



MARCH 1, 2012

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

What Are the Marks of  
True Christianity?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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## FROM OUR COVER

- 3 Are All "Christians" Christian?
- 4 "Remain in My Word"
- 5 "No Part of the World"
- 6 "Have Love Among Yourselves"
- 7 "I Have Made Your Name Known"
- 8 "This Good News of the Kingdom Will Be Preached"



## REGULAR FEATURES

- 16 Learn From God's Word  
—How Should We Remember Jesus' Death?
- 18 Did You Know?
- 19 Draw Close to God  
—"The Former Things Will Not Be Called to Mind"
- 23 Our Readers Ask . . . Is the Trinity a Bible Teaching?
- ◀ 24 A Letter From Russia
- 30 Teach Your Children—"He Kept Sticking to Jehovah"

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 10 Should You Trust Your First Impressions?
- 13 Modern-Day Aztecs Become True Christians
- 20 What Is Wrong With Spiritism?
- ◀ 26 A Look at Colors and Fabrics in Bible Times
- 32 How Do You View Jesus?





# Are All “Christians” Christian?

**H**OW many Christians are there? According to the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, in 2010 there were almost 2.3 billion worldwide. But the same publication also indicates that those Christians belong to over 41,000 denominations—each with its own doctrines and rules of conduct. Faced with this bewildering array of “Christian” religions, it is understandable that some observers become confused or even disillusioned. They may wonder, ‘Are all who claim to be Christians really Christian?’

Let us look at the matter from a different perspective. A traveler is usually required to state his citizenship to a border official. He also needs to prove that he is who he claims to be by producing some identification, perhaps a passport. Similarly, a true Christian needs to do more than profess his faith in Christ. He needs to have additional identification. What would that be?

The term “Christian” first came into use sometime after 44 C.E. The Bible historian Luke reported: “It was first in Antioch

that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians.” (Acts 11:26) Note that those called Christians were Christ’s disciples. What makes a person a disciple of Jesus Christ? *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* explains: “Following Jesus as a disciple means the unconditional sacrifice of [one’s] whole life . . . for the whole of his life.” A true Christian, therefore, is one who follows the teachings and instructions of Jesus, the Founder of Christianity, totally and unconditionally.

Is it possible to find such people among the many who profess to be Christians today? What did Jesus himself say would identify his true followers? We invite you to consider how the Bible answers these questions. In the following articles, we will examine five statements by Jesus that characterize and help to identify his true followers. We will consider how the first-century Christians measured up. And we will endeavor to see who among the many professing to be Christians today fit the pattern.

# “Remain in My Word”

“If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”—JOHN 8:31, 32.

**What It Means:** Jesus’ “word” means his teachings, which came from a higher source. “The Father himself who sent me has given me a commandment as to what to tell and what to speak,” said Jesus. (John 12:49) In prayer to his heavenly Father, Jehovah God, Jesus said: “Your word is truth.” He frequently quoted God’s Word to support his teachings. (John 17:17; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) True Christians, therefore, ‘remain in his word’—that is, they accept God’s Word, the Bible, as “truth” and the ultimate authority for their beliefs and practices.

**How Early Christians Measured Up:** The most prolific Christian Bible writer, the apostle Paul, shared Jesus’ respect for God’s Word. He wrote: “All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial.” (2 Timothy 3:16) Men appointed to teach fellow Christians had to “hold fast to the sure and trustworthy Word of God.” (Titus 1:7, 9, *The Amplified Bible*) Early Christians were admonished to reject “the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ.”—Colossians 2:8.

**Who Fit the Pattern Today?:** According to the Vatican’s *Dogmatic Constitution on Di-*

*vine Revelation*, adopted in 1965 and quoted in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “It is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the [Catholic] Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.” An article in *Maclean’s* magazine quoted a minister in Toronto, Canada, who asked: “Why do we need a ‘revolutionary’ voice from two millennia ago to guide us? We have fabulous ideas of our own, that are constantly weakened by having to tie them back to Jesus and Scripture.”

Regarding Jehovah’s Witnesses, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states: “They regard the Bible as their only source of belief and rule of conduct.” Recently, a man in Canada interrupted one of Jehovah’s Witnesses as she was introducing herself. “I know who you are,” he said, pointing at her Bible, “by your signature.”



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Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah’s Witnesses, using one of these addresses. For a complete list of addresses, see [www.watchtower.org/address](http://www.watchtower.org/address).

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# “No Part of the World”

“The world has hated them, because they are no part of the world.”—JOHN 17:14.

**What It Means:** Being no part of the world, Jesus was neutral in the social and political conflicts of the day. “If my kingdom were part of this world,” he explained, “my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this source.” (John 18:36) He also urged his followers to shun attitudes, speech, and conduct condemned in God’s Word.—Matthew 20:25-27.

**How Early Christians Measured Up:** According to religion writer Jonathan Dymond, the early Christians “refused to engage in [war]; whatever were the consequences, whether reproach, or imprisonment, or death.” They chose to suffer rather than compromise their neutral stand. Their moral code also set them apart. Christians were told: “Because you do not continue running with them in this course to the same low sink of debauchery, they are puzzled and go on speaking abusively of you.” (1 Peter 4:4) Historian Will Durant wrote that Christians

“were troubling the pleasure-mad pagan world with their piety and their decency.”

**Who Fit the Pattern Today?** Regarding Christian neutrality, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* asserts: “Conscientious objection is morally indefensible.” An article in the *Reformierte Presse* states that a report by African Rights, a human rights organization, on the 1994 Rwandan genocide established the participation of all churches, “with the exception of Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

Discussing the Nazi Holocaust, a high-school teacher lamented that “no group or organization of regular citizens spoke out against the mass of lies, cruelty, and eventual atrocities.” After consulting with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, he wrote: “I now had my answer.” He learned that Jehovah’s Witnesses stood firm in their beliefs in spite of the harsh treatment they received.

What about their moral code? “The majority of today’s young adult Catholics disagree with church teachings on issues like cohabitation [and] premarital sex,” says *U.S. Catholic* magazine. The journal quotes a church deacon, who said: “A great percentage I see—I’d guess it’s well over 50 percent—are already living together when they come to be married.” *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* observes that Jehovah’s Witnesses “insist upon a high moral code in personal conduct.”

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<sup>+</sup> CD also available.

<sup>°</sup> MP3 CD-ROM also available.

<sup>°</sup> Audio recordings also available at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).



# “Have Love Among Yourselves”

“I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves.”—JOHN 13:34, 35.

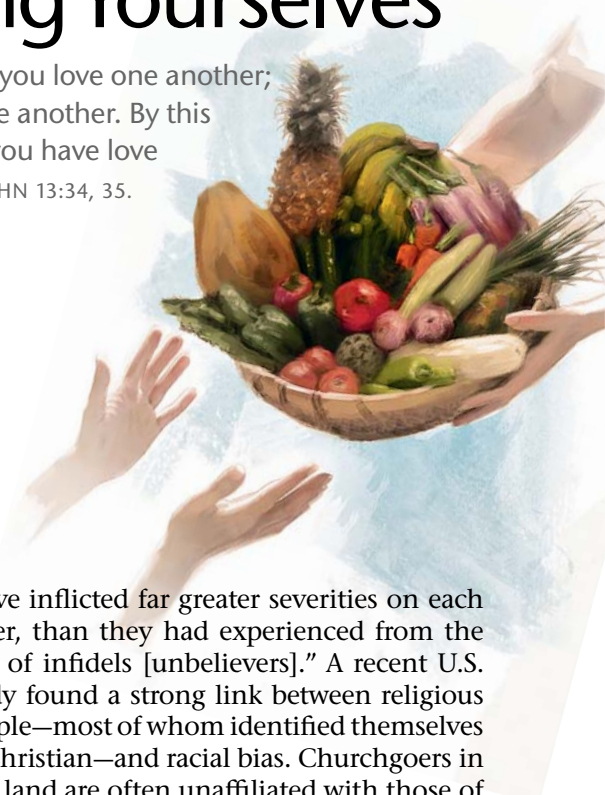
**What It Means:** Christ told his followers to love one another the way that he loved them. How did Jesus love them? His love transcended the national and gender bias prevalent in his day. (John 4:7-10) Love moved Jesus to sacrifice his time, energy, and personal comfort in order to help others. (Mark 6:30-34) Finally, Christ showed love in the greatest way possible. “I am the fine shepherd,” he said. “The fine shepherd surrenders his soul in behalf of the sheep.”—John 10:11.

**How Early Christians Measured Up:** In the first century, Christians called each other “brother” or “sister.” (Philemon 1, 2) People of all nations were welcomed into the Christian congregation, for they believed that “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for there is the same Lord over all.” (Romans 10:11, 12) After Pentecost 33 C.E., the disciples in Jerusalem “went selling their possessions and properties and distributing the proceeds to all, just as anyone would have the need.” For what purpose? So that those newly baptized could remain in Jerusalem and continue “devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles.” (Acts 2:41-45) What motivated such actions? Less than 200 years after the death of the apostles, Tertullian quoted what others said of Christians: “How they love one another . . . and how they are ready even to die for one another.”

**Who Fit the Pattern Today?** The book *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1837) observed that over the centuries those who professed to be Christians

“have inflicted far greater severities on each other, than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels [unbelievers].” A recent U.S. study found a strong link between religious people—most of whom identified themselves as Christian—and racial bias. Churchgoers in one land are often unaffiliated with those of the same denomination in another land and are thus unable or disinclined to help fellow believers when a need arises.

In 2004, after Florida was hit by a string of four hurricanes in two months, the chairman of Florida’s Emergency Operations Committee checked to ensure that their supplies were being used properly. He said that no other group was as well organized as Jehovah’s Witnesses, and he offered to provide any supplies needed by the Witnesses. Earlier, in 1997, a relief team of Jehovah’s Witnesses with medicine, food, and clothing traveled to the Democratic Republic of Congo to assist their Christian brothers and others in need. Fellow Witnesses in Europe had donated supplies totaling a million dollars (U.S.).





# “I Have Made Your Name Known”

“I have made your name manifest to the men you gave me out of the world. . . . I have made your name known to them and will make it known.”

—JOHN 17:6, 26.

**What It Means:** Jesus made known God’s name by using it in his ministry. When Jesus read from the Scriptures, as he often did, he would have pronounced God’s personal name. (Luke 4:16-21) He taught his followers to pray: “Father, let your name be sanctified.”—Luke 11:2.

**How Early Christians Measured Up:** The apostle Peter related to the older men at Jerusalem that God had taken out of the nations “a people for his name.” (Acts 15:14) The apostles and others preached that “everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.” (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13) They also used the divine name in their own writings. *The Tosefta*, a collection of Jewish laws completed by about 300 C.E., says regarding the burning of Christian writings by opposers: “The books of the Evangelists and the books of the *minim* [thought to be Jewish Christians] they do not save from a fire. But they are allowed to burn where they are, . . . they and the references to the Divine Name which are in them.”

**Who Fit the Pattern Today?** The *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, authorized by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States, says in its pref-

ace: “The use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom he had to be distinguished, was discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era and is entirely inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church.” Thus, it replaced the divine name with a title, “LORD.” More recently, the Vatican directed its bishops: “In songs and prayers the name of God in the form of the *tetragrammaton* YHWH\* is neither to be used or pronounced.”

Who today use and make known God’s personal name? When Sergey was a teenager in Kyrgyzstan, he watched a film that identified God’s name as Jehovah. For some ten years, he did not hear the divine name again. Later, after Sergey had moved to the United States, two of Jehovah’s Witnesses visited him at his home and showed him God’s name in the Bible. Sergey was thrilled to find a group that used the name Jehovah. Interestingly, under the entry “Jehovah God,” *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary* gives the definition “a supreme deity recognized and the only deity worshiped by Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

\* In English, the divine name is commonly transliterated as “Jehovah.”



## “This Good News of the Kingdom Will Be Preached”

“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.

**What It Means:** The Gospel writer Luke reported that Jesus “went journeying from city to city and from village to village, preaching and declaring the good news of the kingdom of God.” (Luke 8:1) Jesus himself said: “I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this I was sent forth.” (Luke 4:43) He sent his disciples to preach the good news in the towns and villages and later commanded them: “You will be witnesses of me . . . to the most distant part of the earth.”—Acts 1:8; Luke 10:1.

**How Early Christians Measured Up:** Jesus’ disciples wasted no time in doing what Jesus told them. “Every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good

news about the Christ.” (Acts 5:42) Preaching was not limited to an elite group. Historian Neander observed that “Celsus, the first writer against Christianity, jeer[ed] at the fact, that wool-workers, cobblers, leather-dressers, the most illiterate and vulgar of mankind, were zealous preachers of the gospel.” In his book *The Early Centuries of the Church*, Jean Bernardi wrote: “[Christians] were to go out and speak everywhere and to everyone. On the highways and in the cities, on the public squares and in the homes. Welcome or unwelcome. . . . To the ends of the earth.”

**Who Fit the Pattern Today?** “The church’s failure to take preaching and teaching seriously is one reason for the general spiritual





malaise of today,” writes Anglican priest David Watson. In his book *Why Are the Catholics Leaving?* José Luis Pérez Guadalupe wrote about the activities of Evangelicals, Adventists, and others and observed that “they do not go from house to house.” Regarding Jehovah’s Witnesses, he wrote: “They go systematically from house to house.”

An interesting and realistic observation made by Jonathan Turley is found in *Cato Supreme Court Review, 2001-2002*: “Mention the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and most people immediately think of preachers visiting our homes at inconvenient hours. For the Jehovah’s Witnesses, proselytizing door-to-door is not simply to advance their faith but the very article of faith.”

## Do You Recognize the Mark?

Based on the Scriptural criteria discussed in this series of articles, who today, do you think, bear the mark of true Christianity? Though there are tens of thousands of groups and denominations claiming to be Christian, bear in mind what Jesus told his followers: “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) Identifying those who are doing the will of the Father—thus bearing the mark of true Christianity—and associating with them can lead to eternal blessings under God’s Kingdom. We invite you to ask Jehovah’s Witnesses, who brought you this magazine, for more information about God’s Kingdom and the blessings it will bring.—Luke 4:43.

# SHOULD YOU TRUST YOUR First Impressions?

WHILE sitting comfortably in his living room, a doctor was watching a television talk show that was hosting an Irish government minister. After carefully observing the minister's face, the doctor noticed something that he thought gave indication of a tumor. He advised the minister to have it checked immediately.

The diagnosis turned out to be exactly right. That doctor had what is sometimes called a clinical eye, that is, the ability to make a good diagnosis by simply looking at a patient. Some, however, feel that they have a "clinical eye" when it comes to judging people's character, personality, and trustworthiness.

Over the centuries, researchers have tried to come up with a scientific approach to the possibility of discovering a person's character by his physical appearance. They call it physiognomy, which *Encyclopædia Britannica* defines as "a pseudoscience dealing with personality traits supposedly revealed by facial features or by body structure and form." In the 19th century, anthropologists, such as Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, and criminologists, such as Cesare Lombroso of Italy, proposed similar theories and techniques that have since been mostly forgotten.

Still, many people believe that it is possible to come to a reliable judgment about an individual simply by observing his outward appearance. Are such first impressions to be trusted?

## Judging by Appearance

A typical example of judging—or misjudging—by first impressions is found in the

Bible book of First Samuel. Jehovah God directed the prophet Samuel to anoint a member of Jesse's household as the future king of Israel. We read: "It came about that, as [the sons of Jesse] came in and he caught sight of Eliab, he at once said: 'Surely his anointed one is before Jehovah.' But Jehovah said to Samuel: 'Do not look at his appearance and at the height of his stature, for I have rejected him. For not the way man sees is the way God sees, because mere man sees what appears to the eyes; but as for Jehovah, he sees what the heart is.'" The same thing was repeated with six more of Jesse's sons. Finally, contrary to what the prophet and Jesse thought, God chose as future king the eighth son—David—a young lad whom no one had even thought of calling.—1 Samuel 16:6-12.

Things are not very different today. A few years ago, in Germany, a professor of criminology conducted an experiment that involved 500 law students. There were 12 unknown "guests." These included the local police commander and the local prosecutor, the university treasurer and the public relations officer, some lawyers and court officials, and three convicted criminals. The students were to determine the profession of each of the guests, as well as which of the guests had to serve a prison sentence and for what crime. All of this was to be based only on their appearance and on the hobbies they said they had.

The results? About 75 percent of the students succeeded in picking out the three real criminals. But an average of 60 percent of the students also identified as lawbreakers the nine other guests, who had a clean

record. The local prosecutor was thought to be a potential drug pusher by 1 out of 7 of the students, and the police commander was thought to be a thief by 1 out of 3 of them! Assessments based on impressions can be far off the mark. Why?

### **Appearances Can Be Deceptive**

When we meet someone for the first time, we tend to formulate opinions about the person in light of our past experience. We are prone to generalize and to judge him on the basis of stereotypes. In addition to physical appearance, we may evaluate or judge the person because of his nationality, ethnicity, social standing, or religion.

If the opinion we formed of that person turns out to be correct, we congratulate ourselves on our good judgment, and our belief that we can trust our first impressions is reinforced. However, when we realize that we had come to a completely wrong conclusion, how do we react? If we are honest, we should let go of our preconceived opinion and look for the facts. Otherwise, we might be doing others a great disservice or even serious wrong, all because of our pride in exercising what we consider to be our superior sense of judgment.

Judging by appearance can be harmful not only for the victim but also for the one doing the judging. For example, in the first century, many Jews refused to consider the possibility that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Why? Basing their opinions on outward appearances, all they saw was the son of a country carpenter. Although they were impressed by Jesus' wise words and powerful works, they refused to believe that he could be anything more than what they had already decided, based on their preconceived ideas. Their attitude caused Jesus to turn his attention elsewhere, saying: "A prophet is not unhonored except in his home territory and in his own house."—Matthew 13:54-58.

Those Jews were members of a nation that had been awaiting the Messiah for centuries. To allow their first impressions to prevent them from recognizing the Messiah when he finally arrived led to a grave loss spiritually. (Matthew 23:37-39) Similar prejudices were directed at Jesus' followers. Many people simply could not believe that a small group of lowly fishermen, despised by the educated class and the leaders of the dominant religion, could have anything important to say. Those who continued to trust in their first impressions lost out on the

*Their first impressions led many Jews to reject Jesus as the Messiah*





splendid opportunity of becoming followers of God's Son.—John 1:10-12.

### **Some Changed Their Mind**

There were some contemporaries of Jesus who were humble enough to change their mind when faced with the evidence. (John 7:45-52) Included among these were several of Jesus' family members, who at first had not taken seriously the possibility that one of their relatives could be the Messiah. (John 7:5) Commendably, in time they changed their mind and put faith in him. (Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5; Galatians 1:19) Similarly, years later in Rome, some representatives of the Jewish community were willing to listen to the apostle Paul in person rather than trust rumors spread by enemies of Christianity. After having listened, some of them became believers.—Acts 28:22-24.

Today, many have a negative opinion of Jehovah's Witnesses. Why? In most cases, it is not because they have examined the facts or have proved that the beliefs and practices of the Witnesses are unscriptural. Rather, they simply cannot believe that Jehovah's Witnesses could have the truth in the reli-

gious field. This, as you will recall, is exactly the same view that many in the first century had of the early Christians.

It is not surprising that unfavorable or disparaging remarks are made against those who endeavor to follow Jesus' example. Why not? Because Jesus warned his true followers: "You will be objects of hatred by all people on account of my name." But he encouraged them with the words: "He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." —Matthew 10:22.

In obedience to Jesus' command, Jehovah's Witnesses today work hard to bring the good news of God's Kingdom to people worldwide. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Those who flatly refuse to listen risk losing out on the opportunity of getting on the road to everlasting life. (John 17:3) What about you? Will you be guided simply by first impressions and preconceived ideas, or will you be willing to examine the facts with an open mind? Remember: Appearances can be deceptive, and impressions can be wrong; but an objective examination of the facts can result in pleasant surprises.—Acts 17:10-12.

*Is your opinion of Jehovah's Witnesses  
based on impressions or on facts?*



# MODERN-DAY AZTECS BECOME TRUE CHRISTIANS

AZTEC  
POPULATION  
BY STATE

150,000

UNDER  
1,000

MEXICO CITY

"The temples fell, becoming dust and ash, the idols were destroyed, and the sacred books were devoured by flames, but the ancient gods have not stopped living in the hearts of the Indians."

—*Las antiguas culturas mexicanas (The Ancient Mexican Cultures).*

MEXICO is the home of the Aztecs, who went from being a small immigrant tribe in the 13th century to becoming an empire to rival that of the Incas in Peru. Although the Aztec empire fell with the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlán in 1521, the language of the Aztecs, Nahuatl, is by no means dead.\* It is still spoken by about a million and a half indigenous people in at least 15 states in Mexico. It has contributed to preserving some of the ancient Aztec beliefs, as researcher Walter Krickeberg noted above. What were some of those beliefs?

## Traditions Strange Yet Familiar

Perhaps the most widely known Aztec practice is that of human sacrifice. It was based on the belief that the sun would die if not fed with human hearts and blood. In 1487, on the occasion of the dedication of the great pyramid temple of Tenochtitlán, over 80,000 victims were sacrificed in a period of four days, according to Spanish friar Diego Durán.

Though the Spaniards were appalled by this practice, they were surprised to find that many other Aztec beliefs were similar to those of their own Catholic Church. For ex-

ample, the Aztecs practiced a form of communion in which images of their gods made of corn were eaten. The flesh of sacrificial victims was sometimes also eaten. The Aztecs used the cross and practiced oral confession and infant baptism. Perhaps the most amazing similarity was the worship of Tonantzin, a virgin "Mother of the Gods," affectionately called Our Little Mother by the Aztecs.

On the very hill where the Aztecs worshipped Tonantzin, the dark Nahuatl-speaking Catholic Virgin of Guadalupe was said to have appeared to an Aztec Indian in 1531. This hastened the conversion of the Aztecs to Catholicism. A shrine to this virgin was built on the foundation of Tonantzin's temple. On December 12, the basilica is visited by hundreds of thousands of devout Mexicans, many of whom speak Nahuatl.

In their remote sierra communities, the Nahuatl hold numerous festivals devoted to their patron saints, some lasting for days or even weeks. The book *El universo de los aztecas* (The Universe of the Aztecs) comments that the indigenous people "associate the worship of the saints of

\* Nahuatl is part of the Uto-Aztec family of languages, spoken by such tribes as the Hopi, Shoshone, and Comanche of North America. Many Nahuatl words, such as avocado, chocolate, coyote, and tomato, have found their way into the English language.



the Catholic Church with ceremonies that were practiced before Cortés.” The Nahuatl are also very much involved in spiritism. When they get sick, they go to healers who practice ritual cleansing and animal sacrifices. Moreover, illiteracy is widespread; most read neither Spanish nor Nahuatl. Clinging to their traditions and language and immersed in poverty, they have been marginalized by society.

### **Bible Truth Reaches the Modern-Day Aztecs**

For many years, Jehovah’s Witnesses in Mexico have endeavored to reach all people with the “good news of the kingdom.” (Matthew 24:14) In 2000, the Mexico branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses started a project to preach to all Nahuatl-speaking people in their own language and to organize Nahuatl-language congregations for those who were attending meetings in Spanish. A translation group was set up to produce Bible literature in Nahuatl. Efforts were also made to teach Nahuatl-speaking people to read and write in their own language. What has been the result? Consider these experiences.

When an indigenous woman heard a Bible talk in Nahuatl for the first time, she exclaimed: “We have been attending meetings for ten years and leaving with a headache because of not understanding Spanish well. But this is like beginning our lives all over again!” Sixty-year-old Juan had been studying the Bible and attending meetings in Spanish with his wife and children for eight years without making any progress. Then he began to study the Bible in Nahuatl. In less than a year, he became a baptized Witness!

As these experiences show, many had their first contact with the Bible in Spanish, but they did not understand its full meaning. Having meetings, assemblies, and publications in their own language has helped them

to embrace Bible truth and to comprehend their Christian responsibilities.

### **Overcoming Obstacles**

Spiritual progress among the Nahuatl has not been made without obstacles. For instance, there is much pressure to participate in religious festivities. In San Agustín Oapan, Jehovah’s Witnesses were not permitted to preach from house to house. There was fear that it would make the people stop giving money to support the celebrations. When Florencio and a small group of local Nahuatl Witnesses were preaching, three of them were arrested. Within 20 minutes, a crowd gathered to decide what to do with them.

“They wanted to do away with us right then and there,” Florencio recalls. “Some suggested that we be tied up and thrown into the river to drown! We spent the night in jail. The next day, a fellow Witness who was a lawyer and two other brothers came to help. They too were thrown in jail. Finally, the authorities let all of us go on the condition that we leave town.” In spite of that experience, a congregation was established a year later, with 17 baptized Witnesses and about 50 people attending the meetings.

In the Nahuatl community of Coapala, Alberto, one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, was invited to participate in the local festival. He declined and was imprisoned. A general assembly was called, and some clamored for him to be hanged in order to frighten any who may have wished to join his religion and give up the local customs. Some other Witnesses tried to get him released, but they too were arrested. After the week-long festival ended, all were set free. As opposition continued, it was necessary to seek the help of higher officials, and an order was ob-





tained that put an end to the persecution. Interestingly, the main opposer accepted Bible truth a short time later and was baptized. There is now a congregation in that town.

### Ripe for the Harvest

Seeing the potential for growth in the Nahuatl field, many Witnesses are learning the language. This, though, has its challenges. The Nahuatl are a very shy people who

are reticent about speaking their language because of the treatment they have received. There are also many variants, or dialects.



Sonia, a full-time minister, explains what moved her to take on the challenge. “Within two hours of my home, there are some 6,000 Nahuatl migrant workers living in shelters shut in with guards. The people are vulnerable and humiliated,” said Sonia. “Their condition made me very sad because the Nahuatl were once a proud people, the roots of our culture. We had been preaching to them for 20 years in Spanish, but they did not fully understand, and they showed little interest. However, when I learned a few words of their language, the doors opened up. They surrounded me to listen. I offered to teach one of the women to read and write if she would teach me Nahuatl. Now they know me in all the shelters as ‘the woman of the language.’ I feel like a missionary in my own country.” Today, there is a Nahuatl-speaking congregation in that area.

Maricela, another full-time minister, is making every effort to learn Nahuatl. At first, she conducted a Bible study in Spanish with 70-year-old Félix. As she learned more Nahuatl, Maricela began to explain things to him in his language. This had a fine effect. How touched she was when Félix asked, “Does Jehovah listen when I talk to him in Nahuatl?” Félix was happy to learn that Jehovah understands all languages. Félix regularly attends the meetings even though he has to walk for an hour and a half to do so, and he is now baptized. Maricela says, “How happy I am to cooperate with the angel who has good news to declare to all peoples!”—Revelation 14:6, 7.

Indeed, the Nahuatl field is “white for harvesting.” (John 4: 35) We pray that Jehovah God will continue to invite people of all nations, including the noble modern-day Aztecs, to go up to his mountain to be instructed in his ways.—Isaiah 2:2, 3.



## LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

# How Should We Remember Jesus' Death?

This article considers questions you may have raised and shows where you can read the answers in your Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses would be pleased to discuss these answers with you.

### 1. How should Jesus' death be remembered?

Jesus told his followers to remember his death by means of a symbolic meal, using bread and wine. The bread represents Jesus' body, and the wine his blood.—*Read Luke 22:19, 20.*

The bread that Jesus used was unleavened, or without yeast. In the Bible, yeast is often used to represent sin. So the bread was a fitting symbol of Jesus' perfect body. He offered his body as a sacrifice, which did away with the animal sacrifices under the Mosaic Law. (Hebrews 10:5, 9, 10) The wine was a symbol of Jesus' precious blood that was poured out as a sacrifice for our sins.—*Read 1 Peter 1:19; 2:24; 3:18.*



### 2. When should we commemorate Jesus' death?

Jesus' death occurred on Passover, Nisan 14. A Jewish day begins at sundown. The evening before he died, Jesus ate the Passover meal with his apostles and then instituted a new memorial meal to commemorate his death.—*Read Luke 22:14, 15.*

Today, God's people commemorate what God provided through Jesus to set the whole world free from sin and death. (Exodus 12:5-7, 13, 17) Just as the Passover was observed once a year, so the Memorial of Jesus' death is held once a year after sundown on Nisan 14 according to the Bible's lunar calendar.—*Read John 1:29.*

### 3. Who should partake of the bread and the wine?

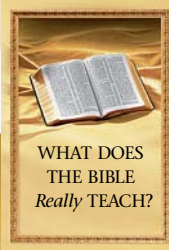
When Jesus handed the wine to his followers, he said: “This cup means the new covenant.” (1 Corinthians 11:25) The new covenant replaced the Mosaic Law covenant, in which God had promised the Israelites that if they strictly obeyed him, they would become his people. (Exodus 19:5, 6) However, Israel did not obey God’s voice. So Jehovah provided a new covenant.—*Read Jeremiah 31:31.*

Through the new covenant, Jehovah makes blessings available to many by means of a few. Those in the covenant are few, a mere 144,000. Through them, millions from all nations will be blessed with everlasting life in an earthly paradise. Some who are in the new covenant serve Jehovah on earth today. They alone properly partake of the bread and the wine because the cup “means the new covenant.”—*Read Luke 12:32; Revelation 14:1, 3.*



### 4. How does the Memorial benefit us?

The annual Memorial of Jesus’ death deepens our appreciation for Jehovah’s extraordinary love. He sent his Son to die for our sins. So when we attend the Memorial, we should contemplate what Jesus’ death means for us. We should consider how we can show appreciation for what Jehovah and Jesus have done for us.—*Read John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.*



For more information, see pages 206-208 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.





## DID YOU KNOW?

### What was the altar to “an Unknown God” that the apostle Paul came across in Athens?—Acts 17:23.

■ A number of ancient Greek writers referred to such altars. For example, historian and geographer Pausanias, of the second century C.E., stated that at Olympia, there was “an altar of the Unknown gods.” And the orator and philosopher Philostratus said that in Athens, “altars [were] set up in honor even of unknown gods.”

Third-century C.E. writer Diogenes Laertius recounts a tradition explaining the origin of “nameless altars.” The story, dating back to the sixth or seventh century B.C.E., relates how a certain Epimenides purified Athens of a pestilence. Diogenes writes: “He [Epimenides] took sheep . . . and brought them to the Areopagus; and there he

let them go whither they pleased, instructing those who followed them to mark the spot where each sheep lay down and offer a sacrifice to the local divinity. And thus, it is said, the plague was stayed. Hence even to this day altars may be found in different parts of Attica with no name inscribed upon them.”

Another possible reason why altars to unknown gods were built, says *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, was “the fear of neglecting to pay homage to some unknown god or goddess and thus either failing to procure the deity’s benefits, or incurring his or her wrath.”



AN ALTAR TO AN UNKNOWN GOD, PERGAMUM RUINS, TURKEY

### Why did first-century Jews despise tax collectors?

■ Tax collectors have never been popular. In first-century Israel, however, they were considered to be among the most despicable and corrupt of people.

The ruling Roman authorities demanded heavy taxes from the people. Roman officials collected land tax and head, or poll, tax, but they farmed out to the highest bidder the work of collecting dues on imports, exports, and goods passing through the land. Local businessmen thus bought the right to collect taxes in certain areas. As willing tools of the hated Romans, such individuals were deeply resented by fellow Jews, who regarded them as “traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent

intercourse with the heathen,” says M’Clintock and Strong’s *Cyclopædia*.

Tax collectors were notoriously dishonest, and they enriched themselves at the expense of their fellow countrymen. Some overestimated the value of the goods to be taxed and pocketed the profit, while others used false accusations to extort money from the poor. (Luke 3:13; 19:8) As a result, tax collectors were put on a par with sinners and, says *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, were “ineligible to serve as judge or even as a witness.”—Matthew 9:10, 11.



A ROMAN RELIEF DEPICTING A TAX COLLECTOR, 2ND OR 3RD CENTURY C.E.

Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY



# “The Former Things Will Not Be Called to Mind”

**M**EMORIES can be a blessing. Reflecting on pleasant times with loved ones can warm our heart. But in other cases, memories may seem more like a curse. Are you plagued by painful memories of hurtful past experiences? If so, you may wonder, ‘Will these sad memories ever fade from my mind?’ We find a most reassuring answer in words recorded by the prophet Isaiah.—*Read Isaiah 65:17.*

Jehovah purposes to cut off painful memories at their source. How so? By removing this wicked world with all its suffering and replacing it with something infinitely better. Jehovah through Isaiah promises: “Here I am creating new heavens and a new earth.” Understanding this promise can fill our hearts with hope.

What are the new heavens? The Bible gives two clues that can help us. First, the idea of a new heavens is mentioned by two other Bible writers, and in both cases the words are associated with sweeping changes on this earth. (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4) Second, in the Bible the term “heavens” can represent rulership, or government. (Isaiah 14:4, 12; Daniel 4: 25, 26) The new heavens, then, is a new government, one capable of establishing righteous conditions on earth. There is but one rulership able to accomplish all of that—God’s Kingdom, the heavenly government that Jesus taught us to pray for. That Kingdom will cause God’s righteous will to be done earth wide.—Matthew 6: 9, 10.

What is the new earth? Consider two Scriptural facts that help us reach the right conclusion. First, in the Bible the term “earth” at times refers to *people*, not the globe. (Psalm 96:1)

Second, the Bible foretold that under God’s rule, faithful humans would learn righteousness, which would spread earth wide. (Isaiah 26:9) The new earth thus refers to a society of people who would submit to God’s rulership and live by his righteous standards.

Can you begin to see how Jehovah will cut off painful memories at their source? Soon Jehovah will completely fulfill his promise of a new heavens and a new earth, establishing a righteous new world.\* In that new world, the causes of hurtful memories—physical, mental, and

### Jehovah purposes to cut off painful memories at their source

emotional suffering—will be things of the past. Faithful humans will enjoy life to the full, and they will treasure the pleasant memories of each passing day.

What, though, about the pain that may burden our hearts at present? Jehovah’s promise through Isaiah continues: “The former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart.” Any pain we have experienced in this old world will gradually fade away. Does that prospect appeal to you? If so, why not find out how you can draw closer to the God who promises such a bright future?

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\* For more information about God’s Kingdom and what it will soon accomplish, see chapters 3, 8, and 9 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

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### SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR MARCH:

■ **Isaiah 63—Jeremiah 16**

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# WHAT IS WRONG WITH Spiritism?

From youth, Barbara\* saw visions, heard voices, and was convinced that she had contacts with deceased relatives. She and her husband, Joachim, read books on the occult and became proficient in reading tarot cards. These indicated that they would earn big money, which they did in business. One day, the cards warned them that dangerous people would come to their home and told them how they should defend themselves.



**A**LTHOUGH belief in the occult may seem antiquated, interest in the paranormal is widespread. People worldwide wear amulets, use Ouija boards, and consult spirit mediums to tell their fortune or to protect themselves from evil. In an article entitled “Laptop and Lucifer,” the German magazine *Focus* remarked: “The Internet is giving the witchcraft scene new impetus.”

Did you know that the Bible speaks about spiritism? What it says on the subject might surprise you.

## What the Bible Says About Spiritism

The law that God gave his people in ancient Israel stated: “There should not be found in you . . . anyone who employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who

looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell or anyone who consults a spirit medium or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead. For everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah.” (Deuteronomy 18:10-12) Why such a strong stand against spiritistic practices?

As our opening experience shows, many believe that the living can communicate with the dead and that information obtained through occult practices originates with the dead. Such beliefs are rooted in what is taught by many religions—that at death humans live on in the spirit realm. But, contrary to this teaching, the Bible clearly states: “As for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) It describes the dead as if they were in

\* The names have been changed.



a deep sleep, totally unaware of what is taking place around them.\* (Matthew 9: 18, 24; John 11:11-14) That being the case, you might ask, How are we to explain experiences that people have with the paranormal? What is the source of such communication?

### Communication With the Spirit World

The Gospel accounts show that when on earth, Jesus had dealings with the spirit world. Mark 1:23, 24 reports that “an unclean spirit” told Jesus: “I know exactly who you are.” The spirits undoubtedly know who you are too. But do you know who they are?

Before God created humans, he created multitudes of spirit sons, or angels. (Job 38: 4-7) The angels are of a life-form higher than humans. (Hebrews 2:6, 7) They are powerful and highly intelligent, and they were created to do God’s will. The psalmist sang: “Bless Jehovah, O you angels of his, mighty in power, carrying out his word.”—Psalm 103:20.

The Bible reveals that in time some of the angels initiated unauthorized contact with humans. For what purpose? The first one to do so used deception to lead the first humans, Adam and Eve, away from their God and Creator. In so doing, he turned himself into Satan the Devil, a slanderer and opposer of God.—Genesis 3:1-6.

Later, other angels “forsook their own proper dwelling place” in heaven, took on human bodies, and began living with attractive women on earth. (Jude 6; Genesis 6:1, 2) Those renegade angels and their hybrid offspring terrorized humankind, so much so that the earth became “filled with violence.” You are probably familiar with the Bible account of how God put an end to that vio-

lent and wicked generation by the Flood in Noah’s day.—Genesis 6:3, 4, 11-13.

The floodwaters forced the spirits to dematerialize and return to the spirit realm. But the Creator did not allow them to return to their original “dwelling place.” Instead, they were confined to a debased condition compared to “pits of dense darkness.” (2 Peter 2:4, 5) The Bible refers to rebel angels as “demons.” (James 2:19) They are the power behind spiritism.

### What the Demons Want

The objective of the wicked spirits who communicate with humans is first to divert them from worshipping the true God, Jehovah. The gifts or powers that many practitioners of the occult claim to have are nothing more than distractions to keep people from gaining accurate knowledge about God and building a relationship with him.

The demons’ second objective can be seen in what Satan, their leader, attempted with Jesus. Satan offered Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.” What did Satan want in return? “Fall down and do an act of worship to me,” he urged. Yes, Satan and the demons desire to be worshipped. But Jesus rejected the idea of forsaking God and true worship.—Matthew 4:8-10.

Evil spirits seldom make such direct offers today.

\* For a detailed discussion of the condition of the dead, see chapter 6, “Where Are the Dead?,” in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Occult practices prevent people from having  
a good relationship with God



Rather, they seek to ensnare the unwary with seemingly harmless means of diversion, such as crystal balls, tea leaves, tarot cards, pendulums, and horoscopes. Do not be deceived by such practices! They are not doorways to the unknown by means of some mysterious force of nature. Wicked spirits use fascination with the occult to lure and ensnare people with the aim of diverting them from worshipping Jehovah. When that does not achieve their goal, evil spirits often harass and make miserable those who become entangled in their web. If that has been true in your case, what can you do to free yourself from their influence?

### **Spiritism—How to Escape**

Make no mistake about it, spirits who communicate with humans are enemies of God, doomed for destruction. (Jude 6) They are impostors and liars, who pose as the dead. How would you feel if you found that a supposed friend was an impostor, interested only in diverting you from your best interests? How would you react if you discovered that you had unknowingly entered into a relationship with a sexual predator on the Internet? Entanglement with the demons is far more dangerous. You need to do all you can to break off the contact. What can you do?

After learning what the Scriptures teach about spiritism, some inhabitants of ancient Ephesus saw the need to destroy their books on magical arts, costly though they were. They “burned them up before everybody.” (Acts 19:19, 20) Today objects related to the occult include not only books, amulets, Ouija boards, and the like but also material from electronic sources. Turn away from anything that seems like a gateway to spiritism.

Recall the couple mentioned at the beginning of this article. From their tarot cards, they concluded that dangerous people would come to their home but that

they should neither listen to nor accept anything from them. However, when Connie and Gudrun, two of Jehovah’s Witnesses, appeared at their door saying that they brought good news about God, Joachim and Barbara decided that they would listen. Their conversation came to the subject of spiritism, and Connie and Gudrun provided accurate information about it from the Scriptures. A regular Bible discussion began.

Soon Joachim and Barbara decided to break off all contacts with the demons. The Witnesses explained that the spirits would likely not be happy about that. In fact, Joachim and Barbara went through

“Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.”—JAMES 4:8

difficult times and suffered frightening demon attacks. For a while, they were in fear every night until moving into another house brought some relief. Throughout their ordeal, this couple maintained confidence in the words of Philippians 4:13: “For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me.” Jehovah blessed their determination, and the spirits eventually stopped harassing them. Today Joachim and Barbara are happy worshippers of the true God, Jehovah.

The Scriptures urge all who would have Jehovah’s blessing: “Subject yourselves . . . to God; but oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” (James 4:7, 8) Jehovah God can and will help you to get free from demon influence, if you want to. Looking back on their liberation from spiritism, Joachim and Barbara wholeheartedly agree with the words of Psalm 121:2: “My help is from Jehovah.”

## Is the Trinity a Bible teaching?

■ The Trinity doctrine is defined this way, although there are many variations: “Three divine Persons (the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost), each said to be eternal, each said to be almighty, none greater or less than another, each said to be God, and yet together being but one God.” Is this a Bible teaching?

Matthew 28:19 is usually cited to prove the doctrine. The text from the *King James Version* quotes Jesus: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” True, the Father, the Son, and the holy ghost (or spirit) are all mentioned in this text. However, nothing is said about their being one. Jesus was commissioning his Jewish followers to teach and baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit. As a nation, what did the Jews believe?

When the nation of Israel received the Law covenant, which forms part of the Bible, they were commanded: “You must never have any other gods against my face.” (Deuteronomy 5:7) How many persons were speaking here? Without any confusion, Deuteronomy 6:4

reads: “Listen, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah”—not three in one. Israel had just been liberated from Egypt, where Osiris, Isis, and Horus (shown at left)—one of a number of triads of gods—were worshipped. Therefore, Israel was commanded to worship just one God. How important was it for people to understand this command? According to

Dr. J. H. Hertz, a rabbi: “This sublime pronouncement of absolute monotheism was a declaration of war against all *polytheism* . . . The Shema excludes *the trinity* of the Christian creed as a violation of the Unity of God.”\*

Since Jesus was a Jew by birth, he was instructed to follow this same command. After his baptism, when tempted by the Devil, he said: “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.’” (Matthew 4:10; Deuteronomy 6:13) We can learn at least two things from this incident. First, Satan was trying to entice Jesus to worship someone other than Jehovah, an attempt that would have been absurd if Jesus were part of the same God. Second, Jesus made it clear that there is just one God who must be worshipped when he said “him alone,” not “us,” which he *would* have said if he were part of a Trinity.

When people come to an accurate knowledge of God and want to serve him, they are baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit.” (Matthew 28:19) They understand and accept the authority of Jehovah and the role of Jesus Christ in the outworking of Jehovah’s purpose. (Psalm 83:18; Matthew 28:18) They also comprehend the function and activity of God’s holy spirit, which is his active force.—Genesis 1:2; Galatians 5:22, 23; 2 Peter 1:21.

The Trinity doctrine has confused people for centuries. On the other hand, Jesus enlightened his followers and directed them to “the only true God,” Jehovah.—John 17:3.

\* The confession of the oneness of God as expressed in the Shema, a prayer based on Deuteronomy 6:4, forms a central part of synagogue worship.







## A LETTER FROM RUSSIA

# Treasure Hunting in the Golden Mountains of Altay



**I**T IS a fine day in May in the Altay Republic—a region of breathtaking beauty in the southwest corner of Siberia. From our window we see swaths of dark coniferous forest; and rising majestically behind, faint blue peaks capped with snow. This is the rugged and remote land of the Altaics—a distinct Asian people with their own language. They are perfectly at home in the Altai Mountains, a name based on a Turkic-Mongolian word meaning “golden.”

It has been a few years since my wife and I learned Russian Sign Language and began visiting sign-language congregations and small groups of Jehovah’s Witnesses who are deaf. In this country, more than 100 ethnic groups and 70 distinct cultures share one common spoken language, Russian. The deaf among us use yet another language, Russian Sign Language. The deaf enjoy a tight-knit culture, and many whom we meet are eager to share their personal history with us and show us hospitality. This is certainly the case in Altay.

In the city of Gorno-Altaysk, we learn of a few deaf ones who live in a small village 155 miles (250 km) away. We know there are a few Witnesses there, but none of

them know sign language. We wonder about these deaf Altaics and decide to drive out to find them. Our enthusiasm excites Yury and Tatyana, a deaf couple who agree to come with us. We load a minivan with sign-language publications on DVD and a DVD player. We also pack a large thermos, sandwiches of rye bread and smoked sausage, and freshly baked piroshki—delicious Russian pastries with fillings of cabbage and potato. Finally, we spray ourselves, our clothes, and our shoes thoroughly with a tick repellent, as tick-borne encephalitis is common in the area.

The road we are traveling winds through spectacular mountain scenery. The air is thick with the fragrance of jasmine and lilac. It invigorates us! We are thrilled to see a herd of Siberian deer calmly munching on the grass. Altaic settlements are clusters of wooden houses with neat metal roofs. Next to many of the houses are wooden dwellings called *ayyl*, usually six-cornered houses with





a conical roof. Some resemble tepees covered with tree bark. Many Altaic families live in the *ayyl* from May to September and move into the house for the fall and winter.

We are warmly welcomed in the village by local Witnesses, who lead us to the home of a deaf Altaic couple. They are delighted to see us and are curious about where we are from and what we are doing. It turns out that they have a computer, so when we pull out a DVD, they insist on playing it. Immediately, all conversation ceases; it is as if we were not there. Their eyes glued to the monitor, they occasionally copy the signs they see and nod in appreciation. With difficulty, we get their attention so we can stop the DVD to return to its opening scenes, which depict a beautiful paradise on earth. Pausing on one scene, we discuss what God will do for mankind and what kind of people will live forever in the conditions they see. We are heartened by their interest, and at the end of the visit, they tell us about another deaf couple living a few hours away in another village.

Setting off again, we cross a spectacular rocky pass cut deep into the mountains and follow the serpentine road to a much smaller village. There we find the deaf family—the husband, the wife, the wife’s mother, and the couple’s small son—who are delighted to have unexpected company. We enter the tiny door of their



*ayyl*, which smells pleasantly of wood and butter-milk. It has a round hole on top of its cone-shaped roof, which lets the light in. A whitewashed brick oven and stove stands in one corner, and cheery red rugs carpet the walls. The couple treat us to an Altaic dish—small fried doughnuts and tea in little Asian-style bowls. We ask them if they have ever considered it possible to be God’s friend. They ponder the question. The wife’s mother

tells us that as a child, she once took some food to a place in the mountains as an offering to the gods. “What that really meant, I don’t know,” she shrugs and smiles. “It was our custom.”

We show a DVD on this subject, and their faces light up. They are eager to continue the discussion, but how? Although text messages usually make it easy to keep in touch with deaf ones, there is not a single mobile-phone antenna in the area. So we promise to keep in touch by letter.

The sun is already setting as we part affectionately and set off on the long road back to Gorno-Altaysk, tired but content. Some time later, we ask local Witnesses about this family and learn that every other week, the husband travels to a larger town, where he studies the Bible and attends a meeting with the help of a local sister who knows sign language. How happy we are that our efforts bore fruit!

Our search for honesthearted deaf people can be compared to looking for treasures hidden deep in the mountains. Long hours of searching are rewarded when we find a stray jewel, seemingly by accident. For us, the mountains of Altay will always be golden, reminding us of the sincere ones we met between the rugged peaks.







# A LOOK AT Colors and Fabrics IN BIBLE TIMES

**I**N THE Bible, we find many references to styles, colors, and materials of the clothing worn by people who lived centuries ago.

The Bible, of course, is not a book on fashions and styles. Yet, such details given in Bible accounts can make the events being reported on come to life in the reader's mind.

For example, we read about the makeshift garb put together by Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness—loin coverings made of fig leaves sewn together. These, however, were later replaced by garments that God gave them—more lasting “long garments of skin.”—Genesis 3:7, 21.

We also have the detailed accounts in Exodus chapters 28 and 39 regarding the garments worn by Israel's high priest. These included a linen undergarment, a white robe, a woven sash, a blue sleeveless coat, and the embroidered ephod and breastpiece, together with a turban and its shining gold plate. Just reading the description of the way that the many precious materials were put together to make these garments is enough to give us a picture of how impressive they must have looked.—Exodus 39:1-5, 22-29.

The clothing of the prophet Elijah was so characteristic that people quickly recognized him by a description of his appearance: “A man possessing a hair garment, with a leather belt girded about his loins.” Hundreds of years later, some people thought that John the Baptizer was Elijah, perhaps partly because of the similarity of their clothing.—2 Kings 1:8; Matthew 3:4; John 1:21.



## Wool and Linen

In Biblical times, sheep were raised mainly for their milk and wool. From a few sheep, a farmer would get enough wool for his family's garments. If many sheep were raised, a farmer could sell the surplus to the local textile producers. Some towns and villages had their own textile guilds. From early times, sheepshearing was part of a year's work for the people.—Genesis 31:19; 38:13; 1 Samuel 25:4, 11.



"BLUE THREAD AND  
WOOL DYED REDDISH  
PURPLE."—EXODUS 26:1

**Fabrics and Colors** The Bible provides many references to the types of material used for clothing and to the colors and dyeing agents, as well as to spinning, weaving, and sewing.\* The main fabrics mentioned were wool from domesticated animals and linen from the flax plant. Abel was called "a herder of sheep." (Genesis 4:2) Whether Abel raised sheep for their wool, the Bible does not say. The earliest Biblical reference to fine linen relates to the garments that Pharaoh placed on Joseph in the 18th century B.C.E. (Genesis 41:42) The Bible makes virtually no mention of cotton as a clothing material used by the Jews, but it was used from early times in Middle Eastern lands.

Both flax and wool yielded fine fibers that were spun together to make threads of varying thicknesses. The threads were then woven into pieces of cloth. Threads and woven fabrics were dyed in a wide range of colors. The fabric was then cut to fit the wearer. Items of clothing were often decorated with embroidery,

\* For details on these processes, see the accompanying boxes.

DRIED FLAX  
PLANT  
BEFORE  
SOAKING

Linen, a popular fabric for clothing, was made from fibers of the flax plant. (Exodus 9:31) The plant was harvested when nearly full-grown. The stalk was allowed to dry in the sun and was then soaked in water to soften the woody parts. After drying, it was beaten and the fibers were separated, or sorted out, and spun into threads for weaving. Royalty and high officials preferred clothing made of linen.



## Spinning

A single fiber—such as flax, wool, or goat's hair—is too fragile and too short to be of use. So a number of fibers are twisted together, or spun, to produce thread or yarn of desired thicknesses and lengths. Of the "capable wife," the Bible says: "Her hands she has thrust out to the distaff, and her own hands take hold of the spindle." (Proverbs 31:10, 19) This is a description of the spinning process, using the distaff and the spindle, basically two simple sticks.

In one hand, a woman holds the distaff, with the fibers loosely wrapped around it. With the other hand, she draws out some fibers, twists them into a thread, and attaches it to a hook or notch at one end of the spindle. On the other end of the spindle is a weighted disk, called a whorl, that serves as a fly-wheel. Suspending the spindle vertically and turning it, she spins the fibers into thread of a certain thickness. The spun thread is wrapped around the shaft of the spindle, as on a bobbin, and the process is repeated until all the fibers on the distaff become one long thread, ready for dyeing or weaving.



interwoven threads of varied colors, adding much to the appearance and value of the garments.—Judges 5:30.

Blue, purple, and crimson are frequently mentioned in the Bible as dyes for fabrics. The Israelites were commanded to put “a blue string above the fringed edge” of their garments as a reminder of their special relationship with their God, Jehovah. (Numbers 15:38-40) The Hebrew words *tekhe’leth*, a shade of blue, and *’ar-ga-man’*, usually translated “purple,” are the colors associated with the high priest’s garments and other decorative items in the tabernacle and temple.

**Tabernacle and Temple Fittings** The tabernacle in the wilderness—and later the temple in Jerusalem—were the center of worship for the Israelites. It is therefore understandable that a great number of details were provided in the Bible in connection with the preparing and outfitting of the tabernacle and of Solomon’s temple. In addition to material and color, we find details regarding the weaving, dyeing, sewing, and embroidering of the tent coverings and curtains.

Under divine guidance and direction, expert craftsmen Bezalel and Oholiab, as well as other men and women, faithfully accomplished a unique assignment, producing a meeting tent worthy of the worship of Jehovah. (Exodus 35:30-35) In chapter 26 of Exodus, the materials and construction of all the parts of the tabernacle are described in meticulous detail. For example, its expansive, colorful tent cloths were woven of “fine twisted linen and blue thread and wool dyed reddish purple and coccus scarlet material.” Much of this material was probably brought out of Egypt at the time of the Exodus. Special attention was given to the colorful thick curtain that was embroidered with figures of cherubs and divided “the Holy and the Most Holy” at the inner part of the tabernacle. (Exodus 26:1,31-33) Similar details were repeated to those who worked with the fabrics for the temple in Jerusalem, under the direction of King Solomon.—2 Chronicles 2:1, 7.

From the details preserved in the Bible, we can see that the ancient Hebrews showed considerable initia-



## Dyeing

After spinning and cleaning, the wool and flax threads—or the woven cloth—are dyed a variety of colors. Several soakings in the dye produce a deeper color. In view of its costliness, surplus dye is squeezed out to be reused after the material is removed from the vat. The dyed thread or cloth is then laid out to dry.

With no synthetic colors at their disposal, the ancients developed permanent dyes for a surprising variety of shades and hues from the animal and plant kingdoms. For example, yellow dye was made from almond leaves and ground pomegranate rinds, and black dye from pomegranate tree bark. Red dye was extracted from the roots of the madder plant or from the kermes insect. Blue coloring came from the indigo flower. The combination of pigments from various murex sea snails could produce

tive and ingenuity in utilizing the materials available to them. What we see is a picture, not of a society eking out a rather gray existence in drab clothing styles and homely fabrics, but of a people who enjoyed a variety of colorful fashions, available for different occasions, according to the seasons of the year and the means of the household.

The Bible tells us that the Israelites were given a good land, “a land flowing with milk and honey,” as their home. (Exodus 3:8; Deuteronomy 26:9, 15) As they pursued true worship of Jehovah, they enjoyed his blessing. Life was good, and the people were happy and contented. For example, the Bible tells us: “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 [King] Solomon.” —1 Kings 4:25.

shades and colors ranging from royal purple to blue to crimson red.

How many sea snails were needed to dye a garment? Each individual sea snail produces such a small amount of pigment that according to one study, some 10,000 were needed to produce enough secretions to dye one robe or cloak a deep shade of aptly named royal purple. During the reign of King Nabonidus of Babylon, wool dyed purple was said to be 40 times more expensive than wool dyed other colors. In view of ancient Tyre’s prominence as a renowned supplier of this costly dye, the color purple became known as Tyrian purple.



SEA  
SNAIL  
SHELL



2ND OR 3RD  
CENTURY B.C.E.  
PURPLE DYE  
VAT FOUND  
IN TEL DOR,  
ISRAEL



## Weaving

A loom is used to weave spun threads into cloths of a desired size for making garments or other items. Sets of threads are interlaced lengthwise as warp threads and crosswise as weft, or woof, threads. The woof threads are woven alternately over and under the warp threads.

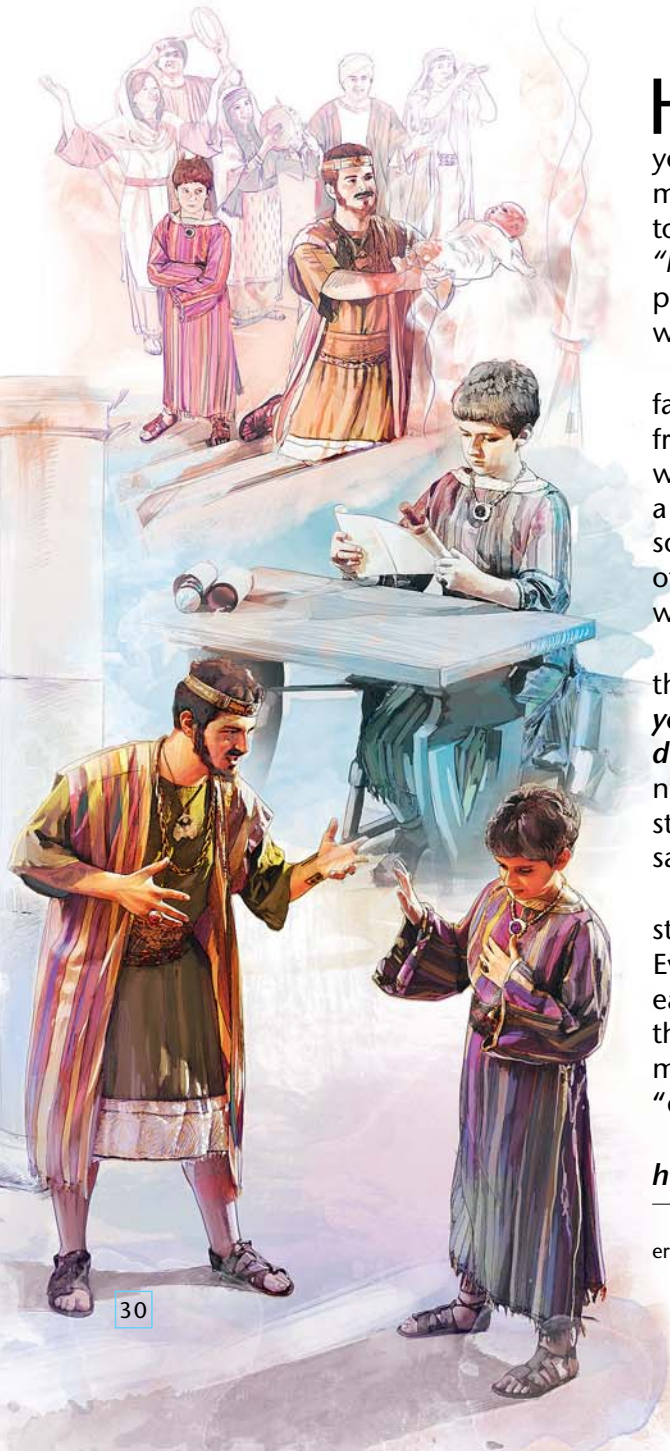
The loom used in Biblical times was either a horizontal frame, placed flat on the floor, or a tall, vertical frame. In some vertical frames, weights were attached to the lower ends of the warp threads. Ancient loom weights have been discovered in numerous locations in Israel.

Weaving was often a domestic chore, but in some places whole villages devoted themselves collectively to the trade. For example, at 1 Chronicles 4:21, we find a reference to “the house of the workers of fine fabric,” evidently an association of workers in that profession.





# “He Kept Sticking to Jehovah”



**H**AVE you ever been told to stick to something?—\* Parents and teachers may tell young ones to stick to their studies. This means to view them as important. We want to talk about a person who the Bible says “kept sticking to Jehovah,” the true God. The person’s name is Hezekiah. Let’s see what we can learn from his example.

Hezekiah had an unhappy childhood. His father, Ahaz, the king of Judah, turned away from serving Jehovah. Ahaz took the lead in worshipping false gods when Hezekiah was a boy. Ahaz even had at least one of his sons—Hezekiah’s own brother—killed and offered up in sacrifice to a god that Ahaz worshipped!

Even though Ahaz continued to do bad things, Hezekiah kept obeying Jehovah. ***Do you think that this was hard for him to do?***— It must have been. But Hezekiah did not give up! Let’s learn how he was able to stick to Jehovah, and how we can do the same.

Hezekiah learned about others who had stuck to Jehovah. David was such a person. Even though David lived hundreds of years earlier, Hezekiah could learn about him in the Scriptures. “In case my own father and my own mother did leave me,” David wrote, “even Jehovah himself would take me up.”

***Do you see what helped David to obey Jehovah?***— It was his faith! David was sure that

\* If you are reading with a child, the dash provides a reminder to pause and encourage the child to express himself.

if he was obedient, Jehovah would help him. David had no doubt about it! Thinking about David surely helped Hezekiah stick to Jehovah by obeying Him. You too can be sure that Jehovah will help you if you keep sticking to him by obeying him.

***What, though, if your father or your mother does not worship Jehovah?***— God says children should obey their parents. So you should obey yours. However, if your parents tell you to do something that God says you should not do, you can explain why you cannot do it. You should not lie, steal, or do any other bad thing that God says is wrong, no matter *who* tells you to do it. You are right to obey God!

There are good examples we can follow. Hezekiah had not only the example of David but also that of his own grandfather Jotham. Hezekiah could learn from him, even as we can in our Bibles today. ***Can you think of other good examples we can follow?***—

True, in the Bible you can learn about some mistakes that Hezekiah, David, Jotham, and other imperfect people made. But those people loved Jehovah, admitted their mistakes, and tried to do what was right. Remember, only God's Son, Jesus, was perfect. Let's especially study about him and try to follow his example.

READ IN YOUR BIBLE

2 Kings 18:6; 2 Chronicles 28:1-3  
Psalm 27:10; Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20  
2 Chronicles 27:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:21





# HOW DO YOU VIEW JESUS?



Are you more inclined to think of Jesus as  
*a newborn baby, a dying man, or an exalted King?*

The Bible reveals that Jesus *is* a powerful King. But what does this mean for you?

Many believe that Jesus died for them. Yet, how can one man's death almost 2,000 years ago mean life for others today?

You are cordially invited to listen to Scriptural answers to these questions. This information will be presented when Jehovah's Witnesses gather to commemorate Jesus' death. This year the anniversary falls on **Thursday, April 5**, after sundown.

Please check with Jehovah's Witnesses locally for the exact time and place.

The weekend following the commemoration of Jesus' death, Jehovah's Witnesses will also present an intriguing Bible-based discourse entitled "Is It Later Than You Think?" This talk will be one of the highlights of a worldwide effort to reach out to all those who love truth and want to learn more about Jesus. You are invited to attend.