foolish to pursue material wealth at the expense of personal Bible study, meeting attendance, prayer, and the field ministry.

No. 1:	Proverbs 8:1-21
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No. 2:	** <i>If Someone Says: "God's Kingdom Won't Come in My Lifetime"</i> (rs p.233¶4–p.234¶1)
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*** rs p. 233 - p. 234 Kingdom ***

‘It won’t come in my lifetime’

You might reply: ‘But it is going to come in someone’s lifetime, isn’t it? . . . Would anyone be able to know that his generation was the one to see it? Jesus’ own apostles wanted to know that, and the answer he gave them is very significant for us today. (Matt. 24:3-14; Luke 21:29-32)’



Or you could say: ‘That view is a very common one. But Jehovah’s Witnesses firmly believe, on the basis of the Bible, that God’s Kingdom is already ruling in the heavens and that it is up to us to show whether we want to continue to live on earth under God’s righteous government or not. That is why I came to your door today. Notice what is stated here at Matthew 25:31-33.’

No. 3: * Why the Scriptures Warn Against Becoming “Righteous Overmuch” (Eccl. 7:16)

*** w95 10/15 p. 31 Watch Out for Self-Righteousness! ***

Misguided Zeal

Self-righteousness and zeal are often interrelated. The apostle Paul spoke of religiously inclined Jews as having “zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge; for, because of not knowing the righteousness of God but seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.” (Romans 10:2, 3) As a Pharisee, Paul himself had been extremely zealous, though his zeal was misguided, not based on Jehovah’s righteousness.—Galatians 1:13, 14; Philippians 3:6.

Appropriately the Bible admonishes: “Do not become righteous overmuch, nor show yourself excessively wise. Why should you cause desolation to yourself?” (Ecclesiastes 7:16) In the congregation a Christian may start out conscientious, but his conscientiousness and zeal can degenerate into self-righteousness. When guided by human wisdom rather than by Jehovah’s righteousness, religious zeal can hurt others. How?

Parents, for example, may become overly occupied in attending to the spiritual needs of others, and in the process they may neglect the needs of their own family. Or parents may be excessively zealous, demanding more of their children than they can possibly do. (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21) Some children, unable to meet such unreasonable demands, respond by leading a double life. A reasonable parent will take into account the limitations of his family and make appropriate adjustments.—Compare Genesis 33:12-14.

Extreme zeal can also deprive us of tact, empathy, and tenderness, which are vital in our dealings with others. A person may work very hard to advance Kingdom interests. However, his extreme zeal may hurt people along the way. Paul said: “If I have the gift of prophesying and am acquainted with all the sacred secrets and all knowledge, and if I have all the faith so as to transplant mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my belongings to feed others, and if I hand over my body, that I may boast, but do not have love, I am not profited at all.”—1 Corinthians 13:2, 3.

*** w77 8/1 pp. 469-470 What Did the Wise Man Mean? ***

What Did the Wise Man Mean?

The Wisdom of Avoiding Extremes

It is very easy for imperfect humans to get off balance, taking an extreme view of matters. King Solomon, therefore, gave this admonition: “Do not become righteous overmuch, nor show yourself excessively wise. Why should you cause desolation to yourself? Do not be wicked overmuch, nor become foolish. Why should you die when it is not your time? It is better that you should take hold of the one, but from the other also do not withdraw your hand; for he that fears God will go forth with them all.”—Eccl. 7:16-18.

The person who is righteous overmuch gets overly concerned about minor matters. For example, he makes big issues over things that are strictly human procedures or methods, matters that are not set forth in the Scriptures. When he sees someone doing a kindness, or perhaps acting in a merciful way, he may object on the basis that certain “protocol” has been ignored. He is much like the Pharisees who did not rejoice about the marvelous relief Jesus Christ brought to afflicted ones on the Sabbath but who became enraged, concluding that the Son of God had violated the law by performing cures on that day. (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 14:1-6) Persons who are righteous overmuch often give no thought to what would be the merciful, loving or helpful thing to do. They take rules to the ultimate limit. When, in their estimation, some rule has been violated, they do not take anything else into consideration.—Compare Matthew 12:2-7; 23:23; Romans 14:1-4, 10.

In their own case, those who are righteous overmuch may practice self-denial to the point of harming their health. They act contrary to the sound advice of Colossians 2:20-23: “Why do you, as if living in the world, further subject yourselves to the decrees: ‘Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch,’ respecting things that are all destined to destruction by being used up, in accordance with the commands and teachings of men? Those very things are, indeed, possessed of an appearance of wisdom in a self-imposed form of worship and mock humility, a severe treatment of the body; but they are of no value in combating the satisfying of the flesh.”



As Solomon said, the person who is righteous overmuch is definitely in danger of causing 'desolation to himself.' He may bring physical, mental or emotional ruin to himself by rash zeal or extreme self-denial. Worse, his unloving attitude can cost him God's favor and blessing.

Then, as Solomon shows, there is the person who 'shows himself excessively wise,' trying to impress others with his wisdom. He sets himself up as a critic and gives the impression that he has better insight than anybody else. His exalted opinion of his abilities often causes him to get involved in other people's affairs, offering them unrequested solutions to their problems. In time he alienates others, and they may do everything possible to avoid him. Also, time may reveal that his advice was not so good, and he may be blamed for causing needless trouble.

Lest a person get off balance and take the wrong view of proper righteousness and wisdom, Solomon went on to warn against 'becoming wicked overmuch.' Imperfection, of course, should be accepted by all of us as a reality. The apostle John wrote: "If we make the statement: 'We have no sin,' we are misleading ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8) We therefore must resign ourselves to falling short in many respects. However, a person must be careful that he does not pass over wrongdoing lightly, excusing himself with the words, 'Well, after all, I'm a sinner.' While a person can enjoy life, he should be careful not to cast off all restraints. Calamity is in store for the one who acts the part of a fool, thinking that he is above law and correction. The person who pursues an unbridled course may experience serious problems and even die prematurely.

How can damaging extremes be avoided? The fear of Jehovah, a wholesome regard for the Creator, is essential. This fear serves to restrain wrongdoing and also moves the individual to follow a balanced course of life, avoiding extremes. One who fears God endeavors to be righteous and wise but shuns being overly scrupulous and making a show of wisdom. Because he enjoys life in a wholesome way, extremists may even judge him as a wrongdoer, just as Jesus Christ was wrongly labeled as being a drunkard and a glutton.—Matt. 11:19.

In reality, however, such a conscientious, balanced person is keeping a tight reign on his conduct and does not become a practitioner of wickedness. The God-fearing person goes forth unharmed by the problems and difficulties of those who ignore the precepts (1) 'do not be righteous overmuch nor show yourself excessively wise' and (2) 'do not be wicked overmuch.' As Solomon recommended, he thus 'takes hold of the one, but from the other also does not withdraw his hand.' He takes on righteousness without being so exacting as to set impossible standards for himself and others, or withdrawing from the healthful pleasure to be enjoyed in life.



October

Oct. 17	Bible reading: Proverbs 12-16
No. 1:	Proverbs 15:1-17
No. 2:	How Are Acceptable Prayers Like Sweet-Smelling Incense to Jehovah? (Ps.141:2; Rev. 5:8)
No. 3:	What Sign Indicates That We Are Living in the Last Days? (rs p.234¶2)

Bible reading: Proverbs 12-16

*** w06 9/15 pp. 18-19 Highlights From the Book of Proverbs ***

12:23—How does one ‘cover knowledge’? Covering knowledge does not mean that one does not display it at all. Rather, it means that one displays knowledge discreetly, not making a showy display of it by bragging.

14:17—In what way is ‘the man of thinking abilities hated’? The Hebrew expression translated “thinking abilities” can mean either discernment or malicious thinking. A man of wicked ideas is, of course, hated. But so is the man of discernment who exercises his thinking abilities and chooses to be “no part of the world.”—John 15:19.

13:4. To be “desirous” of a position of responsibility in the congregation or of life in the new world is in itself not enough. We must also be industrious and put forth diligent effort to meet the requirements.

13:24; 29:15, 21. A loving parent does not pamper his child or overlook his faults. Rather, a father or a mother takes corrective measures to root out such faults before they become deeply ingrained.

14:10. Since our innermost feelings can neither be precisely expressed at all times nor be always understood by onlookers, the emotional comfort that others can offer has its limitations. We may have to endure some difficulties by relying solely on Jehovah.

15:7. We should not pour out everything we know to a person all at once, just as a farmer does not pour out all his seeds in one location. The wise one scatters his knowledge a little at a time as the need may be.

15:15; 18:14. Maintaining a positive mental outlook will help us to find joy, even under distressing circumstances.

No. 1: Proverbs 15:1-17

No. 2: How Are Acceptable Prayers Like Sweet-Smelling Incense to Jehovah? (Ps.141:2; Rev. 5:8)

*** w99 1/15 pp. 10-15 Are Your Prayers “Prepared as Incense”? ***

“May my prayer be prepared as incense before you.”—PSALM 141:2.

JEHOVAH GOD commanded his prophet Moses to have sacred incense prepared for use at Israel’s tabernacle of worship. The divine formula called for a fourfold aromatic mixture. (Exodus 30:34-38) It proved to be sweet-smelling indeed.

² The Law covenant into which the nation of Israel was taken provided for the burning of incense daily. (Exodus 30:7, 8) Did the use of incense have special significance? Yes, for the psalmist sang: “May my prayer be prepared as incense before you [Jehovah God], the raising up of my palms as the evening grain offering.” (Psalm 141:2) In the book of Revelation, the apostle John describes those around God’s heavenly throne as having golden bowls full of incense. “And,” says the inspired account, “the incense means the prayers of the holy ones.” (Revelation 5:8) So, then, the burning of sweet-smelling incense symbolized acceptable prayers offered up by Jehovah’s servants both day and night.—1 Thessalonians 3:10; Hebrews 5:7.

³ If our prayers are to be acceptable to God, we must pray to him in the name of Jesus Christ. (John 16:23, 24) But how can we improve the quality of our prayers? Well, giving consideration to some Scriptural examples should help us to prepare our prayers as incense before Jehovah.—Proverbs 15:8.

Offer Prayers in Faith

⁴ If our prayers are to ascend to God as sweet-smelling incense, we must pray in faith. (Hebrews 11:6) When Christian elders find a spiritually sick person receptive to their Scriptural help, their “prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well.” (James 5:15) Prayers offered in faith are pleasing to our heavenly Father, and so is prayerful study of God’s Word. The psalmist manifested a fine attitude when he sang: “I shall raise my palms to your commandments that I have loved,



and I will concern myself with your regulations. Teach me goodness, sensibleness and knowledge themselves, for in your commandments I have exercised faith.” (Psalm 119:48, 66) Let us ‘spread out our palms’ in humble prayer and exercise faith by complying with God’s commandments.

⁵ Suppose we lack the wisdom needed to deal with a trial. Perhaps we are not sure that a particular Bible prophecy is now being fulfilled. Instead of allowing this to destabilize us spiritually, let us pray for wisdom. (Galatians 5:7, 8; James 1:5-8) Of course, we cannot expect God to answer us in a spectacular way. We need to show the sincerity of our prayers by doing what he expects all of his people to do. It is necessary for us to engage in faith-building study of the Scriptures with the aid of publications provided through “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matthew 24:45-47; Joshua 1:7, 8) We also need to advance in knowledge by participating in meetings of God’s people on a regular basis.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

⁶ Today, some Christians are pursuing interests and careers suggesting that they have lost awareness that we are now deep in “the time of the end.” (Daniel 12:4) Fellow believers can well pray that such ones rekindle or bolster their faith in the Scriptural evidence that Christ’s presence began in 1914 when Jehovah installed him as heavenly King and that he is ruling in the midst of his enemies. (Psalm 110:1, 2; Matthew 24:3) All of us should realize that such foretold events as the destruction of false religion—“Babylon the Great”—the satanic attack of Gog of Magog upon Jehovah’s people, and the rescue of them by God the Almighty at the war of Armageddon can strike with startling suddenness and can all occur within a comparatively short period of time. (Revelation 16:14, 16; 18:1-5; Ezekiel 38:18-23) So let us pray for God’s help to stay awake spiritually. May all of us pray earnestly for the sanctification of Jehovah’s name, for his Kingdom to come, and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Yes, may we continue to exercise faith and give evidence that our prayers are sincere. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Indeed, may all who love Jehovah seek first the Kingdom and his righteousness and have the greatest possible share in preaching the good news before the end comes.—Matthew 6:33; 24:14.

Praise and Thank Jehovah

⁷ An important way to ‘prepare our prayers as incense’ is by expressing heartfelt praise and gratitude to God. King David offered such a prayer when he and the people of Israel contributed toward the construction of Jehovah’s temple. David prayed: “Blessed may you be, O Jehovah the God of Israel our father, from time indefinite even to time indefinite. Yours, O Jehovah, are the greatness and the mightiness and the beauty and the excellency and the dignity; for everything in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Jehovah, the One also lifting yourself up as head over all. The riches and the glory are on account of you, and you are dominating everything; and in your hand there are power and mightiness, and in your hand is ability to make great and to give strength to all. And now, O our God, we are thanking you and praising your beautiful name.”—1 Chronicles 29:10-13.

⁸ What beautiful expressions of praise and thankfulness! Our prayers may not be as eloquent, but they can be just as heartfelt. The book of Psalms is filled with prayers of thanks and praise. Choice words of praise are found in Psalms 148 to 150. Gratitude to God is expressed in many psalms. “One thing I have asked from Jehovah,” sang David. “It is what I shall look for, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of Jehovah and to look with appreciation upon his temple.” (Psalm 27:4) Let us act in harmony with such prayers by participating zealously in all the activities of Jehovah’s congregated throngs. (Psalm 26:12) Doing this and meditating on God’s Word daily will give us many reasons to approach Jehovah with heartfelt praise and gratitude.

Humbly Seek Jehovah’s Help

⁹ If we are serving Jehovah wholeheartedly as his Witnesses, we can be sure that he hears our prayers for help. (Isaiah 43:10-12) Consider King Asa of Judah. The first 10 years of his 41-year reign (977-937 B.C.E.) were marked by peace. Then Judah was invaded by a million-man army under Zerah the Ethiopian. Though greatly outnumbered, Asa and his men went out to meet the invaders. Before the battle, however, Asa prayed fervently. He acknowledged Jehovah’s power to deliver. Pleading for help, the king said: “Upon you we do lean, and in your name we have come against this crowd. O Jehovah, you are our God. Do not let mortal man retain strength against you.” Total victory resulted as Jehovah saved Judah for the sake of his great name. (2 Chronicles 14:1-15) Whether God delivers us from a trial or strengthens us to endure it, there is no question that he hears our pleas for his assistance.

¹⁰ If we do not know how to deal with a certain crisis, we can be confident that Jehovah will hear our petitions for help. This was illustrated in the days of Judean King Jehoshaphat, whose 25-year reign began in 936 B.C.E. When Judah was threatened by the combined forces of Moab, Ammon, and the mountainous region of Seir, Jehoshaphat pleaded: “O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For in us there is no power before this large crowd that is coming against us; and we ourselves do not know what we ought to do, but our eyes are toward you.” Jehovah answered that humble prayer, fighting for Judah by striking the enemy ranks with confusion so that they slaughtered one another. As a result, the surrounding nations became fearful, and peace prevailed in Judah. (2 Chronicles 20:1-30) When we lack the wisdom needed to meet a crisis, like Jehoshaphat we can pray: ‘We do not know what we ought to do, but our eyes are



toward you, Jehovah.' The holy spirit may cause us to recall Scriptural points needed to solve the problem, or God may help us in a way that surpasses human reasoning.—Romans 8:26, 27.

¹¹ We may have to persevere in prayer for God's help. Nehemiah mourned, wept, fasted, and prayed for days about Jerusalem's ruined wall and the desperate plight of Judah's inhabitants. (Nehemiah 1:1-11) His prayers evidently ascended to God like sweet-smelling incense. One day Persian King Artaxerxes asked dejected Nehemiah: "What is this that you are seeking to secure?" "At once," reports Nehemiah, "I prayed to the God of the heavens." That short and silent prayer was answered, for Nehemiah was permitted to fulfill his heart's desire by going to Jerusalem to rebuild its ruined wall.—Nehemiah 2:1-8.

Let Jesus Teach You How to Pray

¹² Of all the prayers recorded in the Scriptures, especially instructive is the model prayer presented as sweet-smelling incense by Jesus Christ. Says Luke's Gospel: "A certain one of [Jesus'] disciples said to him: 'Lord, teach us how to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.' Then he said to them: 'Whenever you pray, say, "Father, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Give us our bread for the day according to the day's requirement. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is in debt to us; and do not bring us into temptation."'" (Luke 11:1-4; Matthew 6:9-13) Let us consider this prayer, not meant to be recited but intended to serve as a guide.

¹³ "*Father, let your name be sanctified.*" Addressing Jehovah as Father is a special privilege of his dedicated servants. As children readily approach a merciful father with any concern, we should spend time in regular dignified and reverential prayer to God. (Psalm 103:13, 14) Our prayers should reflect our concern about the sanctification of Jehovah's name because we long to see it cleared of all the reproach that has been heaped upon it. Yes, we want Jehovah's name to be set apart and held as holy, or sacred.—Psalm 5:11; 63:3, 4; 148:12, 13; Ezekiel 38:23.

¹⁴ "*Let your kingdom come.*" The Kingdom is the rulership of Jehovah expressed through the heavenly Messianic government in the hands of his Son and Jesus' associated "holy ones." (Daniel 7:13, 14, 18, 27; Revelation 20:6) It will soon "come" against all earthly opposers of God's sovereignty, removing them from the scene. (Daniel 2:44) Then the will of Jehovah will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10) What joy that will bring to all creatures loyally serving the Universal Sovereign!

¹⁵ "*Give us our bread for the day according to the day's requirement.*" Asking Jehovah for food "for the day" indicates that we do not request provisions in great abundance but only our daily needs. Though we trust in God to provide, we also work and use whatever proper means are available to us in order to obtain food and other necessities. (2 Thessalonians 3:7-10) Of course, we should thank our heavenly Provider because his love, wisdom, and power are behind these provisions.—Acts 14:15-17.

¹⁶ "*Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is in debt to us.*" Since we are imperfect and sinful, we cannot fully measure up to Jehovah's perfect standards. Hence, we need to pray for his forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. But if we want the "Hearer of prayer" to apply the merit of that sacrifice to our sins, we must be repentant and willing to receive whatever discipline he gives us. (Psalm 65:2; Romans 5:8; 6:23; Hebrews 12:4-11) Moreover, we can expect to be forgiven by God only if we "have forgiven our debtors," those sinning against us.—Matthew 6:12, 14, 15.

¹⁷ "*Do not bring us into temptation.*" The Bible sometimes says that Jehovah does things when he is merely permitting them. (Ruth 1:20, 21) God does not tempt us to commit sin. (James 1:13) Temptations to do evil originate with the Devil, our sinful flesh, and this world. Satan is the Tempter who tries to maneuver us into sinning against God. (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5) When we make the request, "Do not bring us into temptation," we are asking God not to allow us to fail when we are tempted to disobey him. He can guide us so that we do not succumb and are not overreached by Satan, "the wicked one."—Matthew 6:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Work in Harmony With Your Prayers

¹⁸ Jesus' model prayer covered principal points, but we can pray about any matter. For example, we may pray about our desire for a happy marriage. To maintain chastity until wedlock, we may pray for self-control. But then let us work in harmony with our prayers by avoiding immoral literature and entertainment. Let us also be determined to 'marry only in the Lord.' (1 Corinthians 7:39; Deuteronomy 7:3, 4) Once married, we will need to work in harmony with our prayers for happiness by applying God's counsel. And if we have children, it is not enough to pray that they will be faithful servants of Jehovah. We must do all we can to inculcate God's truths in their minds through Bible study and by regularly attending Christian meetings with them.—Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 31:12; Proverbs 22:6.

¹⁹ Are we praying for blessings in the ministry? Then let us act in harmony with such prayers by having a meaningful share in the Kingdom-preaching work. If we pray for opportunities to help others to get on the path to everlasting life, we



need to keep good records of interested ones and be willing to fit the conducting of home Bible studies into our schedule. What if we desire to take up the full-time preaching work as a pioneer? Then let us take steps in harmony with our prayers by increasing our preaching activity and by sharing in the ministry with pioneers. Taking such steps will show that we are working in harmony with our prayers.

²⁰ If we are serving Jehovah faithfully, we can be confident that he will answer our prayers that are in harmony with his will. (1 John 5:14, 15) Surely, beneficial points have been gleaned from an examination of some of the prayers recorded in the Bible. Our next article will consider other Scriptural guidelines for those desiring to ‘prepare their prayers as incense before Jehovah.’

No. 3: What Sign Indicates That We Are Living in the Last Days? (rs p.234¶2)

*** rs p. 234 Last Days ***

Last Days

Definition: The Bible uses the expression “last days” to refer to the concluding time period leading up to a divinely appointed execution that marks the end of a system of things. The Jewish system with its worship built around the temple in Jerusalem experienced its last days from 33 to 70 C.E. What occurred then was pictorial of what would be experienced in a greatly intensified way and on a global scale at a time when all nations would be facing the execution of judgment decreed by God. The present wicked system of things, which extends worldwide, entered its last days in 1914, and some of the generation alive then will also be on hand to witness its complete end in the “great tribulation.”

What indicates that we today are living in “the last days”?

The Bible describes events and conditions that mark this significant time period. “The sign” is a composite one made up of many evidences; thus its fulfillment requires that all aspects of the sign be clearly in evidence during one generation. The various aspects of the sign are recorded at Matthew chapters 24, 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21; there are further details at 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 2 Peter 3:3, 4, and Revelation 6:1-8. By way of illustration, we will consider a few outstanding portions of the sign.



October

Oct. 24	Bible reading: Proverbs 17-21
No. 1:	Proverbs 17:21–18:13
No. 2:	How Are Wars and Food Shortages a Part of “the Sign”? (rs p.234¶3–p.235¶4)
No. 3:	Those Who Praise Creation but Not the Creator Reveal What About Themselves? (Rom. 1:20)

Bible reading: Proverbs 17-21

*** w06 9/15 pp. 18-19 Highlights From the Book of Proverbs ***

18:19—How is ‘a brother who is transgressed against more than a strong town’? Like a strong town under siege, such a person may rigidly refuse to make concessions. Contentions between him and the transgressor can easily become as much of a barrier as “the bar of a dwelling tower.”

17:24. Unlike “the stupid one,” whose eyes and mind wander instead of being focused on important matters, we should seek understanding so that we can act in wisdom.

No. 1: Proverbs 17:21–18:13

No. 2: How Are Wars and Food Shortages a Part of “the Sign”? (rs p.234¶3–p.235¶4)

*** rs p. 234 - p. 236 Last Days ***

“Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom” (Matt. 24:7)

War has marred life on the earth for thousands of years. International wars and wars within nations have been fought. But beginning in 1914 the first *world* war was fought. This was not merely a conflict between two armies on the battlefield. For the first time, all the major powers were at war. Entire nations—including civilian populations—were mobilized to support the war effort. It is estimated that by the end of the war 93 percent of the population of the world was involved. (Regarding the historical significance of 1914, see pages 239, 240.)

As foretold at Revelation 6:4, ‘peace was taken away from the earth.’ Thus the world has continued to be in a state of upheaval ever since 1914. World War II was fought from 1939 to 1945. According to retired Admiral Gene La Rocque, as of 1982 there had been another 270 wars since 1945. Upwards of 100 million persons have been slaughtered in warfare during this century. Also, according to the 1982 edition of *World Military and Social Expenditures*, there were in that year 100 million people engaged directly or indirectly in military activities.

Is more required in order to fulfill this aspect of the prophecy? There are tens of thousands of nuclear weapons deployed for immediate use. Leading scientists have said that if the nations were to use even a fraction of their nuclear arsenals, civilization and possibly the entire human species would be destroyed. But that is not the outcome to which Bible prophecy points.

“There will be food shortages . . . in one place after another” (Matt. 24:7)

There have been many famines in human history. To what extent has the 20th century been afflicted by them? World war led to widespread starvation in Europe and Asia. Africa has been stricken by drought, resulting in extensive food shortages. Late in 1980 the Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that 450 million people were hungry to the point of starvation, and up to a billion did not have enough to eat. Of these, some 40 million a year actually die—in some years as many as 50 million—because of the shortage of food.

Is anything different about these food shortages? Revelation 6:6 indicated that a small quantity of such staples as wheat or barley would be selling for a day’s wage (a denarius; see Matthew 20:2) but that supplies of such items as olive oil and wine used by people who are well-to-do would not be harmed. So apparently many would suffer shortage while others could still get what they wanted. This situation is no longer local, but *global*. In 1981 *The New York Times* reported: “The improvement in living standards and the growing demand for food around the world have put pressure on food prices, making it harder for the poorest countries to import their food needs.” In many lands the production of food, *even with the aid of modern science*, has not been able to keep pace with the increase in total population. Modern food experts see no real solution to the problem.



*** w89 5/1 pp. 18-22 Worship the Creator, Not The Creation ***

“It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.”—LUKE 4:8.

THE expression “to worship” is defined in a dictionary this way: “To regard with great, even extravagant respect, honor, or devotion.” Who should be given such worship? Jesus Christ said: “You must love *Jehovah your God* with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.” (Matthew 22:37) Also, when offered all the kingdoms of the world if he would perform just one “act of worship” to Satan, Jesus refused, declaring: “It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is *to him alone* you must render sacred service.” (Luke 4:7, 8) From Jesus’ words and actions, it is clear that only Jehovah God is to be worshiped. This worship includes “sacred service,” for “faith without works is dead.”—James 2:26.

² Such worship of Jehovah is proper because he is the Supreme Sovereign of the entire universe, the Creator of the awe-inspiring heavens and the earth with all its life-forms. As such, he alone is worthy of being regarded with “great, even extravagant respect, honor, or devotion” on the part of humans. The Bible states: “You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11) Surely, no mere human, no animate or inanimate object, could be worthy of such “respect, honor, or devotion.” Jehovah alone is deserving of “exclusive devotion.”—Exodus 20:3-6.

A Special Urgency

³ Because we live in a judgment period, there is now a special urgency to worship God properly. Eternal destinies are being determined. God’s prophetic Word tells us that in these “last days” of the present system of things, Christ Jesus has arrived in heavenly glory “and all the angels with him.” For what purpose? Jesus himself foretold that purpose, saying: “All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” The sheep will depart “into everlasting life.” The goats will depart “into everlasting cutting-off.”—2 Timothy 3:1-5; Matthew 25:31, 32, 46.

⁴ The apostle Paul wrote about “the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) Thus, everlasting destruction is the destiny of stubborn, goatlike people who do not want to know about God’s purposes or who refuse to act when they have the opportunity. But “everlasting life” is the destiny of humble, sheeplike people who want to know about Jehovah, who listen to his instructions, and who then submit to his will. The Bible says: “The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that *does the will of God* remains forever.”—1 John 2:17; see also 2 Peter 2:12.

⁵ Sheeplike people are willing to sacrifice time, energy, and material resources to search out the truth. They do what Proverbs 2:1-5 says: “My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, so as to pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment; if, moreover, you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, if you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God.”

⁶ The willingness to search for Jehovah is what separates sheeplike people from goatlike ones. “If you search for him, he will let himself be found by you; but if you leave him, he will cast you off forever.” (1 Chronicles 28:9) Thus, no matter what a person’s race or nationality, whatever his education, whether rich or poor, if he sincerely searches for the truth about God, he will find it. From their heavenly vantage point, Christ and his angels will see to it that the searcher comes in contact with the truth, no matter where that person lives. How rewarding will that search be? Jesus said: “*This means everlasting life*, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.”—John 17:3; see also Ezekiel 9:4.

Avoiding Creature Worship

⁷ Many people throughout the earth regard humans—alive or dead—with “extravagant respect, honor, or devotion.” While they may feel that this is part of their worship to God, it actually diverts them from true worship. This opens the way for them to believe doctrines and engage in practices that are contrary to God’s will. One outstanding example is the way in which Mary, the mother of Jesus, is viewed by millions of people in both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Catholic lands.



⁸ Images and icons of Mary are bowed down to in a worshipful attitude, and in official church doctrine, she is referred to as “the Virgin Mary Theotokos.” The word *the-o-to'kos* means “God-bearer” or “mother of God.” The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: “Mary is the mother of God. . . . If Mary is not truly the mother of God, then Christ is not true God as well as true man.” Thus, as part of their Trinity doctrine, these religions teach that Jesus was Almighty God in human form, making Mary the “mother of God.” The same source adds that devotion to Mary includes: “(1) veneration, or the reverent recognition of the dignity of the holy Virgin Mother of God; (2) invocation, or the calling upon our Lady for her motherly and queenly intercession; . . . and private prayers [to Mary].”

⁹ However, the word *the-o-to'kos* does not appear in the inspired Scriptures. And nowhere does the Bible say that Mary was the “mother of God.” Jesus did not teach it, nor did first-century Christians. Furthermore, the Bible plainly shows that Jesus was not God Almighty in human form but was God’s Son. Indeed, when Mary was notified by an angel that she would bear a son, she was told: “Holy spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason also what is born will be called holy, God’s Son.” (Luke 1:35) So Jesus was God’s Son, not God himself in human form. Hence, Mary was the mother of God’s son Jesus, not the mother of God in human form. That is why neither Jesus nor his disciples ever called Mary the “mother of God.”

¹⁰ The way Jesus viewed his mother indicates her relative position. At a marriage feast in Cana, the Bible account tells us: “When the wine ran short the mother of Jesus said to him: ‘They have no wine.’ But Jesus said to her. ‘What have I to do with you, woman?’” Here the Roman Catholic Douay Version of the Bible reads: “Woman, what is that to me and to thee?” (John 2:3, 4) On another occasion, someone said to him: “Happy is the womb that carried you and the breasts that you sucked!” That was a fine opportunity for Jesus to give special honor to his mother and to show that others should do the same. Instead, Jesus said: “No, rather, Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!”—Luke 11:27, 28.

¹¹ Such references show that Jesus took care not to give devotion or undue honor to Mary or to address her by any special title. He did not allow their relationship to influence him. And the apostles and disciples followed his example, for nowhere in their inspired writings is Mary given any undue honor, title, or influence. While they respected her as the mother of Jesus, they did not go beyond that. Certainly they never referred to her as the “mother of God.” They knew that Jesus was not Almighty God in human form and, hence, that Mary could not possibly be God’s mother, a position far beyond what God’s Word allows for Mary.

The Cult of the Mother-Goddess

¹² Where, then, did this idea originate? It gradually crept into apostate Christendom in the third and fourth centuries of our Common Era. Especially was this the case after the year 325 C.E. when the Council of Nicaea adopted the unscriptural doctrine that Christ was God. Once that erroneous idea was accepted, it became easier to teach that Mary was the “mother of God.” Regarding this, *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* states: “The title [‘mother of God’] seems to have arisen in devotional usage, probably in Alexandria, sometime in the 3rd or 4th century By the end of the 4th century, the Theotokos had successfully established itself in various sections of the church.” The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that the doctrine was accepted officially “since the Council of Ephesus in 431.”

¹³ Of interest is where that council met and why. The book *The Cult of the Mother-Goddess*, by E. O. James, states: “The Council of Ephesus assembled in the basilica of the Theotokos in 431. There, if anywhere, in the city so notorious for its devotion to Artemis, or Diana as the Romans called her, where her image was said to have fallen from heaven, under the shadow of the great temple dedicated to the Magna Mater [Great Mother] since 330 B.C. and containing, according to tradition, a temporary residence of Mary, the title ‘God-bearer’ hardly could fail to be upheld.”

¹⁴ So just as with the Trinity, the “mother of God” doctrine is a pagan teaching masquerading as a Christian belief. It was prominent in pagan religions centuries before Christ. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* states under the heading “mother goddess”: “Any of a variety of feminine deities and maternal symbols of creativity, birth, fertility, sexual union, nurturing, and the cycle of growth. The term also has been applied to figures as diverse as the so-called Stone Age Venuses and the Virgin Mary. . . . There is no culture that has not employed some maternal symbolism in depicting its deities. . . . She is the protector and nourisher of a divine child and, by extension, of all mankind.” Thus, Catholic priest Andrew Greely says in his book *The Making of the Popes 1978*: “The Mary symbol links Christianity directly to the ancient [pagan] religions of mother goddesses.”

Improper Worship

¹⁵ To claim that Mary was the “mother of God” elevates her to a position where humans would tend to worship her, and that is what has happened for centuries. Hundreds of millions of people in many lands have prayed to her or through her and have given worshipful devotion to images and icons of her. While theologians may try to excuse this by saying that such veneration of Mary is only an indirect way of worshiping God, that is not the way God views it. “There is one God,



and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1, 2) Jesus himself said: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”—John 14:6.

¹⁶ Giving Mary devotion directly or indirectly, praying to her, bowing down to images and icons of her, is worshiping the creation rather than the Creator. It is idolatrous, and Christians are instructed to “flee from idolatry.” (1 Corinthians 10:14) When the Gentile Cornelius bowed reverently to the apostle Peter, note what happened: “As Peter entered, Cornelius met him, fell down at his feet and did obeisance to him. But Peter lifted him up, saying: ‘Rise; I myself am also a man.’” (Acts 10:25, 26) Bowing worshipfully to a human was improper, and Peter would not accept it. Also, after receiving a vision from an angel, the apostle John reports: “I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that had been showing me these things. But he tells me: ‘Be careful! Do not do that! All I am is a fellow slave of you and of your brothers who are prophets and of those who are observing the words of this scroll. *Worship God.*” (Revelation 22:8, 9) If not even an angel of God is to be worshiped, how much less humans or images of them.

¹⁷ That such devotion to Mary may result in improper worship is acknowledged by *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. An early edition of this work stated: “That popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin was often attended with extravagance and abuses, it is impossible to deny.”

¹⁸ From what source would such an unscriptural doctrine come? The underlying source has to be God’s Adversary, Satan the Devil. (John 8:44) Why would he promote such a teaching? To belittle and downgrade the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, to elevate humans, and to cause confusion. It diverts people from true worship and causes them to look instead to creatures for salvation. For centuries it also enhanced the power of the clergy over the common people, who were taught that they must be totally subservient to their religious leaders because the clergy alone had knowledge of such complicated theology.

¹⁹ However, Jesus foretold: “This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14) And Jehovah promises that by means of the Kingdom preaching, he will gather all sheeplike people to ‘instruct them about his ways so that they can walk in his paths.’ (Isaiah 2:2-4) Because they are gathered to the pure worship of Jehovah, Jesus said of them: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) So those who search for the truth will find it and will be freed from false religious teachings that hinder people from doing the Creator’s will.

*** w82 11/15 p. 31 Questions From Readers ***

▪ **Was Paul referring to the Jews or to the Gentiles when he said at Romans 1:25 that some “rendered sacred service to the creation rather than the One who created”?**

This description could apply to either Jews or non-Jews, for both had been guilty of this. Yet the apostle Paul’s argument in Romans chapter one was particularly about apostate Israel of old.

Creation abundantly testified to the existence of an Almighty God and Creator. It would have been inexcusable even for Gentiles to worship images made in the likeness of some animal, but God had specifically warned the Israelites against idolatry and thus they were more inexcusable.—Romans 1:18-23; Deuteronomy 4:15-19; 5:8, 9.

Still, the Israelites often ignored the truth they knew about God and worshiped “the creation rather than the One who created.” (Romans 1:24, 25) For example, they sinned with the goddess Ashtoreth (represented as a nude female with exaggerated sex organs) and with golden calves. (1 Kings 11:5, 33; 12:26-28; 2 Kings 10:28, 29) This even led them into degraded sexual practices and ungodly dispositions. Hence, these apostate Israelites who knew “the righteous decree of God” about such sins were clearly reprehensible and needed to exercise faith in Christ’s ransom.—Romans 1:26-32.



October

Oct. 31 Bible reading: Proverbs 22-26
Theocratic Ministry School Review

Lectura de la Biblia: Proverbs 22-26

*** w07 6/1 p. 31 Questions From Readers ***

Does Proverbs 22:6 guarantee that if Christian children are properly trained, they will not depart from the way of Jehovah?

This verse reads: “Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it.” Just as the bending of a twig influences its growth into a tree, children who are properly trained are more inclined to continue to serve Jehovah when they grow up. As every parent knows, such training takes considerable time and effort. To make Christian disciples of their children, parents must carefully instruct, admonish, encourage, and discipline them as well as set a good example. They must do this consistently and lovingly for many years.

Does this mean, though, that if a child does turn away from serving Jehovah, parental training is at fault? In some cases, parents may have been deficient in their efforts to bring their children up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah. (Ephesians 6:4) On the other hand, the proverb is not a guarantee that good training will produce children who are faithful to God. Parents cannot mold their children into whatever they wish. Children, like adults, have free will and must ultimately choose their own course in life. (Deuteronomy 30:15, 16, 19) Despite the most earnest efforts of parents, some children become unfaithful, as did Solomon, who wrote the verse we are considering. Even Jehovah had sons who proved unfaithful.

Thus, this scripture does not mean that in *every case* a child “will not turn aside from it” but that *generally speaking* this would be the result. What an encouragement this is to parents! Parents should take heart from knowing that their earnest efforts to train their children in the way of Jehovah will produce good results. Since their role is important and their influence is great, parents are encouraged to take their role seriously.—Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

Even when children turn aside from serving Jehovah, parents who have been conscientious in training their children can entertain the hope that their children will come to their senses. Bible truth is powerful, and parental training is not quickly forgotten.—Psalm 19:7.

*** w08 6/15 pp. 10-11 par. 19 Things From Which We Must Flee ***

¹⁹ *Read Proverbs 22:15.* The foolishness in the heart of a youth can easily lead him or her astray. Something that can help to counter this is Bible-based discipline. Many Christian youths whose parents do not share their faith seek to find and apply principles set out in the Bible. Others benefit from the wise advice of spiritually mature ones in the congregation. Regardless of who gives Bible-based counsel, submitting to it can lead to happiness both now and in the future.—Heb. 12:8-11.

*** w04 6/15 p. 14 par. 2 Rightly Value Your Gift of Life ***

² Your evaluation of life affects your relationships with others. For example, God’s Word directs: “Listen to your father who caused your birth, and do not despise your mother just because she has grown old.” (Proverbs 23:22) To “listen” means more than just to hear words; this proverb means to hear and then to obey. (Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:12; 13:18; 15:5; Joshua 22:2; Psalm 81:13) What reason does God’s Word give for listening? It is not just that your father and mother are older than you or have more experience. The reason given is that they “caused your birth.” Some versions render this verse: “Listen to your father who gave you life.” Understandably, if you value your life, you feel an obligation to the source of that life.



November

Nov. 7	Bible reading: Proverbs 27-31
No. 1:	Proverbs 28:19–29:10
No. 2:	How Does Reasoning on Romans 8:32 Assure Us That All of God’s Promises Will Be Fulfilled?
No. 3:	How Has Luke 21:11 Been Undergoing Fulfillment Since 1914? (rs p.236¶1-3)

Bible reading: Proverbs 27-31

*** w06 9/15 p. 19 Highlights From the Book of Proverbs ***

27:21. Praise can show us up for who we are. Humility is revealed if the praise moves us to acknowledge our indebtedness to Jehovah and encourages us to continue to serve him. A lack of humility is disclosed when praise fosters a feeling of superiority.

27:23-27. Using a pastoral setting, these proverbs emphasize the value of finding contentment in a simple life resulting from diligent work. They should especially impress on us the need to depend on God.

28:5. If we ‘seek Jehovah’ through prayer and a study of his Word, we “can understand everything” needed to serve him acceptably.

*** w00 2/1 pp. 30-31 A Mother’s Wise Counsel ***

A Capable Wife

Mothers are rightfully concerned with the marriage prospects of their sons who are approaching adulthood. Lemuel’s mother next turns her attention to the qualities of an ideal wife. No doubt, a young man would benefit greatly by considering a woman’s perspective on this important matter.

In verse 10, “a capable wife” is likened to rare and valuable corals, which in Bible times were obtained only with considerable effort. In a similar way, finding a capable wife requires effort. Rather than anxiously rushing into marriage, a young man would do well to take his time to be selective. Then, he would be more likely to value his precious find highly.

Regarding a capable wife, Lemuel is told: “In her the heart of her owner has put trust.” (Verse 11) In other words, he should not insist that his wife obtain his approval in every matter. Of course, marriage mates should consult with each other before making major decisions, such as those involving expensive purchases or the upbringing of their children. Communication in these areas contributes to a close bond between them.

A capable wife, of course, has many things to do. In verses 13 to 27 are listed counsel and principles that wives in any age can use for the benefit of their families. For example, with the rising cost of clothing and furnishings, a capable wife learns to be handy and thrifty so that her family is comfortably dressed and presentable. (Verses 13, 19, 21, 22) To reduce the family food bill, she grows what she can and shops carefully.—Verses 14, 16.

Obviously, this woman does not eat “the bread of laziness.” She works hard, and she efficiently coordinates her household’s activities. (Verse 27) She girds up “her hips with strength,” which means that she prepares to engage in physically demanding tasks. (Verse 17) She rises before the sun to begin her workday, and she works industriously into the night. It is as if the lamp that illuminates her work were always burning.—Verses 15, 18.

Above all, the capable wife is a spiritual person. She fears God and worships him with deep respect and reverential awe. (Verse 30) She likewise assists her husband in training their children to do the same. Verse 26 says: “In wisdom,” she instructs her children, and “the law of loving-kindness is upon her tongue.”

No. 1:	Proverbs 28:19–29:10
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No. 2:	How Does Reasoning on Romans 8:32 Assure Us That All of God’s Promises Will Be Fulfilled?
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*** w08 10/1 pp. 4-6 Foretelling the Messiah ***

Foretelling the Messiah

KNOWING what Isaiah and other prophets had written about the Messiah, the Jewish nation long anticipated his arrival. By Jesus’ day, in fact, many Jews “were in expectation” of the Messiah’s imminent appearance. (Luke 3:15)



Significantly, Bible prophecies include remarkable details of the Messiah's life. No mere human could either foretell such events or arrange for Jesus to experience them.

Details Surrounding the Messiah's Birth. Isaiah foretold that the Messiah, or Christ, would be born of a virgin. After describing the miraculous circumstances of Jesus' birth, the apostle Matthew wrote: "All this actually came about for that to be fulfilled which was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet, saying: 'Look! The virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son.'" (Matthew 1:22, 23; Isaiah 7:14) Isaiah also foretold that Christ would be a descendant of David, specifically mentioning Jesse, David's father. Jesus did indeed directly descend from David. (Matthew 1:6, 16; Luke 3:23, 31, 32) Thus, before the birth of Jesus, the angel Gabriel told Jesus' mother, Mary: "God will give him the throne of David *his father*."—Luke 1:32, 33; Isaiah 11:1-5, 10; Romans 15:12.

Details of the Messiah's Life. In the synagogue in Nazareth, the adult Jesus read aloud from Isaiah's prophecy, including these words: "Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news to the poor." Applying the prophecy to himself, Jesus stated: "Today this scripture that you just heard is fulfilled." (Luke 4:17-21; Isaiah 61:1, 2) Isaiah also foretold Jesus' kind, mild, and unassuming way of dealing with those in need of healing. Matthew writes: "Many also followed him, and he cured them all, but he strictly charged them not to make him manifest; that there might be fulfilled what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet . . . 'He will not wrangle, nor cry aloud . . . No bruised reed will he crush.'"—Matthew 8:16, 17; 12:10-21; Isaiah 42:1-4; 53:4, 5.

Details of the Messiah's Suffering. Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would not be accepted by the majority in Israel but would instead become "a stone of stumbling" to them. (1 Peter 2:6-8; Isaiah 8:14, 15) And indeed, despite Jesus' many miracles, the people "were not putting faith in him, so that the word of Isaiah the prophet was fulfilled which he said: 'Jehovah, who has put faith in the thing heard by us?'" (John 12:37, 38; Isaiah 53:1) Contributing to the Jews' lack of faith was the popular, though mistaken, belief that the Messiah would immediately rid the nation of Roman rule and restore an independent Davidic kingdom on earth. Because Jesus suffered and died, most Jews could not accept him as the Messiah. But, in fact, Isaiah had foretold that the Messiah would experience suffering before becoming King.

In the book of Isaiah, the Messiah prophetically says: "My back I gave to the strikers . . . My face I did not conceal from humiliating things and spit." Matthew reports what happened when Jesus was being tried: "They spit into his face and hit him with their fists. Others slapped him in the face." (Isaiah 50:6; Matthew 26:67) "He was letting himself be afflicted; yet he would not open his mouth," wrote Isaiah. Thus, when Pilate questioned Jesus about the Jews' accusations, Jesus "did not answer him, no, not a word, so that the governor wondered very much."—Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:12-14; Acts 8:28, 32-35.

Details of the Messiah's Death. Isaiah's prophecy continued to be fulfilled at Jesus' death and even afterward. Isaiah foretold: "He will make his burial place even with the wicked ones, and with the rich class in his death." (Isaiah 53:9) How could this apparently contradictory prophecy be fulfilled? When Jesus died, he was impaled between two robbers. (Matthew 27:38) But later, wealthy Joseph of Arimathea laid Jesus' body in his own newly quarried tomb. (Matthew 27:57-60) Finally, Jesus' death fulfilled one of the most important elements of Isaiah's prophecy. Speaking of the Messiah, Isaiah says: "The righteous one, my servant, will bring a righteous standing to many people; and their errors he himself will bear." Indeed, Jesus' death provided the ransom so that the burden of sin can be lifted from all faithful people.—Isaiah 53:8, 11; Romans 4:25.

Prophecies Certain of Fulfillment

To establish the identity of the Messiah Scripturally, the apostles and Jesus himself quoted more frequently from the prophecy of Isaiah than from any other Bible book. Still, the book of Isaiah was not the only one to foretell the future. Many other Hebrew Scripture prophecies also find fulfillment in Jesus, his Kingdom, and the good things that the Kingdom will accomplish in the future. (Acts 28:23; Revelation 19:10) How certain was it that these prophecies would be fulfilled? Jesus told his Jewish listeners: "Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets [that is, the Hebrew Scriptures]. I came, not to destroy, but to fulfill; for truly I say to you that sooner would heaven and earth pass away than for one smallest letter or one particle of a letter to pass away from the Law by any means and not all things take place."—Matthew 5:17, 18.

Jesus also pointed to the fulfillment of Bible prophecies in the events unfolding around him and in events to come. (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 15:7-9; 24:15) Further, Jesus and his disciples themselves foretold events that would occur after their day, including many that we have seen take place today. The following article will discuss these and other, yet future, fulfillments of Bible prophecy.



No. 3: How Has Luke 21:11 Been Undergoing Fulfillment Since 1914? (rs p.236¶1-3)

*** rs p. 236 - p. 237 Last Days ***

“There will be great earthquakes” (Luke 21:11)

It is true that there were major quakes in centuries past; furthermore, with their sensitive equipment scientists now detect more than a million quakes a year. But no special instruments are needed for people to know when there is a *great* earthquake.

Has there actually been a significant number of major earthquakes since 1914? With data obtained from the National Geophysical Data Center in Boulder, Colorado, supplemented by a number of standard reference works, a tabulation was made in 1984 that included only earthquakes that measured 7.5 or more on the Richter scale, or that resulted in destruction of five million dollars (U.S.) or more in property, or that caused 100 or more deaths. It was calculated that there had been 856 of such earthquakes during the 2,000 years before 1914. The same tabulation showed that in *just 69 years* following 1914 there were 605 of such quakes. That means that, in comparison with the previous 2,000 years, the average per year has been 20 times as great since 1914.

“In one place after another pestilences” (Luke 21:11)

At the close of the first world war the Spanish flu swept around the globe, claiming upwards of 20 million lives and at a rate unparalleled in the history of disease. Despite advances in medical science, a heavy toll is exacted every year by cancer, heart disease, numerous sexually transmitted diseases, multiple sclerosis, malaria, river blindness, and Chagas' disease.



November

Nov. 14	Bible reading: Ecclesiastes 1-6
No. 1:	Ecclesiastes 6:1-12
No. 2:	What Does the Increase in Lawlessness Indicate? (rs p. 237¶1-2)
No. 3:	* Why True Christians Heed the Counsel at Romans 12:19

Bible reading: Ecclesiastes 1-6

*** w06 11/1 pp. 13-15 Highlights From the Book of Ecclesiastes ***

1:4-10—What is there about the natural cycles that is “wearisome”? The congregator mentions only three of the basic operations that make life on earth possible—the sun, the wind pattern, and the water cycle. In reality, the natural cycles are many, and they are very complex. One can spend a lifetime studying them and still not fully understand them. That can indeed be “wearisome.” It is also frustrating to compare our short life span with the unending repetition of these cycles. Even attempts to make new discoveries are wearisome. After all, new inventions are nothing more than applications of principles that the true God has established and has already used in creation.

2:1, 2—Why is laughter spoken of as “insanity”? Laughter may help us to forget our troubles momentarily, and merrymaking can cause us to view our problems lightly. However, laughter does not make our difficulties disappear. Hence, the pursuit of happiness through laughter is spoken of as “insanity.”

3:11—What has God made “pretty in its time”? Some of the things that Jehovah God has made “pretty,” or appropriate and good, at the proper time are the creation of Adam and Eve, the rainbow covenant, the covenant with Abraham, the Davidic covenant, the coming of the Messiah, and the enthronement of Jesus Christ as King of God’s Kingdom. However, there is something else that Jehovah will make “pretty” in the near future. We can be confident that the righteous new world will become a reality at its right time.—2 Peter 3:13.

3:15b—How does ‘the true God keep seeking what is pursued’? ‘What is pursued’ may refer to what God purposes to do. While the repetitive cycles of birth and death and of war and peace may make man feel powerless and cause him to think that history keeps repeating itself, the true God can seek and accomplish all that He wants to. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-10, 15a) ‘What is pursued’ may also apply to the righteous, who are often pursued by the wicked. In this case, Jehovah keeps seeking righteous ones in order “to show his strength” in their behalf.—2 Chronicles 16:9.

5:9—How is ‘the profit of the earth among them all’? All inhabitants of the earth are dependent upon “the profit of the earth”—what the land produces. A king is no exception. To receive the produce of his field, the king has to be served by the hard work of his servants who cultivate the land.

1:15. It is futile to spend time and energy trying to correct the oppression and injustice that we see today. Only God’s Kingdom can do away with wickedness.—Daniel 2:44.

2:4-11. Cultural activities, such as architecture, gardening, and music, as well as luxurious living are “a striving after wind” because they neither make life truly meaningful nor bring lasting happiness.

2:12-16. Wisdom has the advantage over folly in that it can help solve certain problems. Concerning death, however, human wisdom has no advantage. And even if one may have gained fame because of having such wisdom, one is soon forgotten.

2:24; 3:12, 13, 22. Enjoying the fruits of our labor is not wrong.

2:26. Godly wisdom, which brings joy, is given to ‘a man who is good before Jehovah.’ It is impossible to gain this wisdom without having a good relationship with God.

3:16, 17. To expect justice in every case is unrealistic. Rather than feel anxious about what is happening in the world today, we should wait on Jehovah to set matters straight.

4:4. Hard work skillfully done can bring satisfaction. Working hard simply to outshine others, however, promotes competition and can breed feelings of ill will and jealousy. Our hard work in the Christian ministry must stem from right motives.

4:7-12. Human relationships are more important than material possessions and should not be sacrificed in the pursuit of riches.

4:13. Position and age do not always win respect. Those in responsible positions should act wisely.



4:15, 16. “The child, who is second”—the king’s successor—may initially have the support of ‘all those people before him,’ but ‘afterward they do not rejoice in him.’ Indeed, popularity is usually short-lived.

5:2. Our prayers should be thoughtful and reverential, not wordy.

5:3-7. Preoccupation with material concerns can prompt one to daydream about selfish interests. It can also put one in a restless, dreamy state of mind at night, depriving one of sweet sleep. An abundance of words can make a person appear foolish to others and can cause him to make a rash vow before God. ‘Fearing the true God’ prevents us from doing either of these things.

6:1-9. What good are riches, glory, long life, and even a large family if circumstances prevent us from enjoying them? And “better is the seeing by the eyes,” or facing realities, than “the walking about of the soul [“soulful desire,” footnote],” that is, striving to gratify desires that are impossible to satisfy. The best way to live, then, is to be content with “having sustenance and covering” while enjoying wholesome things in life and focusing on maintaining a close relationship with Jehovah.—1 Timothy 6:8.

No. 1: Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

No. 2: What Does the Increase in Lawlessness Indicate? (rs p. 237¶1-2)

*** rs p. 237 Last Days ***

‘Increased lawlessness accompanied by a cooling off of love on the part of the greater number’ (Matt. 24:11, 12)

A leading criminologist says: “The one thing that hits you in the eye when you look at crime on the world scale is a pervasive and persistent increase everywhere. Such exceptions as there are stand out in splendid isolation, and may soon be swamped in the rising tide.” (*The Growth of Crime*, New York, 1977, Sir Leon Radzinowicz and Joan King, pp. 4, 5) The increase is real; it is not merely a matter of better reporting. It is true, past generations had criminals too, but never before has crime been as pervasive as it is now. Persons who are up in years know that from personal experience.

The lawlessness referred to in the prophecy includes contempt for the known laws of God, a placing of self instead of God at the center of one’s life. As a result of this attitude, divorce rates are skyrocketing, sex outside of marriage and homosexuality are widely accepted, and tens of millions of abortions are performed every year. Such lawlessness is associated (in Matthew 24:11, 12) with the influence of false prophets, those who set aside God’s Word in favor of their own teachings. Heeding their philosophies instead of holding to the Bible contributes toward a loveless world. (1 John 4:8) Read the description of it at 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

No. 3: * Why True Christians Heed the Counsel at Romans 12:19

*** w09 10/15 p. 10 “Be Peaceable With All Men” ***

Vengeance Belongs to Jehovah

¹⁰ *Read Romans 12:19.* Even with “those not favorably disposed” toward our work and our message, including outright opposers, we will keep ourselves “restrained under evil” and act “with mildness.” (2 Tim. 2:23-25) Paul counsels Christians not to avenge themselves but to “yield place to the wrath.” To whose wrath is Paul referring? He could hardly mean that we should give free rein to our own wrath. Clearly, we yield place to God’s wrath. As Christians, we know that it does not belong to us to take vengeance. The psalmist wrote: “Let anger alone and leave rage; do not show yourself heated up only to do evil.” (Ps. 37:8) And Solomon counseled: “Do not say: ‘I will pay back evil!’ Hope in Jehovah, and he will save you.”—Prov. 20:22.

¹¹ If opposers do us harm, the wise course is to leave it to Jehovah to punish them if and when he sees fit. Showing that he had Jehovah’s wrath in mind, Paul added: “It is written: ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.’” (Compare Deuteronomy 32:35.) Were we to try to avenge ourselves, we would be acting presumptuously, taking it upon ourselves to do what Jehovah has reserved as his prerogative. Furthermore, we would be showing a lack of faith in Jehovah’s promise: “I will repay.”

¹² Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul stated: “God’s wrath is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who are suppressing the truth in an unrighteous way.” (Rom. 1:18) Jehovah’s wrath will be revealed from heaven by means of his Son at the time of “the great tribulation.” (Rev. 7:14) That will be “proof of the righteous judgment of God,” as Paul explained in another of his inspired letters: “This takes into account that it is righteous on God’s part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you, but, to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.”—2 Thess. 1:5-8.



*** w08 3/15 pp. 3-5 Be Yielding, Be Balanced ***

Why Be Yielding?

⁵ An example from pre-Christian times focuses on the right motive for being yielding. Under the Mosaic Law, Hebrews who had become slaves were to be set free in the seventh year of their servitude or in the Jubilee year, whichever came first. But a slave could choose to remain a slave. (*Read Exodus 21:5, 6.*) What could prompt a slave to do this? Love prompted the slave to remain in that situation, under the authority of his considerate master.

⁶ In a similar way, our love for Jehovah moves us to dedicate our lives to him and then to live up to our dedication. (Rom. 14:7, 8) “This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome,” wrote the apostle John. (1 John 5:3) This love does not look for its own interests. (1 Cor. 13:4, 5) When we deal with other humans, love of neighbor inclines us to yield and allow them the first place. Instead of allowing selfishness to rule, we consider the interests of others.—Phil. 2:2, 3.

⁷ Neither our speech nor our actions should stumble others. (Eph. 4:29) Indeed, love will impel us to avoid doing anything that might hinder people of different backgrounds and cultures from progressing toward serving Jehovah. This often involves our being yielding. For example, missionary sisters accustomed to wearing cosmetics or nylons do not insist on using them in localities where that might call their morals into question and stumble others.—1 Cor. 10:31-33.

⁸ Our love for Jehovah helps us to banish pride. After a dispute among the disciples as to who was the greatest, Jesus stood a young child in their midst. He explained: “Whoever receives this young child on the basis of my name receives me too, and whoever receives me receives him also that sent me forth. For he that conducts himself as a lesser one among all of you is the one that is great.” (Luke 9:48; Mark 9:36) Individually, we may find it a real challenge to conduct ourselves as “a lesser one.” Inherited imperfection and a tendency to be proud may motivate us to seek prominence, but humility will help us to yield.—Rom. 12:10.

⁹ To be yielding, we must take into account divinely constituted authority. All true Christians recognize the important principle of headship. The apostle Paul outlined this clearly to the Corinthians: “I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ; in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God.”—1 Cor. 11:3.

¹⁰ Yielding to God’s authority demonstrates our trust and confidence in him as our loving Father. He is aware of all that happens and can reward us accordingly. It is helpful to bear that in mind when others do not treat us with respect or they become angry and lose their temper. Paul wrote: “If possible, as far as it depends upon you, be peaceable with all men.” Paul punctuated that advice with this directive: “Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.’”—Rom. 12:18, 19.

¹¹ Divinely constituted authority is also a factor within the Christian congregation. Revelation chapter 1 depicts Christ Jesus as holding the “stars” of the congregation in his right hand. (Rev. 1:16, 20) In a general sense, these “stars” represent the bodies of elders, or overseers, in the congregations. Such appointed overseers yield to Christ’s leadership and imitate his kindly way of dealing with others. All in the congregation submit to the arrangement that Jesus made for “the faithful and discreet slave” to provide spiritual food at the proper time. (Matt. 24:45-47) Today, our willingness to study and apply this material demonstrates that we personally are yielding to Christ’s headship, which contributes to peace and unity.—Rom. 14:13, 19.

*** w07 7/1 pp. 25-26 “Return Evil for Evil to No One” ***

“Do Not Avenge Yourselves”

¹⁵ Paul gives another compelling reason why we should not retaliate; it is the modest course to follow. He states: “Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.’” (Romans 12:19) A Christian who tries to take revenge is presumptuous. He claims for himself a role that belongs to God. (Matthew 7:1) Moreover, by taking matters into his own hands, he shows a lack of faith in Jehovah’s assurance: “I will repay.” In contrast, true Christians trust that Jehovah will “cause justice to be done for his chosen ones.” (Luke 18:7, 8; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8) They modestly leave the avenging of wrong in God’s hands.—Jeremiah 30:23, 24; Romans 1:18.

¹⁶ Taking vengeance on an enemy would likely harden his spirit, but treating him with kindness may soften his heart. Why? Note Paul’s words to the Christians in Rome. He says: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by doing this you will heap fiery coals upon his head.” (Romans 12:20; Proverbs 25:21, 22) What does this mean?

¹⁷ To “heap fiery coals upon his head” is a figure of speech drawn from the method of smelting metals in Bible times. Ore was put into a furnace, and a layer of coals was put not only underneath the ore but also on top of it. Fiery coals heaped on top increased the heat so that the hard metal melted and separated from the impurities in the ore. Similarly, by doing kind deeds to an opposer, we may “melt” his hardness and bring out his better qualities. (2 Kings 6:14-23) In fact, numerous members of the Christian congregation were first attracted to true worship by the kind deeds that Jehovah’s servants performed in their behalf.



November

Nov. 21	Bible reading: Ecclesiastes 7-12
No. 1:	Ecclesiastes 9:13–10:11
No. 2:	Love Is Not Jealous (1 Cor.13:4)
No. 3:	How Does the Sign of the Last Days Affect True Christians? (rs p.238¶2, 3)

Bible reading: Ecclesiastes 7-12

*** w06 11/1 pp. 15-16 Highlights From the Book of Ecclesiastes ***

7:19—How is wisdom stronger than “ten men in power”? When used figuratively in the Bible, the number ten represents completeness. Solomon is saying that the protective value of wisdom is greater than a complete number of warriors guarding a city.

10:2—What does it mean that one’s heart is “at his right hand” or “at his left hand”? Since the right hand often denotes the position of favor, a person’s heart being at his right hand means that his heart motivates him to do good. If it moves an individual to pursue a wrong course, though, his heart is said to be at his left hand.

10:15—How does “the hard work of the stupid ones make them weary”? If someone lacks good judgment, his hard work fails to produce anything really worthwhile. He gains no satisfaction from it. Such tireless striving only makes him weary.

11:7, 8—What is the meaning of the statement: “The light is also sweet, and it is good for the eyes to see the sun.” The light and the sun are for the enjoyment of the living. Solomon is stating here that it is good to be alive and that we should “rejoice” before the days of darkness, or old age, rob us of vitality.

11:10—Why are “youth and the prime of life” vanity? If not used properly, these are vanity because, like vapor, the days of youthful vigor disappear quickly.

7:6. Laughter at an inappropriate time is as irritating and useless as the crackling of thorns burning under a pot. We do well to guard against it.

7:21, 22. We should not be overly concerned about what others say.

8:2, 3; 10:4. When we are criticized or corrected by a supervisor or an employer, it is wise to remain calm. This is better than to ‘hurry and go out from before him,’ that is, to resign hastily.

8:8; 9:5-10, 12. Our life can end as unexpectedly as when fish are caught in a net or birds in a trap. Moreover, no one can restrain the life force from departing at death, nor can anyone be discharged from the war that death wages against mankind. Hence, we should not idly waste time. Jehovah wants us to value life and enjoy it in a wholesome way. To do this, we should give Jehovah’s service the first place in our life.

8:16, 17. The full scope of everything that God has done and has allowed to happen among mankind cannot be fathomed, even if we were to lose sleep over it. Worrying about all the wrongs that have been committed will only rob us of enjoyment in life.

9:16-18. Wisdom is to be valued even when there is a general lack of appreciation for it. The calmly spoken words of a wise person are to be preferred to the boisterous shouts of a stupid one.

10:1. We must be careful about our speech and actions. Just one indiscretion, such as an angry outburst, one act of the misuse of alcohol, or an incident involving unchaste sexual behavior, is enough to ruin the good reputation of a respected person.

10:5-11. An incompetent person in high office is not to be envied. Incompetence in performing even a simple task can have bad consequences. Rather, cultivating the ability to ‘use wisdom to succeed’ is advantageous. How important it is that we become competent in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work!

11:1, 2. We should practice wholehearted generosity. It begets generosity.—Luke 6:38.

11:3-6. Life’s uncertainties should not make us indecisive.

11:9; 12:1-7. Young people are accountable to Jehovah. Therefore, they should use their time and energy in God’s service before old age robs them of their vigor.



No. 1: Ecclesiastes 9:13–10:11

No. 2: Love Is Not Jealous (1 Cor.13:4)

*** w02 10/15 pp. 28-31 **Should Christians Be Jealous?** ***

Should Christians Be Jealous?

JEALOUSY—is it a quality that Christians should cultivate? As Christians, we are encouraged to “pursue love,” and we are told that “love is not jealous.” (1 Corinthians 13:4; 14:1) On the other hand, we are also told that “Jehovah . . . is a jealous God” and are commanded to “become imitators of God.” (Exodus 34:14; Ephesians 5:1) Why the seeming contradiction?

It is because the Hebrew and Greek words translated “jealousy” in the Bible carry a wide range of meanings. They can have either a positive or a negative connotation, depending on how the words are used. For instance, the Hebrew word translated “jealousy” can mean “insistence on exclusive devotion; toleration of no rivalry; zeal; ardor; jealousy [righteous or sinful]; envying.” The corresponding Greek word has a similar meaning. These words can refer to a warped, distorted emotion toward a suspected rival or one believed to be enjoying an advantage. (Proverbs 14:30) They can also refer to a positive expression of a God-given quality—wanting to protect a loved one from harm.—2 Corinthians 11:2.

The Superlative Example

Jehovah sets the superlative example in exercising proper jealousy. His motives are pure and clean, prompted by the desire to keep his people from spiritual and moral corruption. Of his ancient people, figuratively spoken of as Zion, he said: “I will be jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and with great rage I will be jealous for her.” (Zechariah 8:2) Just as a loving father is ever alert to protect his children from harm, Jehovah is alert to protect his servants from physical and spiritual danger.

To safeguard his people, Jehovah provided his Word, the Bible. It contains much encouragement for them to walk wisely, and it is rich in examples of those who did. At Isaiah 48:17, we read: “I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk.” How comforting it is to know that his jealousy moves him to care for and to watch over us! If he were not jealous in this good way, we would suffer all kinds of harm because of our inexperience. Jehovah’s expressions of jealousy are in no way selfish.

So, then, what makes the difference between godly jealousy and improper jealousy? To find out, let us consider the example of Miriam and that of Phinehas. Notice what moved them.

Miriam and Phinehas

Miriam was the older sister of Moses and Aaron, the leaders of the Israelites during the Exodus. While the Israelites were in the wilderness, Miriam became jealous of her brother Moses. The Bible record reads: “Now Miriam and Aaron began to speak against Moses on account of the Cushite wife whom he had taken . . . And they kept saying: ‘Is it just by Moses alone that Jehovah has spoken? Is it not by us also that he has spoken?’” Apparently, Miriam took the lead in this move against Moses, for Jehovah disciplined Miriam, not Aaron, with a week-long case of leprosy for her disrespectful conduct.—Numbers 12:1-15.

What prompted Miriam to act against Moses? Was it concern for true worship and a desire to protect fellow Israelites from harm? Evidently not. It appears that Miriam had allowed an improper desire for more prestige and authority to well up in her heart. As a prophetess in Israel, she enjoyed great respect from the people, particularly the women. She led them in music and song after Israel’s miraculous salvation at the Red Sea. Now, though, Miriam might have become unduly concerned about losing some of her prominence to a suspected rival, the wife of Moses. Moved by selfish jealousy, she stirred up contention against Moses, the one appointed by Jehovah.—Exodus 15:1, 20, 21.

Phinehas, on the other hand, had a different motive for his actions. Shortly before entering the Promised Land, when Israel was encamped on the Plains of Moab, Moabite and Midianite women lured many Israelite males into immorality and idolatry. To cleanse the camp and turn back Jehovah’s burning anger, the judges of Israel were instructed to kill all the men who had thus deflected. For immoral purposes, the Simeonite chieftain Zimri brazenly brought the Midianite woman Cozbi into the camp “before the eyes of all the assembly of the sons of Israel.” Phinehas acted decisively. Impelled by feelings of jealousy, or zeal, for Jehovah’s worship and a desire to maintain the moral purity of the camp, he executed the fornicators in their tent. He was commended for his “jealous anger,” “tolerating no rivalry at all” toward Jehovah. Phinehas’ prompt action stopped the punishing scourge that had already claimed the lives of 24,000, and Jehovah rewarded him with a covenant for the priesthood to remain in his line to time indefinite.—Numbers 25:4-13; *The New English Bible*.



What was the difference between these two expressions of jealousy? Miriam acted against her brother out of selfish jealousy, while Phinehas executed justice based on godly jealousy. There are times when we, like Phinehas, should feel compelled to speak up or to take some action in defense of Jehovah's name, his worship, and his people.

Misguided Jealousy

Is it possible, though, to hold feelings of misplaced or misguided jealousy? Yes, it is. This was the general case with the Jews in the first century. They jealously guarded the God-given Law and their traditions. In their efforts to protect the Law, they formed innumerable detailed regulations and restrictions that became a heavy burden on the people. (Matthew 23:4) Unable or unwilling to recognize that God had now replaced the Mosaic Law with the reality that it had foreshadowed, their jealousy wrongly moved them to vent uncontrolled rage at the followers of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, who himself was once jealously loyal to the Law in a misguided sense, pointed out that people who were defending the Law had "a zeal [jealousy] for God; but not according to accurate knowledge."—Romans 10:2; Galatians 1:14.

Even many of the Jews who became Christians had a hard time ridding themselves of this inordinate zeal for the Law. After his third missionary tour, Paul gave a report to the first-century governing body on the conversion of the nations. At that time, thousands of Christian Jews were "all zealous for the Law." (Acts 21:20) This was years after the governing body had ruled that the Gentile Christians did not have to be circumcised. Issues related to observing the Law had been causing strife in the congregation. (Acts 15:1, 2, 28, 29; Galatians 4:9, 10; 5:7-12) Lacking full understanding of how Jehovah now dealt with his people, some Jewish Christians insisted on their own viewpoints, criticizing others.—Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1.

We, then, must avoid the snare of jealously trying to protect our own cherished ideas or ways that are not solidly based on God's Word. We do well to accept the fresh light shed on the Word of God through the channel that Jehovah is using today.

Be Jealous for Jehovah

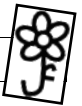
Godly jealousy, however, has its place in true worship. When we tend to be unduly concerned with our own reputation or rights, godly jealousy turns our attention to Jehovah. It moves us to seek out avenues to declare the truth about him, defending his ways and his people.

Akiko, a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, was sternly rebuffed by a householder who had misconceptions about God's law on blood. Akiko tactfully defended God's Word, even mentioning the medical complications and problems associated with blood transfusions. Moved by an ardent desire to talk about Jehovah, she turned the conversation to what she discerned was the real basis for the woman's objections—her lack of belief in the existence of a Creator. Akiko reasoned with the householder on how creation supported belief in a Creator. Her bold defense led not only to the removing of unfounded prejudices but also to a home Bible study with the woman. Today the formerly irate householder is a praiser of Jehovah.

Proper jealousy, or zeal, for true worship compels us to be alert and to seize opportunities to talk about and defend our faith at work, in school, at the store, and while traveling. Midori, for example, makes it a point to speak about her faith to her workmates. One colleague who was in her 40's said that she wanted nothing to do with Jehovah's Witnesses. Later, during another conversation, the woman complained of her daughter's developing a personality problem. Midori showed her the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, and she offered to arrange a study in the book with the daughter. A study was started, but the mother did not sit in on the discussion. Midori decided to show the woman the video *Jehovah's Witnesses—The Organization Behind the Name*.^{*} This cleared up many of her misimpressions. Moved by what she saw, she said: "I want to be like Jehovah's Witnesses." She joined her daughter in studying the Bible.

Proper jealousy has its place in the Christian congregation too. It fosters a warm spirit of love and concern and moves us to resist disruptive influences that would harm our spiritual brothers, such as damaging gossip and apostate thinking. Godly jealousy moves us to support the decisions of the elders, who on occasion find it necessary to reprove wrongdoers. (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 1 Timothy 5:20) Writing about his jealous feelings for fellow believers in the Corinthian congregation, Paul said: "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I personally promised you in marriage to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to the Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2) So, too, our jealousy moves us to do all we can to protect the doctrinal, spiritual, and moral purity of all in the congregation.

Yes, properly motivated jealousy—godly jealousy—has a wholesome influence on others. It elicits Jehovah's approval and should be one of the qualities observed in Christians today.—John 2:17.



No. 3: How Does the Sign of the Last Days Affect True Christians? (rs p.238¶2, 3)

*** rs p. 238 Last Days ***

'Christ's true followers to be objects of hatred by all nations on account of his name' (Matt. 24:9)

This persecution is not because of political meddling but 'on account of the name of Jesus Christ,' because his followers adhere to him as Jehovah's Messianic King, because of their obeying Christ ahead of any earthly ruler, because of their loyally adhering to his Kingdom and not becoming involved in the affairs of human governments. As modern-day history testifies, that has been the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses in all parts of the earth.

'This good news of the kingdom preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness' (Matt. 24:14)

The message that would be preached is that God's Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ has begun to rule in the heavens, that soon it will put an end to the entire wicked system of things, that under its rule mankind will be brought to perfection and earth will become a paradise. That good news is being preached today in over 200 lands and island groups, to the most distant parts of the earth. Jehovah's Witnesses devote hundreds of millions of hours to this activity each year, making repeated house-to-house visits so that everyone possible is given the opportunity to hear.



November

Nov. 28	Bible reading: The Song of Solomon 1-8
No.1:	Song of Solomon 1:1-17
No. 2:	Why Do Jehovah’s Witnesses Say That the Last Days Began in 1914? (rs p.239¶2–p.240¶1)
No. 3:	* How Can We Earn the Respect of Others?

Bible reading: The Song of Solomon 1-8

*** w06 11/15 pp. 18-20 Highlights From the Song of Solomon ***

1:2, 3—Why is the remembrance of the shepherd boy’s expressions of endearment like wine and his name like oil? Just as wine makes the heart of a man rejoice and the pouring of oil on the head is soothing, the memory of the boy’s love and his name strengthened and comforted the maiden. (Psalm 23:5; 104:15) True Christians, particularly anointed ones, likewise find strength and encouragement in reflecting upon the love that Jesus Christ has shown toward them.

1:5—Why does the country girl liken her swarthy appearance to “the tents of Kedar”? Goat’s hair, made into fabric, had many uses. (Numbers 31:20) For example, “cloths of goat’s hair” were used to make “the tent upon the tabernacle.” (Exodus 26:7) As is true of Bedouin tents even today, the tents of Kedar may well have been made of black goat’s hair.

1:15—What does the shepherd boy mean when he says: “Your eyes are those of doves”? The shepherd boy is saying that the eyes of his girl companion are soft and gentle in appearance, as are those of doves.

2:7; 3:5—Why are the court ladies put under oath “by the female gazelles or by the hinds of the field”? Gazelles and hinds are noted for their gracefulness and beauty. In effect, the Shulammitte maiden is obligating the court ladies by everything that is graceful and beautiful to refrain from trying to awaken love in her.

1:2; 2:6. Clean expressions of endearment may be appropriate during courtship. However, a couple should take care that these are manifestations of genuine affection and not of unclean passion, which may pave the way for sexual immorality.—Galatians 5:19.

1:6; 2:10-15. The Shulammitte’s brothers did not allow their sister to go with her beloved to an isolated place in the mountains but not because she was immoral or did not have proper motives. Rather, they took a precautionary measure intended to prevent her from getting into a situation that might lead to temptation. The lesson for courting couples is that they should avoid secluded places.

2:1-3, 8, 9. Though beautiful, the Shulammitte maiden modestly viewed herself as “a mere saffron [a common flower] of the coastal plain.” Because of her beauty and faithfulness to Jehovah, the shepherd boy thought of her as “a lily among thorny weeds.” And what can be said about him? Because he was handsome, to her he resembled “a gazelle.” He must also have been spiritually inclined and devoted to Jehovah. “Like an apple tree [that provides shade and fruit] among the trees of the forest,” she says, “so is my dear one among the sons.” Are not faith and devotion to God desirable qualities to look for in a prospective marriage mate?

2:7; 3:5. The country girl felt no romantic attraction to Solomon. She also put the court ladies under oath not to try to arouse in her love for anyone other than the shepherd boy. It is neither possible nor proper to feel romantic love for just anyone. A single Christian desiring to marry should consider only a loyal servant of Jehovah.—1 Corinthians 7:39.

4:1; 6:5—Why is the maiden’s hair compared to “a drove of goats”? The comparison suggests that her hair was shiny and luxuriant like the black hair of goats.

4:11—What is significant about the Shulammitte’s ‘lips dripping with comb honey’ and ‘honey and milk being under her tongue’? Comb honey is more flavorful and sweeter than honey that has been exposed to air. This comparison, as well as the idea that honey and milk were under the maiden’s tongue, emphasizes the goodness and pleasantness of the words spoken by the Shulammitte.

5:12—What is the thought behind the expression “his eyes are like doves by the channels of water, which are bathing themselves in milk”? The maiden is speaking of her beloved’s beautiful eyes. Perhaps she is poetically likening the dark iris surrounded by the white of his eyes to blue-gray doves bathing in milk.

5:14, 15—Why are the shepherd’s hands and legs described in this way? The maiden is apparently referring to the shepherd’s fingers as gold cylinders and to his nails as chrysolite. She likens his legs to “pillars of marble” because they are strong and beautiful.



6:4, footnote—Does “Pleasant City” refer to Jerusalem? No. “Pleasant City” is “Tirzah.” This Canaanite city was captured by Joshua, and after Solomon’s time it became the first capital of the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. (Joshua 12:7, 24; 1 Kings 16:5, 6, 8, 15) “It appears that the city must have been a very beautiful one,” says one reference work, “which would account for its mention here.”

6:13, footnote—What is “the dance of two camps”? This expression can also be rendered the “dance of Mahanaim.” The city bearing that name was located on the east side of the Jordan River near the torrent valley of Jabbok. (Genesis 32:2, 22; 2 Samuel 2:29) “The dance of two camps” may refer to a certain dance held at that city in connection with a festival.

7:4—Why does Solomon liken the neck of the Shulammitte maiden to “an ivory tower”? Earlier, the girl received this compliment: “Your neck is like the tower of David.” (Song of Solomon 4:4) A tower is long and slender, and ivory is smooth. Solomon is impressed with the slenderness and the smoothness of the girl’s neck.

4:7. By resisting Solomon’s enticements, the Shulammitte, though imperfect, proved herself to be without moral defect. Her moral strength thus enhanced her physical beauty. That should also be true of Christian women.

4:12. Like a beautiful garden enclosed by a hedge or a wall, which could be accessed only through a locked gate, the Shulammitte maiden made her tender affections available only to her future husband. What a fine example for unmarried Christian women and men!

No.1: Song of Solomon 1:1-17

No. 2: Why Do Jehovah’s Witnesses Say That the Last Days Began in 1914? (rs p.239¶2–p.240¶1)

*** rs p. 239 - p. 240 Last Days ***

Why do Jehovah’s Witnesses say that it was in 1914 that “the last days” began?

The year 1914 is marked by Bible prophecy. For details regarding the chronology, see pages 95-97, under the main heading “Dates.” The correctness of the date is shown by the fact that world conditions foretold to mark this time period have come to pass since 1914 exactly as foretold. The facts set out above illustrate this.

How do secular historians view the year 1914?

“Looking back from the vantage point of the present we see clearly today that the outbreak of World War I ushered in a twentieth-century ‘Time of Troubles’—in the expressive term of the British historian Arnold Toynbee—from which our civilization has by no means yet emerged. Directly or indirectly all the convulsions of the last half century stem back to 1914.”—*The Fall of the Dynasties: The Collapse of the Old Order* (New York, 1963), Edmond Taylor, p. 16.

“People of the World War II generation, my generation, will always think of their conflict as the great modern watershed of change. . . . We should be allowed our vanity, our personal rendezvous with history. But we should know that, in social terms, a far more decisive change came with World War I. It was then that political and social systems, centuries in the building, came apart—sometimes in a matter of weeks. And others were permanently transformed. It was in World War I that the age-old certainties were lost. . . . World War II continued, enlarged and affirmed this change. In social terms World War II was the last battle of World War I.”—*The Age of Uncertainty* (Boston, 1977), John K. Galbraith, p. 133.

“Half a century has gone by, yet the mark that the tragedy of the Great War [World War I, which started in 1914] left on the body and soul of the nations has not faded . . . The physical and moral magnitude of this ordeal was such that nothing left was the same as before. Society in its entirety: systems of government, national borders, laws, armed forces, interstate relations, but also ideologies, family life, fortunes, positions, personal relations—everything was changed from top to bottom. . . . Humanity finally lost its balance, never to recover it to this day.”—General Charles de Gaulle, speaking in 1968 (*Le Monde*, Nov. 12, 1968, p. 9).

No. 3: * How Can We Earn the Respect of Others?

*** g92 3/8 pp. 18-20 How Can I Make Others Respect Me? ***

**Young People Ask . . .
How Can I Make Others Respect Me?**

“Sometimes when you start talking to an adult, it’s like talking to a wall.”—Paul.



“I hate it when grown-ups don’t trust you.”—Matt.

“My parents either ignore me or pretend to listen, but they don’t. You talk and talk and ask, ‘Did you hear me?’ and they answer, ‘Uh-huh.’ They really don’t know what you said.”—Paula.

RESPECT—why is it so hard to get others to treat you with just a little respect? You want to be heard, to be taken seriously. So when grown-ups—especially your parents—and peers ignore you, make light of your feelings, talk down to you, or put you in your place, it can really hurt.

It’s only natural to want to be esteemed by others. The Bible itself encourages us to “find favor and good insight in the eyes of God and of earthling man.” (Proverbs 3:4) And godly youths in Bible times did so. For instance, the young man named Timothy had the privilege of accompanying the apostle Paul on his missionary journeys. Why? He was “well reported on by the brothers,” having gained their respect. (Acts 16:1, 2) And there is Jesus himself, who as a youth “went on progressing in wisdom and in physical growth and in favor with God and men.”—Luke 2:52.

True, you are not Jesus. And gaining the respect of others is not easy when you’re young. For one thing, the Bible associates youth with ‘inexperience’ and unbridled energy; knowledge and wisdom come with age. (Proverbs 1:4; 20:29; Job 32:6, 7) Generally, then, people do not give youths the same respect they give adults. Unfair? Perhaps. But it is a fact of life you must deal with. Furthermore, many youths have made a bad name for themselves. As a result, some adults mistakenly think that *all* youths are “rebellious,” “irresponsible,” or “crazy.”

In some lands, culture, tradition, and rapid social changes have widened the gap between youths and adults. In Africa, for example, many youths have educational advantages their parents did not have. Furthermore, they may find themselves in constant conflict with their elders who are guided by the traditional norms. Older ones are often greatly irritated by what they perceive as disrespect or even rebellion on the part of youths.

Whatever your situation, it will take real initiative and hard work for you to win the respect of others. But it can be done.

Something to Be Earned

First, realize that respect is not something bestowed upon you simply because you want it, nor can you *make* someone respect you. Respect is something that you earn. In Bible times the man Job was highly respected in his community. “Young men stepped aside as soon as they saw me,” Job recalled, “and old men stood up to show me respect.” However, Job clearly earned such respect. “Everyone who saw me or heard of me had good things to say about what I had done,” Job explained. Yes, Job had a consistent record of upright conduct.—Job 29:7-17, *Today’s English Version*.

What kind of record have you established for yourself? Have you applied the counsel given Timothy? “Let no man ever look down on your youth,” Paul said. “On the contrary, become an example to the faithful ones in speaking, in conduct, in love, in faith, in chasteness.” (1 Timothy 4:12) You too can become an example worthy of respect. Studying God’s Word can help you do so. The psalmist said: “How I do love your law! . . . More insight than all my teachers I have come to have, because your reminders are a concern to me. With more understanding than older men I behave, because I have observed your own orders.”—Psalm 119:97, 99, 100.

Fellow Christians are sure to respect you if you develop such spiritual insight. Note, however, that you must also ‘observe,’ or apply, the Bible’s counsel. An African youth named Charles took seriously the Bible’s command to “make disciples” and became a full-time evangelizer at the age of 16 and now serves at a branch office of the Watch Tower Society. (Matthew 28:19, 20) His faithful example in speaking has caused others to respect him and resulted in much personal joy. He says: “Life in this service is just fascinating. Working closely with godly men with vast experience has really built me up. It’s a joy beyond compare.”

Ways to Earn Respect

Another important way to earn respect is to become an example in conduct. Salome, a young African Witness, recalls of her youth: “I did not go along with the crowd. Rather, I fought hard to uphold Christian principles at all times. I tried to be serious-minded, polite, and respectful to others—even kids.” True, you may get mocked and teased for being different. (1 Peter 4:4) But as in Salome’s case, others will often begrudgingly respect you for it.

Note, too, that Salome made a point of being respectful to others. Respect begets respect. Romans 12:10 thus says: “In showing honor to one another take the lead.” Lying and bending the truth, cruel teasing, making other people the butt of jokes, bossing or bullying—these are not ways of treating others with honor. In the long run, they undermine what respect others have for you.

It is particularly important that we show honor and respect to those in positions of authority. (1 Peter 2:17) For example, a law enforcement officer once said: “Kids today seldom say, ‘Sir.’” How do you treat those in authority—



teachers, police officers, school administrators? If you have a reputation for being respectful to authority figures, it is far more likely that such ones will treat you with a measure of respect.—Compare Matthew 7:2.

Respecting Older Ones

In certain cultures there are long-standing rules of etiquette that a youth is expected to follow. In Ghana, for instance, many older ones do not take kindly to a youth who talks to them with his hands in his pockets or who gestures to them with his left hand. Such social norms may seem strange to Westerners and old-fashioned even to some African youths, but they are not objectionable to Christians. Indeed, the Bible encourages us to avoid offending others needlessly.—2 Corinthians 6:3.

A common saying in Ghana is: “A child is supposed to unshell snails but not tortoises.” In other words, certain roles are expected to be filled by adults, not youths. This may very well seem unfair and demeaning to you. But one who bucks local culture by usurping adult authority will usually be thought of as impertinent. You will do far more to win others’ respect if you recognize your subordinate role and learn to cope with it.

The Bible says at Leviticus 19:32: “Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show consideration for the person of an old man, and you must be in fear of your God. I am Jehovah.” When riding public transportation, do you willingly give up your seat for elderly ones? When conversing, are you careful to mind your language? Do you listen in a respectful way?

Gaining Respect for Your Beliefs

What, though, if others disrespect you because of your religious beliefs? For example, youths among Jehovah’s Witnesses are often pressured by teachers and peers to participate in patriotic ceremonies and religious activities that violate Bible principles. Unable to fathom why Witness youths take such courageous stands, others may view their beliefs with disdain. Witness youths may even be subjected to hostility.

Consider, though, how an African youth we’ll call Kwasi conducted himself. “I never dodged classes,” he explains, “and I supported activities that did not violate my conscience. More important, I made my stand as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses clear right from the outset.” Kwasi’s honesty, seriousness, and firm principles endeared him to teachers and students alike. He adds: “I had to explain my stand sometimes—once to the principal and his whole staff—but my views were always respected.”

Yes, conduct yourself in a manner that commands respect. Without forcing your beliefs on others, be “always ready to make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you, but doing so together with a mild temper and deep respect.” (1 Peter 3:15) Avoid behaving in any way that could cause ‘the word of God to be spoken of abusively.’ (Titus 2:5) That would include avoiding outlandish dress and grooming styles and adopting independent or rebellious attitudes.

Of course, the Bible encourages you to ‘rejoice in your youth,’ and no one expects you to act like a 50-year-old. (Ecclesiastes 11:9) But by being an example in your speech and conduct, you can win the respect and confidence of others.



December

Dec. 5	Bible reading: Isaiah 1-5
No. 1:	Isaiah 3:16–4:6
No. 2:	Why Must We Maintain Our Sense of Urgency?
No. 3:	Will Anyone Be Alive on Earth After the End of the Present World System? (rs p.240¶2-5)

Bible reading: Isaiah 1-5

*** w06 12/1 pp. 8-10 Highlights From the Book of Isaiah—I ***

1:8, 9—How is the daughter of Zion to be “left remaining like a booth in a vineyard, like a lookout hut in a field of cucumbers”? This means that during the Assyrian invasion, Jerusalem will look extremely vulnerable, like a mere booth in a vineyard or an easily collapsible hut in a cucumber field. But Jehovah comes to her aid and thus does not allow her to become like Sodom and Gomorrah.

1:18—What is meant by the words: “Come, now, you people, and let us set matters straight between us”? This is not an invitation to talk things over and reach a mutual agreement by having give-and-take discussions. Instead, the verse refers to establishing a forum of justice in which the righteous Judge, Jehovah, gives Israel an opportunity to change and cleanse herself.

1:3. To refuse to live by what our Creator requires of us is to know less than a bull or an ass. On the other hand, building appreciation for all that Jehovah has done for us will deter us from behaving without understanding and leaving him.

1:11-13. Hypocritical religious ceremonies and formalistic prayers are wearisome to Jehovah. Our actions and prayers should stem from a right heart motive.

1:25-27; 2:2; 4:2, 3. Slavery and the desolation of Judah were to end with the return of the repentant remnant to Jerusalem and the restoration of true worship. Jehovah is merciful to repentant wrongdoers.

2:2-4. Our having a zealous share in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work helps individuals from many nations to learn the ways of peace and to pursue peace with one another.

4:4. Jehovah will remove, or wash away, moral filthiness and bloodguilt.

5:11-13. To shed restraint and moderation in one’s choice of recreation is to refuse to act according to knowledge.—Romans 13:13.

5:21-23. Christian elders, or overseers, must avoid being “wise in their own eyes.” They also need to exercise moderation in “drinking wine” and must refrain from showing favoritism.

No. 1:	Isaiah 3:16–4:6
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No. 2:	Why Must We Maintain Our Sense of Urgency?
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*** w95 10/1 pp. 25-28 Guard Your Sense of Urgency ***

WHAT is one sure, God-approved way to keep on serving Jehovah whole-souled? It is to have a genuine sense of urgency deep in our hearts. To serve God in a whole-souled manner means to serve him with the whole of our being, and it requires earnest, implicit obedience to everything he asks us to do.

The prophet Moses stressed this need when he instructed the nation of Israel: “You must love Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your vital force.” (Deuteronomy 6:5) Centuries later that same command was repeated by Christ Jesus: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.” (Matthew 22:37) The apostle Paul alluded to this same requirement when he told the Ephesians to do “the will of God whole-souled,” and when he urged the Colossians: “Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men.”—Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:23.

It is difficult, however, to put our heart and soul into our service to God if we do not have a feeling of urgency deep within ourselves or if the sense of urgency we once had has now become dull—perhaps lost altogether. Today, we live in a time of urgency unparalleled by any other period in man’s history.

Specific Periods of Urgency

In pre-Christian times there were several periods of urgency. Noah’s day and the period leading up to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah certainly were times of real urgency. (2 Peter 2:5, 6; Jude 7) The pre-Flood years were



undoubtedly filled with urgent activity. Even though Noah and his family did not know precisely when the Deluge would begin, their “godly fear” would have ensured that they did not procrastinate.—Hebrews 11:7.

Similarly, before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the angels “became urgent with Lot” and told him: “Escape for your soul!” (Genesis 19:15, 17) Yes, on that occasion too, urgency saved righteous lives. Centuries later Jewish captives in Babylon were exhorted: “Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch nothing unclean; get out from the midst of her.” (Isaiah 52:11) In 537 B.C.E., about 200,000 exiles hastened out of Babylon in obedience to that urgent prophetic command.

The sense of urgency in each of those situations resulted in whole-souled service by those who felt and kept alive a conviction that they were living in urgent times.

Urgency in Christian Times

Echoes of urgency can also be heard throughout the Christian Greek Scriptures. “Keep looking,” “keep awake,” “keep on the watch,” “prove yourselves ready”—all these are expressions used by Christ Jesus to instill a proper sense of urgency in his followers. (Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:32-37) Additionally, his illustrations regarding the ten virgins, the wicked slave, the talents, and the separating of the sheep from the goats all incite anticipation and generate a feeling of urgency.—Matthew 25:1, 14, 15, 32, 33.

Not only did Jesus speak about urgency but he also backed up the realism of his words by working with urgency. On one occasion he told the crowds when they tried to detain him: “Also to other cities I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this I was sent forth.” (Luke 4:42, 43) Further, he encouraged his disciples to beg the Master of the harvest to send out more workers into His harvest because “the harvest is great, but the workers are few.” (Matthew 9:37, 38) Such a prayerful request to God indeed breathes a spirit of urgency.

Was Such Urgency Misplaced?

Some might raise the logical question, Why was a sense of urgency needed back then if the foretold “great tribulation” was centuries away?—Matthew 24:21.

We can be certain that it was not just a ruse used by Jesus to keep his followers busy in the preaching and teaching work. No, it was Christ’s love for his disciples, as well as his perfect understanding of Jehovah’s view of time, that was the basis for his counsel on urgency. Yes, Christ Jesus knew that a spirit of urgency was needed to accomplish Jehovah’s will according to God’s purpose. Furthermore, he knew that his disciples would themselves benefit spiritually by maintaining a sense of urgency until his return.

Jesus Christ had clearly indicated that there was a worldwide witness work to be accomplished and in a limited time. (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10) The progressive stages of this assignment were revealed only as the work unfolded. But urgency was needed to fulfill each step. Jesus indicated the progression of this assignment when he said: “You will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) And that is how the assignment has unfolded down to the present. It has meant some surprises for God’s servants along the way, necessitating adjustments in understanding at times.

The Christian sense of urgency has served Jehovah’s purpose. It has helped Christ’s disciples to carry out the progression of their assignment according to Jehovah’s unerring schedule. And so today, looking back over nearly 2,000 years, we understand that divine schedule more fully.

Christian urgency helped the disciples to give a thorough witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the dispersed Jews before 36 C.E. when special favor toward Israel came to a close. (Daniel 9:27; Acts 2:46, 47) Similarly, Christian urgency aided the early congregation in giving a clear warning to all Jews that shortly their system would end. (Luke 19:43, 44; Colossians 1:5, 6, 23) And after it ended unexpectedly in 70 C.E., urgency helped Christ’s first-century witnesses to proclaim the heavenly hope to many before the foretold apostasy spread its morbid shroud. (2 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Timothy 4:2) Then, through the centuries of the Dark Ages, the few wheatlike Christians kept the Kingdom hope alive, as Christ Jesus had foretold. (Matthew 13:28-30) Finally, at his appointed time, Jehovah raised up a vigorous, modern-day congregation, spurred along by his urgent message of judgment for those living in this final generation.—Matthew 24:34.

Like Daniel of old, God’s faithful modern-day Witnesses would never dare to question Jehovah, to ask him: “What have you been doing?” (Daniel 4:35) They are confident that Jehovah knows exactly what is necessary to get his work done right on schedule. So rather than question Jehovah’s way of arranging matters, they are happy that God has given them the opportunity to work along with him in these momentous times.—1 Corinthians 3:9.

A Further Encouragement to Urgency



Another reason for urgency is our inability to pinpoint the exact day and hour for the sudden outbreak of the great tribulation. Christ Jesus was definite that nobody on earth knows the predetermined day and hour of the start of that crucial event. (Matthew 24:36) On another occasion he told his eager apostles: “It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction.” (Acts 1:7) Yes, the outcome is clear, but all the details are simply not ours to know.

The apostle Paul had the right attitude of urgency. Perhaps he had Jesus’ words in mind when he wrote to the Thessalonians about Christ’s presence: “Now as for the times and the seasons, brothers, you need nothing to be written to you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:1) He wrote this letter some 17 years after Jesus had said: “You will be witnesses of me . . . to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) At that time no more could be written because no more had been revealed. Even so they could be confident that Jehovah’s day would definitely come “as a thief in the night” when Christians would still be urgently preaching.—1 Thessalonians 5:2.

It would seem unlikely that with these words in mind, first-century Christians thought that Jehovah’s day was centuries off. True, they knew of Jesus’ parables about the king who went to a distant land and about the man who traveled abroad. They knew, too, that the parables showed that the king would return “eventually” and the traveler “after a long time.” But undoubtedly they puzzled over such questions as, When is “eventually”? And what is meant by “after a long time”? Ten years? Twenty years? Fifty years? Or longer? (Luke 19:12, 15; Matthew 25:14, 19) Jesus’ words would continue to ring in their ears: “You also, keep ready, because at an hour that you do not think likely the Son of man is coming.”—Luke 12:40.

Urgency’s Positive Effect

Yes, the God-stimulated sense of urgency had a wonderfully encouraging effect on the first-century Christians, helping them to keep busy in the all-important work of preaching and teaching. It continues to encourage us today in many ways. It keeps us from becoming complacent or ‘weary of well doing.’ (Galatians 6:9, *King James Version*) It protects us from overinvolvement with the world and its insidious materialism. It keeps our minds on “the real life.” (1 Timothy 6:19) The Lord Jesus said that his disciples would be like “sheep amidst wolves,” and he knew the need for us to keep a determined, fixed view in order to combat the world. Yes, we have been safeguarded, protected by our Christian sense of urgency.—Matthew 10:16.

Jehovah God in his infinite wisdom has always given his servants enough information for them to keep their sense of urgency alive. He has kindly assured us that we are in “the last days” of this corrupt system of things. (2 Timothy 3:1) We are continually reminded that we must shine as illuminators until the generation in which we live passes away in the great tribulation, its climax being at Har–Magedon.—Philippians 2:15; Revelation 7:14; 16:14, 16.

Yes, a godly sense of urgency *is* an integral part of whole-souled service to Jehovah. It wards off and helps thwart the Devil’s attempts to cause God’s servants to “get tired and give out in [their] souls.” (Hebrews 12:3) For all eternity, whole-souled devotion will cause Jehovah’s servants to obey him, but now, in these pre-Armageddon days, a deep, genuine sense of urgency is an essential part of whole-souled devotion.

May Jehovah our God help all of us to guard our sense of urgency while we continue to echo the words of the apostle John: “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.”—Revelation 22:20.

No. 3: Will Anyone Be Alive on Earth After the End of the Present World System? (*rs* p.240¶2-5)

*** *rs* p. 240 Last Days ***

Will anyone at all be alive on earth after the end of the present world system?

Definitely yes. The end of the present global system will come, not as a result of indiscriminate slaughter in nuclear war, but in a great tribulation that includes “the war of the great day of God the Almighty.” (Rev. 16:14, 16) That war will not destroy the earth, nor will it bring all mankind to ruin.

Matt. 24:21, 22: “Then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short.” (So some “flesh,” some of humankind, will survive.)

Prov. 2:21, 22: “The upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it. As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it.”

Ps. 37:29, 34: “The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it. Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it.”



December

Dec. 12	Bible reading: Isaiah 6-10
No. 1:	Isaiah 6:1-13
No. 2:	Why Does God Allow So Much Time to Pass Before Destroying the Wicked? (rs p. 241¶1-3)
No. 3:	Why Love Never Fails? (1 Cor. 13:8; 1 John 4:8)

Bible reading: Isaiah 6-10

*** w06 12/1 p. 9 Highlights From the Book of Isaiah—I ***

6:8a—Why are the pronouns “I” and “us” used here? The pronoun “I” stands for Jehovah God. The plural pronoun “us” indicates that there is another person with Jehovah. This, of course, is his “only-begotten Son.”—John 1:14; 3:16.

6:11—What did Isaiah mean when he asked: “How long, O Jehovah?” Isaiah was not asking how long he would have to deliver Jehovah’s message to unresponsive people. Rather, he wanted to know how long the spiritually sick condition of the people would continue to bring dishonor to God’s name.

7:3, 4—Why did Jehovah extend salvation to wicked King Ahaz? The kings of Syria and Israel planned to dethrone King Ahaz of Judah and install in his place a puppet ruler, the son of Tabeel—a man who was not a descendant of David. This diabolical scheme would have the effect of interrupting the operation of the Kingdom covenant with David. Jehovah extended salvation to Ahaz in order to preserve the line through which the promised “Prince of Peace” would come.—Isaiah 9:6.

7:8—How was Ephraim “shattered to pieces” within 65 years? The deportation of the people from the ten-tribe kingdom and the repopulation of the land with foreigners began “in the days of Pekah the king of Israel,” shortly after Isaiah uttered this prophecy. (2 Kings 15:29) It continued long thereafter into the days of the Assyrian King Esar-haddon, a son and successor of Sennacherib. (2 Kings 17:6; Ezra 4:1, 2; Isaiah 37:37, 38) This ongoing Assyrian transplantation of people to and from Samaria allows for the period of 65 years mentioned at Isaiah 7:8.

No. 1: Isaiah 6:1-13

No. 2: Why Does God Allow So Much Time to Pass Before Destroying the Wicked? (rs p. 241¶1-3)

*** rs p. 241 Last Days ***

Why does God allow so much time to pass before destroying the wicked?

2 Pet. 3:9: “Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.”

Mark 13:10: “In all the nations the good news has to be preached first.”

Matt. 25:31, 32, 46: “When the Son of man [Jesus Christ] arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And these [who fail to recognize Christ’s spiritual brothers as representatives of the King himself] will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life.”

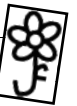
No. 3: Why Love Never Fails? (1 Cor. 13:8; 1 John 4:8)

*** w03 7/1 p. 7 How to Develop Genuine Love ***

“Love Never Fails”

The Bible says that “love never fails.” (1 Corinthians 13:8) How is that so? The apostle Paul tells us: “Love is long-suffering and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, does not get puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked. It does not keep account of the injury.” (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) Clearly, this love is no fanciful notion or superficial sentiment. On the contrary—those showing it are aware of and acknowledge life’s disappointments and pains, but they do not allow these to destroy their love for fellowman. Such love truly is “a perfect bond of union.”—Colossians 3:12-14.

Consider the example of a 17-year-old Christian girl in Korea. When she began to serve Jehovah God, her family disapproved and she had to move out of the house. However, instead of becoming angry, she prayed about the matter,



letting God's Word and spirit mold her thinking. Thereafter, she wrote to her family often, filling her letters with the genuine warm affection that she felt for them. In response, her two older brothers began to study the Bible and are now dedicated Christians. Her mother and younger brother also accepted Bible truth. Lastly, her father, who had been bitterly opposed, had a change of heart. The Witness girl writes: "We all married fellow Christians, and our family of united worshipers now totals 23." What a victory for love!

Do you want to cultivate genuine love and help others to do the same? Then turn to Jehovah, the Source of that precious quality. Yes, take his Word to heart, pray for holy spirit, and regularly associate with the Christian brotherhood. (Isaiah 11:9; Matthew 5:5) How heartwarming it is to know that soon all the wicked will be gone, leaving only those who practice genuine Christian love! Truly, love is the key to happiness and life.—Psalm 37:10, 11; 1 John 3:14.

*** cl chap. 30 pp. 308-309 "Go On Walking in Love" ***

"A Surpassing Way"

²¹ "*Love never fails.*" What did Paul mean by those words? As seen in the context, he was discussing the gifts of the spirit that were present among early Christians. Those gifts served as signs that God's favor was on the newly formed congregation. But not all Christians could heal, prophesy, or speak in tongues. However, that did not matter; the miraculous gifts would eventually cease anyway. Yet, something else would remain, something every Christian could cultivate. It was more outstanding, more enduring, than any miraculous gift. In fact, Paul called it "a surpassing way." (1 Corinthians 12:31) What was this "surpassing way"? It was the way of love.

²² Indeed, the Christian love that Paul described "never fails," that is, it will never come to an end. To this day, self-sacrificing brotherly love identifies Jesus' true followers. Do we not see evidence of such love in the congregations of Jehovah's worshipers earth wide? That love will last forever, for Jehovah promises everlasting life to his faithful servants. (Psalm 37:9-11, 29) May we continue to do our best to "go on walking in love." By doing so, we can experience the greater happiness that comes from giving. More than that, we can keep on living—yes, keep on loving—for all eternity, in imitation of our loving God, Jehovah.

*** w93 10/15 pp. 20-21 par. 14 Love (Agape)—What It Is Not and What It Is ***

¹⁴ Now the final thing that love does not do: "*Love never fails.*" For one thing, love never fails or ends because God is love, and he is "the King of eternity." (1 Timothy 1:17) At Romans 8:38, 39, we are assured that Jehovah's love for us will never fail: "I am convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor governments nor things now here nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other creation will be able to separate us from God's love that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Also, love never fails in that it is never found wanting. Love is equal to any occasion, to any challenge.

*** w09 12/15 pp. 24-25 pars. 1-2 Cultivate Love That Never Fails ***

MUCH has been publicized on the subject of love. This quality has been extolled and romanticized in song. Love is a basic human need. But books and movies have often featured it in made-up love stories, and a glut of such material floods the marketplace. Yet, genuine love of God and neighbor is woefully lacking. We see happening what the Bible foretold about these last days. Men are "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, . . . lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."—2 Tim. 3:1-5.

² Humans have the ability to show love, yet God's Word warns us against misguided love. And the Bible describes what happens when such love takes root in one's heart. (1 Tim. 6:9, 10) Do you recall what the apostle Paul wrote about Demas? Though he was associated with Paul, Demas turned to loving what the world offered. (2 Tim. 4:10) The apostle John warned Christians against this very danger. (*Read 1 John 2:15, 16.*) Loving the world and its transitory things and ways is not compatible with loving God and what originates with him.



December

Dec. 19 Bible reading: Isaiah 11-16

No. 1: Isaiah 13:1-16

No. 2: Why We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight (2 Cor. 5:7)

No. 3: ***If Someone Says: "Conditions Are No Worse Today, There Have Always Been Wars, Famines, Earthquakes, and Crime" (rsp.241¶5-p.242¶2)*

Bible reading: Isaiah 11-16

***** w06 12/1 pp. 9-11 Highlights From the Book of Isaiah—I *****

11:1, 10—How can Jesus Christ be “a twig out of the stump of Jesse” as well as “the root of Jesse”? (Romans 15:12) Jesus was “out of the stump of Jesse” in a fleshly way. He was a descendant of Jesse through Jesse’s son David. (Matthew 1:1-6; Luke 3:23-32) However, the receiving of the kingly power affects Jesus’ relationship with his ancestors. By virtue of his having been given power and authority to grant obedient mankind everlasting life on earth, Jesus becomes their “Eternal Father.” (Isaiah 9:6) Hence, he is also “the root” of his ancestors, including Jesse.

11:3a. Jesus’ example and teachings show that there is joy in the fear of Jehovah.

13:17—In what way did the Medes consider silver as nothing and take no delight in gold? The Medes and the Persians regarded the glory resulting from a conquest more highly than the spoils of war. This proved true in the case of Cyrus, who gave the returning exiles the gold and silver utensils that Nebuchadnezzar had looted from Jehovah’s temple.

14:1, 2—How did Jehovah’s people become “the captors of those holding them captive” and “have in subjection those who were driving them to work”? This was fulfilled in the case of such individuals as Daniel, who held a high office in Babylon under the Medes and the Persians; Esther, who became a Persian queen; and Mordecai, who was appointed prime minister of the Persian Empire.

No. 1: Isaiah 13:1-16

No. 2: Why We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight (2 Cor. 5:7)

***** w05 9/15 pp. 18-20 Walk by Faith, Not by Sight! *****

Keeping the End in Sight

¹¹ Walking by faith helps us to shun fleshly views that the end is far off or is not coming at all. Unlike skeptics who make light of Bible prophecy, we discern how world events line up with what God’s Word foretold for our day. (2 Peter 3:3, 4) For example, do not the attitude and the behavior of people in general give evidence that we are living in “the last days”? (2 Timothy 3:1-5) With the eyes of faith, we see that current world events are not just history repeating itself. Rather, they form “the sign of [Christ’s] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things.”—Matthew 24:1-14.

¹² Consider an event in the first century of our Common Era that has a parallel in our day. When on earth, Jesus Christ warned his followers: “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw.” (Luke 21:20, 21) In fulfillment of this prophecy, Roman armies under the command of Cestius Gallus laid siege to Jerusalem in 66 C.E. But the armies withdrew abruptly, furnishing the signal and the opportunity for the Christians there ‘to flee to the mountains.’ In 70 C.E., the Roman armies returned, attacked the city of Jerusalem, and destroyed its temple. Josephus reports that over a million Jews died, and 97,000 were taken captive. Divine judgment was executed upon that Jewish system of things. Those who walked by faith and heeded Jesus’ warning escaped the calamity.

¹³ Something similar is about to take place in our day. Elements within the United Nations will be involved in the execution of divine judgment. Just as the Roman armies of the first century were designed to maintain the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace), the United Nations of today is intended to be a peacekeeping instrument. Although the Roman armies tried to ensure relative safety throughout the then known world, they became the desolater of Jerusalem. Likewise today, Bible prophecy indicates that militarized powers within the United Nations will see religion as a disturbing element and will act to destroy modern-day Jerusalem—Christendom—as well as the rest of Babylon the Great. (Revelation 17:12-17) Yes, the entire world empire of false religion stands on the brink of destruction.

¹⁴ The desolation of false religion will mark the beginning of the great tribulation. In the final part of the great tribulation, the remaining elements of this wicked system of things will be destroyed. (Matthew 24:29, 30; Revelation 16:14, 16) Walking by faith keeps us alert to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. We are not duped into thinking that any man-made



agency like the United Nations is God’s means of bringing true peace and security. So, then, should not our way of life demonstrate our conviction that “the great day of Jehovah is near”?—Zephaniah 1:14.

Walking by Sight—How Dangerous?

¹⁵ The experiences of ancient Israel illustrate the dangers of allowing walking by sight to weaken one’s faith. In spite of witnessing the ten plagues that humiliated the false gods of Egypt and then experiencing the spectacular deliverance through the Red Sea, the Israelites disobediently made a golden calf and began to worship it. They became restless and grew weary of waiting for Moses, who “was taking a long time about coming down from the mountain.” (Exodus 32:1-4) Impatience moved them to worship an idol visible to the natural eye. Their walking by sight insulted Jehovah and led to the execution of “about three thousand men.” (Exodus 32:25-29) How sad it is when a worshipper of Jehovah today makes decisions that indicate distrust of Jehovah and a lack of confidence in his ability to fulfill his promises!

¹⁶ Outward appearances affected the Israelites negatively in other ways. Walking by sight made them tremble in fear of their enemies. (Numbers 13:28, 32; Deuteronomy 1:28) It caused them to challenge Moses’ God-given authority and complain about their lot in life. This lack of faith led to their preferring demon-controlled Egypt to the Promised Land. (Numbers 14:1-4; Psalm 106:24) How hurt Jehovah must have been as he witnessed the gross disrespect his people showed for their invisible King!

¹⁷ Again in the prophet Samuel’s day, the favored nation of Israel was caught in the snare of walking by sight. The people began to desire a king whom they could see. Even though Jehovah had demonstrated that he was their King, this was not enough to make them walk by faith. (1 Samuel 8:4-9) To their own harm, they foolishly rejected the flawless guidance of Jehovah, preferring instead to be like the surrounding nations.—1 Samuel 8:19, 20.

¹⁸ As Jehovah’s modern-day servants, we cherish our good relationship with God. We are eager to learn and apply in our lives valuable lessons from past events. (Romans 15:4) When the Israelites walked by sight, they forgot that God through Moses was directing them. If we are not careful, we too can forget that Jehovah God and the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, are directing the Christian congregation today. (Revelation 1:12-16) We must be on guard against taking a human view of the earthly part of Jehovah’s organization. Our doing so can lead to a complaining spirit and a loss of appreciation for Jehovah’s representatives as well as for the spiritual food provided by “the faithful and discreet slave.”—Matthew 24:45.

Be Resolved to Walk by Faith

¹⁹ “We have a wrestling,” states the Bible, “not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:12) Our chief enemy is Satan the Devil. His aim is to destroy our faith in Jehovah. He will not overlook any type of persuasion that might sway us from our decision to serve God. (1 Peter 5:8) What will protect us from being deceived by the outward appearance of Satan’s system? Walking by faith, not by sight! Trust and confidence in Jehovah’s promises will safeguard us from experiencing ‘shipwreck concerning our faith.’ (1 Timothy 1:19) By all means, then, let us be determined to continue walking by faith, fully confident in Jehovah’s blessing. And may we keep on praying that we may escape all the things destined to occur in the near future.—Luke 21:36.

No. 3: ***If Someone Says: “Conditions Are No Worse Today, There Have Always Been Wars, Famines, Earthquakes, and Crime” (rs.p.241¶5-p.242¶2)*

*** rs p. 241 Last Days ***

If Someone Says—

‘Conditions are no worse today; there have always been wars, famines, earthquakes, crime’

You might reply: ‘I can understand why you feel that way. We were born into a world where these things are everyday news. But historians explain that there is something drastically different about the 20th century. (Read quotations on pages 239, 240.)’

Or you could say: ‘It is not merely the fact that there have been wars, famines, earthquakes, and crime that is significant. Did you realize that the sign Jesus gave was a composite one?’ **Then perhaps add:** ‘He did not say that any one event by itself would prove that we were in “the last days.” But when the entire sign is in evidence, that is significant—and especially when it appears on a global scale and beginning with a year that is fixed by Bible chronology.’ (See pages 234-239, also pages 95-97.)



December

Dec. 26 Bible reading: Isaiah 17-23
Theocratic Ministry School Review

Bible reading: Isaiah 17-23

*** w06 12/1 p. 11 Highlights From the Book of Isaiah—I ***

20:2-5—Did Isaiah really walk about completely naked for three years? Isaiah possibly took off his outer garment only and walked about “lightly clad.”—1 Samuel 19:24, footnote.

21:1—What region is called “the wilderness of the sea”? Even though Babylon was nowhere near the actual sea, it is referred to this way. This is because the overflowing waters of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers flooded the region annually, creating a marshy “sea.”

17:7, 8. Though most in Israel did not listen, some individuals looked to Jehovah. Similarly, some in Christendom respond to the Kingdom message.

SCHEDULE

Jan. 3 Bible reading: 2 Chronicles 29-32

No. 1: 2 Chronicles 30:13-22

No. 2: Was Jesus Christ Simply a Good Man? (rs p. 210 ¶1)

No. 3: How People Are Slaves Because of the Fear of Death (Heb. 2:15)

Jan. 10 Bible reading: 2 Chronicles 33-36

No. 1: 2 Chronicles 34:12-21

No. 2: What Can We Learn From the Example of Jesus' Mother, Mary?

No. 3: Was Jesus Just Another Religious Leader? (rs p. 210 ¶2)

Jan. 17 Bible reading: Ezra 1-5

No. 1: Ezra 3:1-9

No. 2: Why Did the Jews in General Not Accept Jesus as the Messiah? (rs p. 211 ¶1-2)

No. 3: How Does the Spirit Return to God? (Eccl. 12:7)

Jan. 24 Bible reading: Ezra 6-10

No. 1: Ezra 7:1-17

No. 2: How Jesus Demonstrated His Worthiness to Rule as King

No. 3: Is Jesus Christ Actually God? (rs p. 212 ¶1-2)

Jan. 31 Bible reading: Nehemiah 1-4

No. 1: Nehemiah 2:11-20

No. 2: Does John 1:1 Prove That Jesus Is God? (rs p. 212 ¶4-6)

No. 3: Ways in Which We Heed Jesus' Words at Matthew 22:21

Feb. 7 Bible reading: Nehemiah 5-8

No. 1: Nehemiah 6:1-13

No. 2: What Can We Learn About Hospitality From Lydia, Gaius, and Philemon?

No. 3: Does Thomas' Exclamation at John 20:28 Prove That Jesus Is Truly God? (rs p. 213 ¶1-3)

Feb. 14 Bible reading: Nehemiah 9-11

No. 1: Nehemiah 11:1-14

No. 2: Does Matthew 1:23 Indicate That Jesus When on Earth Was God? (rs p. 214 ¶1-3)

No. 3: Ways in Which God's Undeserved Kindness Is Expressed (1 Pet. 4:10)

Feb. 21 Bible reading: Nehemiah 12-13

No. 1: Nehemiah 13:15-22

No. 2: What It Means to Give Jehovah God Exclusive Devotion (Ex. 20:5)

No. 3: What Is the Meaning of John 5:18? (rs p. 214 ¶4-5)

Feb. 28 Bible reading: Esther 1-5**Theocratic Ministry School Review**

Mar. 7 Bible reading: Esther 6-10

No. 1: Esther 7:1-10

No. 2: Does the Fact That Worship Is Given to Jesus Prove That He Is God? (rs p. 214 ¶6-p. 215 ¶2)

No. 3: Why Jesus Is the Chief Agent and Perfector of Our Faith (Heb. 12:2)

Mar. 14 Bible reading: Job 1-5

No. 1: Job 3:1-26

No. 2: What Can We Learn From the Example of Zelophehad's Daughters? (Num. 36:10-12)

No. 3: Do the Miracles Performed by Jesus Prove That He Is God? (rs p. 215 ¶3-p. 216 ¶1)

Mar. 21 Bible reading: Job 6-10

No. 1: Job 8:1-22

No. 2: Is Believing in Jesus Christ All That Is Required for Salvation? (rs p. 216 ¶3)

No. 3: * How Can We Apply the Counsel Recorded at Matthew 10:16?

Mar. 28 Bible reading: Job 11-15

No. 1: Job 13:1-28

No. 2: Why Jesus Is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:8)

No. 3: Did Jesus Have a Heavenly Existence Before He Became a Human? (rs p. 216 ¶4-p. 217 ¶1)

Apr. 4 Bible reading: Job 16-20

No. 1: Job 18:1-21

No. 2: Does Jesus Have His Fleshly Body in Heaven? (rs p. 217 ¶2-5)

No. 3: Why Enlightened Rulers Praise Jehovah's Witnesses (Rom. 13:3)

Apr. 11 Bible reading: Job 21-27

No. 1: Job 25:1-26:14

No. 2: Why the Cross Should Not Be Viewed as an Object of Devotion

No. 3: Is Jesus Christ the Same Person as Michael the Archangel? (rs p. 218 ¶1-3)

Apr. 18 Bible reading: Job 28-32

No. 1: Job 30:1-23

No. 2: ** *If Someone Says: "You Don't Believe in Jesus"* (rs p. 219 ¶1-3)

No. 3: * *Why We Should Think Before We Speak* (Prov. 16:23)

Apr. 25 Bible reading: Job 33-37**Theocratic Ministry School Review**

May 2 Bible reading: Job 38-42

No. 1: Job 40:1-24

No. 2: Benefits From Being Mild-Tempered and Patient

No. 3: ** *If Someone Says: "Do You Accept Jesus as Your Personal Savior?"* (rs p. 219 ¶4-5)

May 9 Bible reading: Psalms 1-10

No. 1: Psalm 7:1-17

No. 2: ** *If Someone Says: "I Have Accepted Jesus as My Personal Savior"* (rs p. 220 ¶1)

No. 3: Why Jesus Corrected a Man for Calling Him "Good Teacher" (Mark 10:17, 18)

May 16 Bible reading: Psalms 11-18

No. 1: Psalm 17:1-15

No. 2: How We Show That We Worship Jehovah Alone (Rom. 6:16, 17)

No. 3: Are the Natural Jews Today God's Chosen People? (rs p. 220 ¶2-p. 221 ¶4)

May 23 Bible reading: Psalms 19-25

No. 1: Psalm 23:1-24:10

No. 2: Will All the Jews Be Converted to Faith in Christ? (rs p. 222 ¶1-2)

No. 3: How and When Will Romans 8:21 Be Fulfilled?

May 30 Bible reading: Psalms 26-33

No. 1: Psalm 31:9-24

No. 2: Bible Examples of Genuine Humility

No. 3: Must Jews Put Faith in Jesus to Be Saved? (rs p. 222 ¶3-p. 223 ¶1)

June 6 Bible reading: Psalms 34-37

No. 1: Psalm 35:1-18

No. 2: Are the Events Taking Place in Israel Today in Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy? (rs p. 223 ¶2-p. 224 ¶2)

No. 3: What Can We Learn From Luke 12:13-15, 21?

June 13 Bible reading: Psalms 38-44

No. 1: Psalm 41:1-42:5

No. 2: Bible Examples of Close Friendships and Qualities That We Can Imitate

No. 3: Among Whom Do the Prophecies About Restoration of Israel Have Fulfillment Today? (rs p. 224 ¶3-p. 225 ¶3)

June 20 Bible reading: Psalms 45-51

No. 1: Psalm 48:1-49:9

No. 2: Is God's Kingdom a Real Government? (rs p. 226 ¶1-2)

No. 3: Since Life Is a Gift, Why Must We Work Out Our Own Salvation? (Rom. 6:23; Phil. 2:12)

June 27 Bible reading: Psalms 52-59**Theocratic Ministry School Review**

July 4 Bible reading: Psalms 60-68

No. 1: Psalm 62:1-63:5

No. 2: How Are We Involved in the Fulfillment of Haggai 2:7?

No. 3: Who Are the Rulers in the Kingdom? (rs p. 226 ¶3-5)

July 11 Bible reading: Psalms 69-73

No. 1: Psalm 72:1-20

No. 2: What Effect Will God's Kingdom Have on Human Governments? (rs p. 227 ¶1-2)

No. 3: Lessons That Youths Can Learn From Kings Hezekiah and Josiah

July 18 Bible reading: Psalms 74-78

No. 1: Psalm 77:1-20

No. 2: Ways in Which We Can Oppose the Devil (Jas. 4:7)

No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Sanctify Jehovah's Name (rs p. 227 ¶3-5)

July 25 Bible reading: Psalms 79-86

No. 1: Psalm 84:1-85:7

No. 2: God's Kingdom Will Unify All Creation in Pure Worship (rs p. 228 ¶1-2)

No. 3: Why None of the Demons Are Atheists (Jas. 2:19)

Aug. 1 Bible reading: Psalms 87-91

No. 1: Psalm 89:26-52

No. 2: Reasons Why Jehovah's Faithful Servants Are Happy

No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Eliminate War and Corruption (rs p. 228 ¶3-p. 229 ¶2)

Aug. 8 Bible reading: Psalms 92-101

No. 1: Psalm 94:1-23

No. 2: God's Kingdom Will Provide Food for All and Do Away With Sickness (rs p. 229 ¶3-5)

No. 3: Guard Against the Deceptive Power of Riches (Matt. 13:22)

Aug. 15 Bible reading: Psalms 102-105

No. 1: Psalm 105:1-24

No. 2: Why We Should Not Look Back Longingly at What We Have Forsaken to Serve Jehovah (Luke 9:62)

No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Provide Homes, Employment, and Security for All (rs p. 229 ¶6-p. 230 ¶2)

Aug. 22 Bible reading: Psalms 106-109

No. 1: Psalm 109:1-20

No. 2: God's Kingdom Will Cause Righteousness and Justice to Prevail (rs p. 230 ¶3-5)

No. 3: * Follow the Examples of Jehovah and Jesus in Displaying Good Manners

Aug. 29 Bible reading: Psalms 110-118

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Sept. 5 Bible reading: Psalm 119

No. 1: Psalm 119:49-72

No. 2: Why the Scriptures Encourage the Fear of Jehovah (Deut. 5:29)

No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Resurrect the Dead (rs p. 230 ¶6-p. 231 ¶3)

Sept. 12 Bible reading: Psalms 120-134

No. 1: Psalm 124:1-126:6

No. 2: God's Kingdom Will Provide a World of Love and Harmony (rs p. 231 ¶4-6)

No. 3: How Can We Keep a 'Simple Eye'? (Matt. 6:22, 23)

Sept. 19 Bible reading: Psalms 135-141

No. 1: Psalm 137:1-138:8

No. 2: Why We Find Comfort in Paul's Words at Romans 14:7-9

No. 3: God's Kingdom Will Make the Earth a Paradise (rs p. 232 ¶1-3)

Sept. 26 Bible reading: Psalms 142-150

No. 1: Psalm 144:1-145:4

No. 2: Did God's Kingdom Begin to Rule in the First Century? (rs p. 232 ¶4-6)

No. 3: * Why Must We Avoid "Acts of Favoritism"? (Jas. 2:1-4)

Oct. 3 Bible reading: Proverbs 1-6

No. 1: Proverbs 6:1-19

No. 2: How Are We Assured of God's Love for Us at Romans 8:26, 27?

No. 3: Must the Coming of God's Kingdom Await the Conversion of the World? (rs p. 233 ¶1-2)

Oct. 10 Bible reading: Proverbs 7-11

No. 1: Proverbs 8:1-21

No. 2: * *If Someone Says: "God's Kingdom Won't Come in My Lifetime"* (rs p. 233 ¶4-p. 234 ¶1)

No. 3: * *Why the Scriptures Warn Against Becoming "Righteous Overmuch"* (Eccl. 7:16)

Oct. 17 Bible reading: Proverbs 12-16

No. 1: Proverbs 15:1-17

No. 2: How Are Acceptable Prayers Like Sweet-Smelling Incense to Jehovah? (Ps. 141:2; Rev. 5:8)

No. 3: What Sign Indicates That We Are Living in the Last Days? (rs p. 234 ¶2)

Oct. 24 Bible reading: Proverbs 17-21

No. 1: Proverbs 17:21-18:13

No. 2: How Are Wars and Food Shortages a Part of "the Sign"? (rs p. 234 ¶3-p. 235 ¶4)

No. 3: Those Who Praise Creation but Not the Creator Reveal What About Themselves? (Rom. 1:20)

Oct. 31 Bible reading: Proverbs 22-26

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Nov. 7 Bible reading: Proverbs 27-31

No. 1: Proverbs 28:19-29:10

No. 2: How Does Reasoning on Romans 8:32 Assure Us That All of God's Promises Will Be Fulfilled?

No. 3: How Has Luke 21:11 Been Undergoing Fulfillment Since 1914? (rs p. 236 ¶1-3)

Nov. 14 Bible reading: Ecclesiastes 1-6

No. 1: Ecclesiastes 6:1-12

No. 2: What Does the Increase in Lawlessness Indicate? (rs p. 237 ¶1-2)

No. 3: * *Why True Christians Heed the Counsel at Romans 12:19*

Nov. 21 Bible reading: Ecclesiastes 7-12

No. 1: Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:11

No. 2: Love Is Not Jealous (1 Cor. 13:4)

No. 3: How Does the Sign of the Last Days Affect True Christians? (rs p. 238 ¶2-3)

Nov. 28 Bible reading: The Song of Solomon 1-8

No. 1: Song of Solomon 1:1-17

No. 2: Why Do Jehovah's Witnesses Say That the Last Days Began in 1914? (rs p. 239 ¶2-p. 240 ¶1)

No. 3: * *How Can We Earn the Respect of Others?*

Dec. 5 Bible reading: Isaiah 1-5

No. 1: Isaiah 3:16-4:6

No. 2: Why Must We Maintain Our Sense of Urgency?

No. 3: Will Anyone Be Alive on Earth After the End of the Present World System? (rs p. 240 ¶2-5)

Dec. 12 Bible reading: Isaiah 6-10

No. 1: Isaiah 6:1-13

No. 2: Why Does God Allow So Much Time to Pass Before Destroying the Wicked? (rs p. 241 ¶1-3)

No. 3: Why Love Never Fails (1 Cor. 13:8; 1 John 4:8)

Dec. 19 Bible reading: Isaiah 11-16

No. 1: Isaiah 13:1-16

No. 2: Why We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight (2 Cor. 5:7)

No. 3: * *If Someone Says: "Conditions Are No Worse Today; There Have Always Been Wars, Famines, Earthquakes, and Crime"* (rs p. 241 ¶5-p. 242 ¶2)

Dec. 26 Bible reading: Isaiah 17-23

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* Assign to brothers only

** As time permits, the student should reply to the householder's assertions, objections, and so forth, so as to meet the needs in the territory.



Dear Brethren:

Theocratic Ministry School References 2011, was created to help more Brethren quickly find the information source of his speeches, this is just a basic guide to sources information.

As you know in certain parts of the world are brothers who do not have enough time to prepare all the information, this document is special for these circumstances.

Prior to this document came the version in Spanish in 2010, TMS 2011 now comes with certain adjustments to the image on the orders of the branch, without logos of the watchtower, I suggest you not try to upload it to Web pages is for personal use.

The format was done in Office 2007 and is converted to PDF format for use fastest.

Hyperlinks were placed in the "**Schedule Weeks**" to find dates and fastest source of information.

The format is made especially for printing and binding, in leaf size and mirror margins Charter to be printed "side by side" or "two faces", this is the order of printing: Cover (front) - Schedule Weeks (Back), pages 3 onwards margins are symmetrical: Page 3 (front) - page 4 (back).

Created with happiness, your objective is: praise Jehovah. That will always be the goal.