

- Song 85 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Jehovah Keeps His Promises”:** (10 min.) [Play the video entitled *Introduction to Ezra*.] Ezr 3:1-6—Jehovah’s prophecies never fail (w06 1/15 19 ¶2) Ezr 5:1-7—Jehovah can maneuver matters for the success of his people (w06 1/15 19 ¶4; w86 1/15 9 ¶2; w86 2/1 29 box)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.) Ezr 1:3-6—Why were the Israelites who did not volunteer to return to Jerusalem not necessarily weak in faith? (w06 1/15 17 ¶5; 19 ¶1)

Ezr 4:1-3—Why was an offer of help rejected? (w06 1/15 19 ¶3)

What does this week’s Bible reading teach me about Jehovah?

What points from this week’s Bible reading can I use in the field ministry?

- **Bible Reading:** Ezr 3:10–4:7 (4 min. or less)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Present the last article of the current *Watchtower*. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Demonstrate how to make a return visit on someone who responded well to the presentation that featured the last article of the current *Watchtower*. Lay the groundwork for the next visit.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) Demonstrate a Bible study. (bh 20-21 ¶6-8)

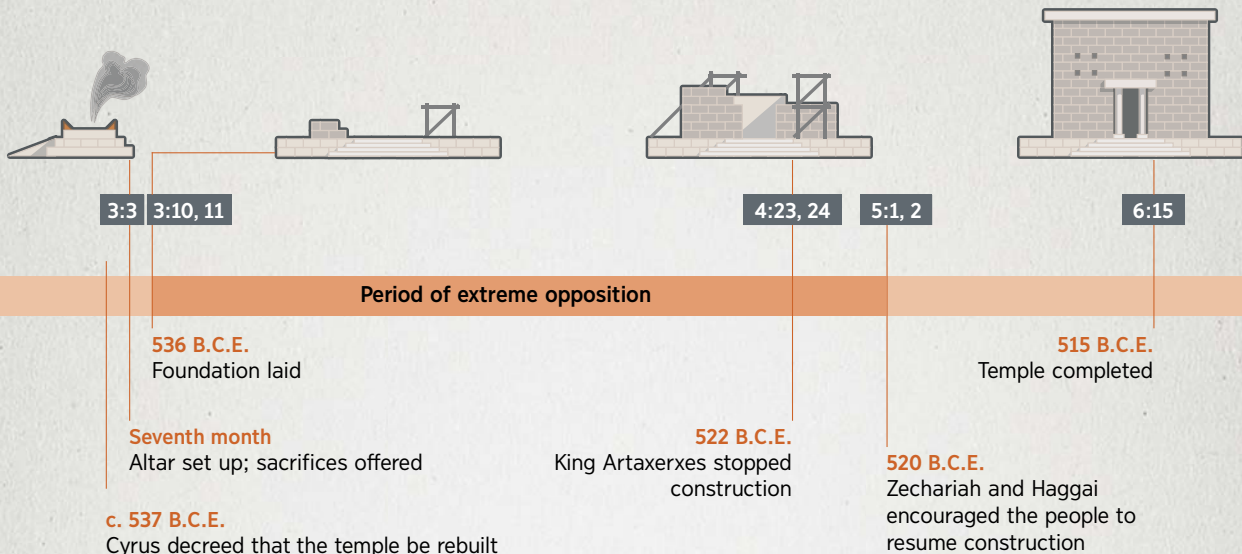
LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 40
- **“All These Other Things Will Be Added to You”:** (5 min.) Talk based on Matthew 6:33 and Luke 12:22-24. Invite publishers to relate experiences in which Jehovah fulfilled his promise to care for their material needs when they put the Kingdom first.
- **Your Speech—“‘Yes’ and yet ‘No’”?:** (10 min.) Discussion. (w14 3/15 30-32)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** ia chap. 7 ¶1-14 (30 min.)
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 41 and Prayer



EZRA 1-5 | Jehovah Keeps His Promises

Jehovah promised a restoration of true worship at the temple in Jerusalem. But after the exiles returned from Babylon, there were numerous obstacles, including a royal decree to halt construction. Many feared that the work would never be completed.



85 *A Full Reward From Jehovah* (Matthew 19:29)

1. Jehovah is faithful and fully aware
Of all those who serve him whole-souled.
He knows there are times their devotion and zeal
Result in their loss as foretold.
If you have left houses or fam'ly or friends,
Be sure that our God knows the sum.
He makes it up now with our dear brotherhood
And life in the new world to come.

(CHORUS)

*May Jehovah, the God of comfort, see;
May he provide a full reward for you.
May you find refuge beneath his wings.
Jehovah is faithful; Jehovah is true.*

2. It may be by choice or by their lot in life;
There are some who single remain.
By seeking the Kingdom of God to the full,
In godly devotion they gain.
By making the room for their unwedded state,
At times they are lonely, we know.
As brothers and sisters to these faithful ones,
Support and approval we show.

(Chorus)

15 Jehovah the God of their forefathers kept warning them by means of his messengers, warning them again and again, because he felt compassion for his people and for his dwelling place. **16** But they kept ridiculing the messengers of the true God,^a and they despised his words^b and mocked his prophets,^c until the rage of Jehovah came up against his people,^d until they were beyond healing.

17 So he brought against them the king of the Chal-de'ans,^e who killed their young men with the sword^f in the house of their sanctuary;^g he felt no compassion for young man or virgin, old or infirm.^h God gave everything into his hand.ⁱ **18** All the utensils of the house of the true God, great and small, as well as the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the treasures of the king and his princes, everything he brought to Babylon.^j **19** He burned down the house of the true God,^k tore down the wall of Jerusalem,^l burned all its fortified towers with fire, and destroyed everything of value.^m

CHAP. 36

a 2Ch 30:1, 10
b Jer 5:12
c Jer 20:7
d Ps 74:1
e 2Ki 24:2
f Le 26:31
De 28:25
Ps 79:2
g Eze 9:7
h La 2:21
i De 28:49-51
j 2Ki 20:16, 17
Isa 39:6
Jer 27:19-22
Jer 52:17
k Ps 74:4-7
l Jer 52:14
m 1Ki 9:7
2Ki 25:9, 10
Ps 79:1

Second Col.

a 2Ki 25:21
Ps 137:1
b Jer 27:6, 7
c Ezz 1:1-3
d Jer 25:9
e Le 26:34
f Jer 25:12
Zec 1:12
g Isa 44:28
Isa 45:1
h Jer 29:14
Jer 32:42
Jer 33:10, 11
i Ezz 1:1-4
j Da 5:18
k Isa 44:28
l Ezz 7:12, 13

20 He carried off captive to Babylon those who escaped the sword,^a and they became servants to him^b and his sons until the kingdom^{*} of Persia began to reign,^c **21** to fulfill Jehovah's word spoken by Jeremiah,^d until the land had paid off its sabbaths.^e All the days it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill 70 years.^f

22 In the first year of King Cyrus^g of Persia, in order that Jehovah's word spoken by Jeremiah^h would be fulfilled, Jehovah stirred the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his kingdom, which he also put in writing,ⁱ saying: **23** "This is what King Cyrus of Persia says, 'Jehovah the God of the heavens has given me all the kingdoms of the earth,^j and he has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.^k Whoever there is among you of all his people, may Jehovah his God be with him, and let him go up.'"^l

36:20 *Or "royalty."

EZRA

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

- 1 King Cyrus' decree to rebuild the temple (1-4)
Preparations for exiles' return from Babylon (5-11)
- 2 List of exiles who returned (1-67)
Temple servants (43-54)
Sons of the servants of Solomon (55-57)
Voluntary offerings for the temple (68-70)
- 3 Altar rebuilt and sacrifices offered (1-7)

- The temple rebuilding begins (8, 9)
Temple foundation laid (10-13)
- 4 Opposition to rebuilding the temple (1-6)
Enemies send complaint to King Artaxerxes (7-16)
Artaxerxes' reply (17-22)
Temple construction halted (23-24)
- 5 The Jews resume temple building (1-5)
Tattenai's letter to King Darius (6-17)

- 6 Darius' investigation and decree (1-12)
 Temple completed and inaugurated (13-18)
 Passover observed (19-22)
- 7 Ezra comes to Jerusalem (1-10)
 Artaxerxes' letter to Ezra (11-26)
 Ezra praises Jehovah (27-28)
- 8 List of those returning with Ezra (1-14)
 Preparations for the journey (15-30)

Departure from Babylon and arrival in Jerusalem (31-36)

- 9 Inter-marriage in Israel (1-4)
 Ezra's prayer of confession (5-15)
- 10 Covenant to send away foreign wives (1-14)
 Foreign wives dismissed (15-44)

1 In the first year of King Cyrus^a of Persia, in order that Jehovah's word spoken by Jeremiah^b would be fulfilled, Jehovah stirred the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his kingdom, which he also put in writing,^c saying:

2 "This is what King Cyrus of Persia says, 'Jehovah the God of the heavens has given me all the kingdoms of the earth,^d and he has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem,^e which is in Judah. **3** Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—he is the true God—whose house was in Jerusalem.*

4 Anyone who is residing as a foreigner,^f wherever he may be, let him be helped by his neighbors* by their giving him silver and gold, goods and livestock, along with the voluntary offering for the house of the true God,^g which was in Jerusalem."

5 Then the heads of the paternal houses of Judah and of Benjamin and the priests and the Levites—everyone whose spirit the true God had stirred—prepared to go up and rebuild the

1:3 *Or possibly, "who is in Jerusalem."
 1:4 *Lit., "the men of his place."

CHAP. 1

a Isa 45:1
 Da 10:1

b Jer 25:12
 Jer 29:14
 Jer 33:10, 11

c 2Ch 36:22, 23

d Da 4:34, 35

e Isa 44:28

f 2Ki 17:6
 Jer 9:16

g Ex 35:21
 1Ch 29:9
 Ezr 7:14-16

Second Col.

a 2Ki 24:11, 13
 2Ch 36:7, 18
 Ezr 6:5
 Da 1:1, 2
 Da 5:2

b Ezr 5:14, 16
 Hag 1:1, 14
 Hag 2:23

c 2Ki 24:14, 15
 2Ch 36:20

CHAP. 2

d Ezr 8:1

house of Jehovah, which was in Jerusalem. **6** All those around them supported them by giving them* utensils of silver and of gold, goods, livestock, and valuable things, besides all the voluntary offerings.

7 King Cyrus also brought out the utensils of the house of Jehovah that Neb-u-chad-nez'zar had taken from Jerusalem and had put in the house of his god.^a

8 King Cyrus of Persia brought them out under the supervision of Mith're-dath the treasurer, who made an inventory of them for Shesh-baz'zar*^b the chieftain of Judah.

9 Now this was the inventory: 30 basket-shaped vessels of gold, 1,000 basket-shaped vessels of silver, 29 replacement vessels, **10** 30 small gold bowls, 410 small silver bowls, 1,000 other utensils. **11** All the utensils of gold and of silver were 5,400. Shesh-baz'zar brought all of these up when the exiles^c were brought out of Babylon to Jerusalem.

2 And these were the people of the province* who came up from the captives of the exile,^d those whom King Neb-u-chad-

1:6 *Lit., "strengthened their hands with." 1:8 *Possibly Zerubbabel at Ezr 2:2; 3:8. 2:1 *Or "jurisdictional district."

nez'zar of Babylon had exiled to Babylon^a and who later returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own city,^b **2** those who came with Ze-rub'ba-bel,^c Jesh'u-a,^d Ne-he-mi'ah, Se-rai'ah, Re-el-ai'ah, Mor'de-cai, Bil'shan, Mis'par, Big'vai, Re'hum, and Ba'-a-nah.

The number of the Israelite men included:^e **3** the sons of Pa'rosh, 2,172; **4** the sons of Sheph-a-ti'ah, 372; **5** the sons of A'rah,^f 775; **6** the sons of Pa'hath-mo'ab,^g of the sons of Jesh'u-a and Jo'ab, 2,812; **7** the sons of E'lam,^h 1,254; **8** the sons of Zac'cai, 760; **10** the sons of Ba'ni, 642; **11** the sons of Be'-bai, 623; **12** the sons of Az'gad, 1,222; **13** the sons of Ad-o-ni'-kam, 666; **14** the sons of Big'-vai, 2,056; **15** the sons of A'din, 454; **16** the sons of A'ter, of Hez-e-ki'ah, 98; **17** the sons of Be'zai, 323; **18** the sons of Jo'-rah, 112; **19** the sons of Ha'shum,ⁱ 223; **20** the sons of Gib'bar, 95; **21** the sons of Beth'-le-hem, 123; **22** the men of Ne-to'phah, 56; **23** the men of An'-a-thoth,^k 128; **24** the sons of Az'ma-veth, 42; **25** the sons of Kir'i-ath-je'a-rim, Che-phi'rah, and Be-er'oth, 743; **26** the sons of Ra'mah^l and Ge'ba,^m 621; **27** the men of Mich'mas, 122; **28** the men of Beth'el and A'i,ⁿ 223; **29** the sons of Ne'bo,^o 52; **30** the sons of Mag'bish, 156; **31** the sons of the other E'lam, 1,254; **32** the sons of Ha'rim, 320; **33** the sons of Lod, Ha'-did, and O'no, 725; **34** the sons of Jer'i-cho, 345; **35** the sons of Se-na'ah, 3,630.

36 The priests:^p the sons of Je-da'iah^q of the house of Jesh'u-a,^r 973; **37** the sons of Im'-mer,^s 1,052; **38** the sons of Pash'hur,^t 1,247; **39** the sons of Ha'rim,^u 1,017.

CHAP. 2

a 2KJ 24:15, 16

2KJ 25:11

2Ch 36:20

b Ne 7:6, 7

c Ezz 1:8, 11

Hag 1:14

Mt 1:12

d Ezz 3:8

Ezz 5:2

Zec 3:1

e Ne 7:8-38

f Ne 6:17, 18

g Ezz 10:30, 44

Ne 3:11

h Ezz 10:26, 44

i Ezz 10:27, 44

j Ezz 10:33, 44

k Jos 21:8, 18

Jer 1:1

l Jos 18:21, 25

m Jos 18:21, 24

n Jos 7:2

o Ezz 10:43, 44

p Ne 7:39-42

q 1Ch 9:2, 10

Ne 11:3, 10

r 1Ch 24:3, 11

s 1Ch 24:3, 14

Ezz 10:20, 44

t Ezz 10:22, 44

u 1Ch 24:3, 8

Ezz 10:21, 44

Second Col.

a Ne 7:43

b Ezz 3:9

Ne 12:8, 24

c Ne 7:44

d 1Ch 15:16, 17

Ne 11:3, 17

e Ne 7:45

f 1Ch 9:2, 17

Ne 11:3, 19

g Ne 12:25, 26

h Jos 9:3, 27

1Ch 9:2

Ne 3:26

Ne 7:46-56

i Ne 7:57-60

40 The Levites:^a the sons of Jesh'u-a and Kad'mi-el,^b of the sons of Hod-a-vi'ah, 74. **41** The singers:^c the sons of A'saph,^d 128. **42** The sons of the gatekeepers:^e the sons of Shal'lum, the sons of A'ter, the sons of Tal'mon,^f the sons of Ak'kub,^g the sons of Ha-ti'ta, the sons of Sho'bai, altogether 139.

43 The temple servants:^{*h} the sons of Zi'ha, the sons of Ha-su'pha, the sons of Tab-ba'oth, **44** the sons of Ke'ros, the sons of Si'a-ha, the sons of Pa'don, **45** the sons of Le-ba'nah, the sons of Hag'a-bah, the sons of Ak'kub, **46** the sons of Ha'gab, the sons of Sal'mai, the sons of Ha'nan, **47** the sons of Gid'del, the sons of Ga'har, the sons of Re-a'iah, **48** the sons of Re'zin, the sons of Ne-ko'da, the sons of Gaz'zam, **49** the sons of Uz'za, the sons of Pa-se'ah, the sons of Be'sai, **50** the sons of As'nah, the sons of Me-u'nim, the sons of Ne-phu'sim, **51** the sons of Bak'buk, the sons of Ha-ku'pha, the sons of Har'hur, **52** the sons of Baz'luth, the sons of Me-hi'da, the sons of Har'sha, **53** the sons of Bar'kos, the sons of Sis'e-ra, the sons of Te'mah, **54** the sons of Ne-zi'ah, the sons of Ha-ti'pha.

55 The sons of the servants of Sol'o-mon: the sons of So'-tai, the sons of So-phe'reth, the sons of Pe-ru'da,ⁱ **56** the sons of Ja'a-lah, the sons of Dar'-kon, the sons of Gid'del, **57** the sons of Sheph-a-ti'ah, the sons of Hat'til, the sons of Po'che-reth-haz-ze-ba'im, the sons of A'mi.

58 All the temple servants* and the sons of the servants of Sol'o-mon were 392.

59 And these went up from Tel-me'lah, Tel-har'sha, Che'rub,

2:43 *Or "The Nethinim." Lit., "The given ones." **2:58** *Or "the Nethinim." Lit., "the given ones."

Ad'don, and Im'mer, but they were unable to verify their paternal house and their origin, as to whether they were Israelites:^a **60** the sons of De-la'iah, the sons of To-bi'ah, the sons of Ne-ko'da, **652**. **61** And of the sons of the priests: the sons of Ha-bai'ah, the sons of Hak'koz,^b the sons of Bar-zil'lai, who took a wife from the daughters of Bar-zil'lai^c the Gil'e-ad-ite and was called by their name. **62** These looked for their records to establish their genealogy, but they did not find them, so they were disqualified from the priesthood.^d **63** The governor* told them that they could not eat from the most holy things^e until there was a priest who could consult the U'rim and Thum'mim.^f

64 The total number of the entire congregation was 42,360,^g **65** apart from their male and female slaves, who were 7,337; they also had 200 male and female singers. **66** Their horses were 736, their mules 245, **67** their camels 435, their donkeys 6,720.

68 When they arrived at the house of Jehovah in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the paternal houses made voluntary offerings^h for the house of the true God, to rebuild it* on its own site.ⁱ **69** According to their means, they gave to the project treasury 61,000 gold drachmas,* 5,000 silver mi'nas,^j and 100 robes for the priests. **70** And the priests, the Levites, some of

2:62 *Or "were excluded from the priesthood as unclean." 2:63 *Or "the Tirshatha," a Persian title for a governor of a province. 2:68 *Or "make it stand." 2:69 *Generally equated with the Persian gold daric that weighed 8.4 g (0.27 oz t). Not the drachma of the Greek Scriptures. See App. B14. #A mina in the Hebrew Scriptures equaled 570 g (18.35 oz t). See App. B14.

CHAP. 2

- a Ne 7:61-65
b 1Ch 24:3, 10
Ne 3:21
c 2Sa 17:27-29
1Ki 2:7
d Nu 3:10
e Le 2:3
Le 6:26
Nu 18:11
f Ex 28:30
Nu 27:21
1Sa 28:6
g Ne 7:66-69
Isa 10:21
Jer 23:3
h Ex 35:5
1Ch 29:5
Ne 7:70-72
i 2Ch 3:1
j Ezr 8:25

Second Col.

- a Ne 7:73

CHAP. 3

- b 1Ki 8:2
c Hag 1:1
d Ezr 1:7, 8
Lu 3:23, 27
e 1Ch 3:17
Mt 1:12
f Ex 20:24
Ex 40:29
g Ezr 4:4
h Nu 28:3, 4
i Ex 23:16
Le 23:34
j Ex 29:38
Nu 29:12, 13
k Ex 29:39, 42
l Nu 10:10
Ps 81:3
m De 16:16
n De 12:5, 6
o Nu 29:1
p 1Ki 5:17
q Ezr 5:8

the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants* settled in their cities, and all the rest of Israel^r settled in their cities.^a

3 When the seventh month^b arrived and the Israelites* were in their cities, they gathered together with one accord in Jerusalem. **2** Jesh'u-a^c the son of Je-hoz'a-dak and his fellow priests and Ze-rub'ba-bel^d the son of She-al'ti-el^e and his brothers rose up and built the altar of the God of Israel, so that they could offer up burnt sacrifices on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses^f the man of the true God.

3 So they set the altar up on its former site, despite their fear of the peoples of the surrounding lands,^g and they began offering up burnt sacrifices to Jehovah on it, the morning and the evening burnt sacrifices.^h

4 Then they held the Festival of Booths* according to what is written,ⁱ and day by day they offered up the specified number of burnt sacrifices that were required each day.^j **5** Afterward they offered up the regular burnt offering^k and the offerings for the new moons^l and those for all the sanctified festival seasons^m of Jehovah, as well as those from everyone who willingly offered a voluntary offeringⁿ to Jehovah. **6** From the first day of the seventh month^o they started to offer up burnt sacrifices to Jehovah, though the foundation of Jehovah's temple had not yet been laid.

7 They gave money to the stonecutters^p and the craftsmen,^q and food and drink and oil to the Si-do'ni-ans and the Tyr'i-ans for bringing cedar timbers

2:70 *Or "the Nethinim." Lit., "the given ones." #Lit., "all Israel." 3:1 *Lit., "sons of Israel." 3:4 *Or "Temporary Shelters."

by sea from Leb'a-non to Jop'pa,^a according to the authorization granted them by King Cyrus of Persia.^b

8 In the second year after they came to the house of the true God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Ze-rub'ba-bel the son of She-al'ti-el, Jesh'u-a the son of Je-hoz'a-dak and the rest of their brothers, the priests and the Levites, and all those who had come to Jerusalem out of the captivity^c started the work; they appointed the Levites from 20 years old and up to serve as supervisors over the work of the house of Jehovah. **9** So Jesh'u-a, his sons and his brothers, and Kad'mi-el and his sons, the sons of Judah, joined together to supervise those doing the work in the house of the true God, along with the sons of Hen'a-dad,^d their sons and their brothers, the Levites.

10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah,^e then the priests in official clothing, with the trumpets,^f and the Levites, the sons of A'saph, with the cymbals, stood up to praise Jehovah according to the direction of King David of Israel.^g **11** And they began to sing in response^h by praising and giving thanks to Jehovah, "for he is good; his loyal love toward Israel endures forever."ⁱ Then all the people shouted with a loud shout of praise to Jehovah because the foundation of the house of Jehovah had been laid. **12** Many of the priests, the Levites, and the heads of the paternal houses—the old men who had seen the former house^j—wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, while many others shouted joyfully at the top of their voice.^k **13** So the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shouts from the sound of

CHAP. 3

a Jos 19:46, 48
1Ch 22:3, 4
2Ch 2:10, 16

b Ezz 1:2, 3
Ezz 6:3, 4

c Ne 7:6, 7

d Ne 3:18

e Zec 4:9

f Nu 10:8

g 1Ch 6:31, 32
1Ch 23:5
1Ch 25:1

h Ex 15:21
Ne 12:24

i 1Ch 16:34
2Ch 7:3

j 1Ki 6:22
Hag 2:3

k Ps 126:1, 6
Isa 35:10
Zec 4:9

Second Col.

CHAP. 4

a Ezz 4:6-8
Ne 4:7, 8

b Ezz 2:1, 6, 4

c 2Ki 17:33, 34

d 2Ki 19:36, 37

e 2Ki 17:24

f Ne 2:19, 20
Joh 4:9, 22

g 2Ch 36:23
Ezz 1:1-3
Ezz 6:3, 4

h Ne 6:9

i Ne 6:10-12

j Ezz 4:24
Ezz 5:5
Ezz 6:1

k 2Ki 18:26

the weeping, for the people were shouting so loudly that the sound was heard from a great distance.

4 When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin^a heard that the returned exiles^b were building a temple to Jehovah the God of Israel, **2** they immediately approached Ze-rub'ba-bel and the heads of the paternal houses and said to them: "Let us build along with you; for like you, we worship* your God^c and we have been sacrificing to him since the days of King E'sar-had'don^d of As-syr'i-a, who brought us here."^e **3** However, Ze-rub'ba-bel and Jesh'u-a and the rest of the heads of the paternal houses of Israel said to them: "You have no share with us in building a house to our God,^f for we alone will build it to Jehovah the God of Israel, just as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us."^g

4 Then the people of the land were continually discouraging* the people of Judah and disheartening them from building.^h **5** They hired advisers against them to frustrate their plansⁱ all the days of King Cyrus of Persia until the reign of King Dari'us^j of Persia. **6** At the beginning of the reign of A-has-u-e'rus, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. **7** And in the days of King Ar-ta-xerx'es of Persia, Bish'l'am, Mith're-dath, Tab'e-el, and the rest of his colleagues wrote to Ar-ta-xerx'es the king; they translated the letter into Ar-a-ma'ic,^k writing it with Ar-a-ma'ic characters.*

8 * Re'hum the chief government official and Shim'shai the

4:2 *Lit., "search for." 4:4 *Lit., "weakening the hands of." 4:7 *Or possibly, "it was written in Aramaic and then translated." 4:8 *Ezz 4:8 through 6:18 was originally written in Aramaic.

scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Ar-ta-xerx'es, as follows: **9** (It was from Re'hum the chief government official and Shim'shai the scribe and the rest of their colleagues, the judges and the lesser governors, the secretaries, the people of E'rech,^a the Babylonians, the inhabitants of Su'sa,^b that is, the E'lam-ites,^c **10** and the rest of the nations that the great and honorable As'e-nap-par took into exile and settled in the cities of Sa-mar'i-a,^d and the rest in the region Beyond the River,* and now **11** this is a copy of the letter that they sent him.)

"To King Ar-ta-xerx'es from your servants, the men of the region Beyond the River: And now **12** let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up here from you to us have arrived at Jerusalem. They are rebuilding the rebellious and wicked city, and they are finishing the walls^e and repairing the foundations. **13** Now let it be known to the king that if this city should be rebuilt and its walls finished, they will not give tax, tribute,^f or toll, and it will result in a loss to the treasuries of the kings. **14** Since we eat the salt of the palace* and it is not proper for us to see the king's interests harmed, we have therefore sent to make this known to the king, **15** so that there may be an investigation of the book of records of your ancestors.^g You will find in the book of records and learn that this city is a rebellious city, injurious to kings and provinces,* and within it have been those stirring up sedition from ancient times. That is why this city was destroyed.^h **16** We

4:10 *Or "in Trans-Euphrates." **4:14** *Or "we receive our salary from the palace." **4:15** *Or "jurisdictional districts."

CHAP. 4

a Ge 10:9, 10

b Ne 1:1

Es 1:2

Da 8:2

c Ge 10:22

Isa 11:11

Jer 49:35, 36

d 2Ki 17:24

e Ne 1:3

f 2Ki 23:35

Ne 5:4

g Es 2:23

Es 6:1

h Jer 52:3

Second Col.

a De 11:24

b 2Ki 18:1, 7

2Ki 24:20

Ezr 4:15

c Ezr 4:13

d Ezr 5:5

Ezr 6:1

Hag 1:14, 15

CHAP. 5

e Hag 1:1

f Zec 1:1

g Ne 12:1, 4

are making known to the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are finished, you will have no control* of the region Beyond the River."^a

17 The king sent word to Re'hum the chief government official and Shim'shai the scribe and the rest of their colleagues who were dwelling in Sa-mar'i-a and the rest of the region Beyond the River:

"Greetings! And now **18** the official document that you sent us has been clearly read* before me. **19** By my order an investigation was made, and it was found that from long ago the city has had uprisings against kings, and rebellions and revolts have taken place there.^b **20** There were powerful kings over Jerusalem who ruled the whole region Beyond the River, and tax, tribute, and toll were paid to them. **21** Now issue an order for these men to stop work, so that the city may not be rebuilt until I issue an order. **22** Be careful not to neglect acting in this regard, so that the king's interests are not harmed any further."^c

23 Now after the copy of the official document of King Ar-ta-xerx'es had been read before Re'hum and Shim'shai the scribe and their colleagues, they quickly went to Jerusalem to the Jews and used force to stop them. **24** It was then that the work on the house of God, which was in Jerusalem, came to a halt; and it remained at a standstill until the second year of the reign of King Da-ri'us of Persia.^d

5 Then the prophets Hag'gai^e and Zech-a-ri'ah^f the grandson of Id'do^g prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and

4:16 *Lit., "share." **4:18** *Or possibly, "has been translated and read."

in Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. **2** It was then that Zerub'ba-bel^a the son of She'al'tiel and Jesh'u-a^b the son of Jehoz'a-dak started to rebuild the house of God,^c which was in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them and supported them.^d **3** At that time Tat'te-nai the governor of the region Beyond the River* and She'thar-boz'e-nai and their colleagues came to them and asked them: "Who issued an order to you to build this house and to finish this structure?"^e **4** Then they asked them: "What are the names of the men who are working on this building?" **5** But God was watching over* the elders of the Jews,^e and they did not stop them until the report could be sent to Da-ri'us and an official document could be sent back concerning this.

6 Here is a copy of the letter that Tat'te-nai the governor of the region Beyond the River and She'thar-boz'e-nai and his colleagues, the lesser governors of the region Beyond the River, sent to King Da-ri'us; **7** they sent the report to him, and this is what they wrote:

"To King Da-ri'us:

"All peace! **8** Let it be known to the king that we went to the province* of Judah to the house of the great God, and it is being built with large stones rolled into place, and timbers are being laid in the walls. The work is being eagerly done by the people and is making progress through their efforts. **9** Then we questioned their elders, asking them: 'Who issued an order to you to

5:3 *Or "of Trans-Euphrates." 5:3, 9 *Or "these beams." 5:5 *Lit., "the eye of their God was on." 5:8 *Or "jurisdictional district."

CHAP. 5

a Mt 1:12

b Zec 6:11

c Ezr 3:2, 8

d Ezr 6:14
Hag 2:4, 21
Zec 4:7

e Ezr 7:6, 28
Ezr 8:22

Second Col.

a Ezr 5:3, 4

b 1Ki 7:51

c De 31:17
2Ch 34:24,
25

d 2Ki 24:1
2Ki 25:1

e 2Ki 25:8, 9

f 2Ki 25:11

g Ezr 1:1-3

h 2Ki 25:14, 15
2Ch 36:7, 18

i Ezr 1:8, 11

j Hag 1:1, 14

k Ezr 1:2, 7

l Ezr 3:10
Hag 2:18
Zec 4:9

m Ezr 4:23, 24

build this house and to finish this structure?"^a **10** We also asked them their names to inform you, so that we could write the names of the men who are taking the lead.

11 "This is the response they gave us: 'We are the servants of the God of the heavens and the earth, and we are rebuilding the house that was built many years ago, which a great king of Israel built and finished.'^b **12** However, because our fathers angered the God of the heavens,^c he gave them into the hand of King Neb-u-chad-nez'zar^d of Babylon, the Chal-de'an, who demolished this house^e and took the people into exile to Babylon.^f **13** Nevertheless, in the first year of King Cyrus of Babylon, King Cyrus issued an order to rebuild this house of God.^g **14** Moreover, King Cyrus took out of the temple of Babylon the gold and silver vessels of the house of God that Neb-u-chad-nez'zar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and had brought to the temple of Babylon.^h They were given to a man named Shesh-baz'zar,ⁱ whom Cyrus made governor.^j **15** Cyrus said to him: "Take these vessels. Go, deposit them in the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be rebuilt in its former place."^k **16** Then this Shesh-baz'zar came, and he laid the foundations of the house of God,^l which is in Jerusalem; and it has been under construction from then until now, but it has not been completed.^m

17 "Now if it seems good to the king, let an investigation be made in the royal treasury there in Babylon, to determine whether King Cyrus issued an order to rebuild that house of God in

5:14 *Possibly Zerubbabel at Ezr 2:2; 3:8.

Jerusalem;^a and let the decision of the king concerning this be sent to us.”

6 It was then that King Dar-i-us issued an order, and they made an investigation in the archives* where the treasures were deposited in Babylon. **2** And a scroll was found in the citadel at Ec-bat'a-na, in the province* of Me'di-a, and the following memorandum was written on it:

3 “In the first year of King Cyrus, King Cyrus issued an order concerning the house of God in Jerusalem:^b ‘Let the house be rebuilt as the place where they are to offer sacrifices, and its foundations are to be set in place; its height is to be 60 cubits,* its width 60 cubits,^c **4** with three layers of large stones rolled into place and one layer of timbers;^d and let the expense be paid from the king's house.^e **5** Also, let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God that Neb-u-chad-nez'zar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem and brought to Babylon^f be returned, so that they may be put in their place in the temple in Jerusalem and be deposited in the house of God.’^g

6 “So now Tat'te-nai the governor of the region Beyond the River,* She'thar-boz'e-nai, and your colleagues, the lesser governors of the region Beyond the River^h—stay away from there. **7** Do not interfere with the work on that house of God. The governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews will rebuild that house of God in its former place. **8** Furthermore, I am issuing an order as to what you are to do for these elders of the

6:1 *Lit., “the house of the records.”
6:2 *Or “jurisdictional district.” **6:3** *About 26.7 m (87.6 ft). See App. B14.
6:6 *Or “of Trans-Euphrates.”

CHAP. 5

a 2Ch 36:22, 23
Ezr 6:3, 4

CHAP. 6

b 2Ch 36:22, 23
Ezr 1:1-3

c 1Ki 6:2

d Ezr 3:7
Ezr 5:8

e Ezr 7:20
Isa 49:23

f 2Ki 25:13-15
2Ch 36:7, 18
Da 1:1, 2
Da 5:2

g Ezr 1:8, 11

h Ezr 5:3, 6

Second Col.

a Ezr 7:20
Hag 2:7, 8

b Ezr 5:5

c Le 1:3, 5

d Le 1:10

e Nu 28:3

f Le 2:1

g Le 2:13

h Nu 15:5

i Ex 27:20
Le 2:4

j Ezr 7:23

k De 12:5, 6
2Ch 7:16

l Ezr 5:6

m Ezr 3:8
Ezr 4:3

n Hag 1:12

o Ezr 5:1, 2
Zec 1:1, 7
Zec 6:15

p Hag 1:8

q 2Ch 36:23
Ezr 1:2, 3
Isa 44:28

r Ezr 6:12

s Ezr 7:12, 13

Jews for rebuilding that house of God: From the royal treasury,^a from the tax collected in the region Beyond the River, the expenses are to be promptly given to these men to continue without interruption.^b **9** And whatever is needed—**young bulls^c** as well as rams^d and lambs^e for the burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat,^f salt,^g wine,^h and oil,ⁱ just as the priests who are in Jerusalem say—is to be given them continually day by day without fail, **10** so that they may continually present offerings that please the God of the heavens and pray for the life of the king and his sons.^j **11** I have also issued an order that if anyone violates this decree, a timber will be pulled out of his house and he will be lifted up and fastened to it,* and his house will be turned into a public latrine^k for this offense. **12** And may the God who has caused his name to reside there^k overthrow any king and people who lift a hand to violate this order and destroy that house of God, which is in Jerusalem. I, Da-ri-us, issue this order. Let it be done promptly.”

13 Then Tat'te-nai the governor of the region Beyond the River, She'thar-boz'e-nai,^l and their colleagues promptly carried out everything that King Da-ri-us had ordered. **14** And the elders of the Jews continued building and making progress,^m urged on by the prophesying of Hag-gaiⁿ the prophet and Zech-a-ri-ah^o the grandson of Id'do; they finished building it by the order of the God of Israel^p and by the order of Cyrus^q and Da-ri-us^r and King Ar-ta-xer-x'es^s of Persia. **15** They completed the house by the third day of the month of

6:11 *Or “and he will be impaled on it.” *Or possibly, “a garbage dump; a dunghill.”

- Song 85 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Jehovah Keeps His Promises”:** (10 min.)
[Play the video entitled *Introduction to Ezra*.]
Ezr 3:1-6—Jehovah’s prophecies never fail (w06 1/15 19 ¶2)
Ezr 5:1-7—Jehovah can maneuver matters for the success of his people (w06 1/15 19 ¶4; w86 1/15 9 ¶2; w86 2/1 29 box)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Ezr 1:3-6—Why were the Israelites who did not volunteer to return to Jerusalem not necessarily weak in faith? (w06 1/15 17 ¶5; 19 ¶1)

Ezr 4:1-3—Why was an offer of help rejected? (w06 1/15 19 ¶3)

What does this week’s Bible reading teach me about Jehovah?

What points from this week’s Bible reading can I use in the field ministry?

- **Bible Reading:** Ezr 3:10–4:7 (4 min. or less)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Present the last article of the current *Watchtower*. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Demonstrate how to make a return visit on someone who responded well to the presentation that featured the last article of the current *Watchtower*. Lay the groundwork for the next visit.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) Demonstrate a Bible study. (bh 20-21 ¶6-8)

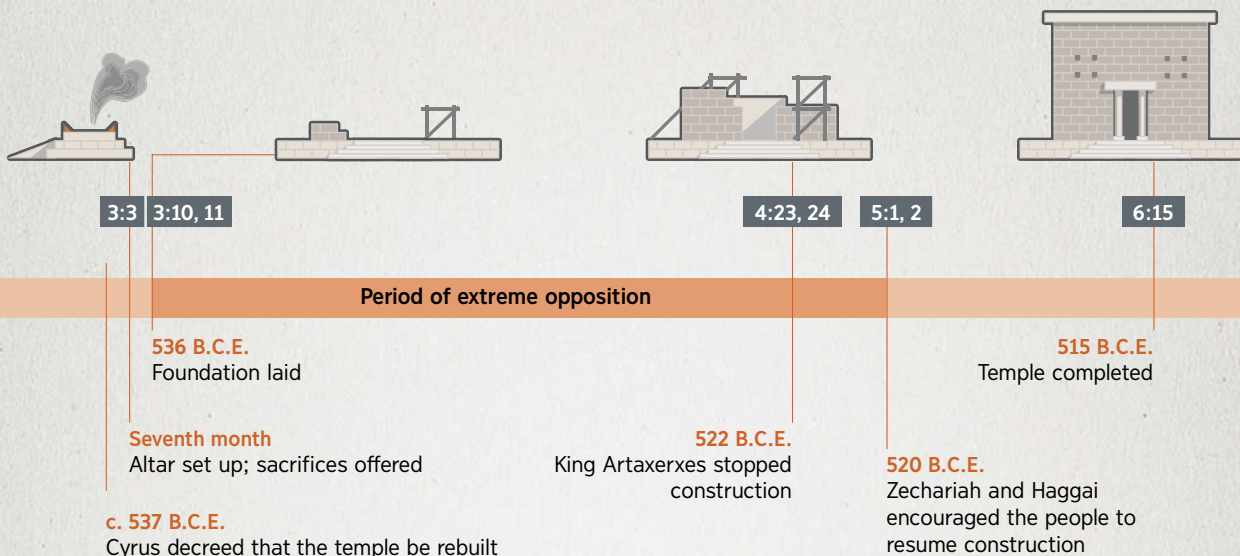
LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 40
- **“All These Other Things Will Be Added to You”:** (5 min.) Talk based on Matthew 6:33 and Luke 12:22-24. Invite publishers to relate experiences in which Jehovah fulfilled his promise to care for their material needs when they put the Kingdom first.
- **Your Speech—“‘Yes’ and yet ‘No’”?:** (10 min.) Discussion. (w14 3/15 30-32)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** ia chap. 7 ¶1-14 (30 min.)
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 41 and Prayer



EZRA 1-5 | Jehovah Keeps His Promises

Jehovah promised a restoration of true worship at the temple in Jerusalem. But after the exiles returned from Babylon, there were numerous obstacles, including a royal decree to halt construction. Many feared that the work would never be completed.



Initial Call: (2 min. or less) Present the last article of the current *Watchtower*. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.



What happens when we die?

SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE that we live on in another form, while others feel that death is the end of everything. **What do you believe?**

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“The dead know nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) When we die, we cease to exist.

WHAT ELSE WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

- The first man, Adam, returned to the dust when he died. (Genesis 2:7; 3:19) Likewise, all others who die return to the dust.—Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20.
- People who die are acquitted of, or pardoned for, their sins. (Romans 6:7) There is no further punishment for sin after a person dies.

Can the dead live again?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“There is going to be a resurrection.”
—Acts 24:15.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- The Bible often compares death to sleep. (John 11:11-14) God can awaken the dead, just as we can awaken a person from sleep. —Job 14:13-15.
- The Bible records several resurrections, thus giving us a solid basis for believing that the dead will be raised up.—1 Kings 17:17-24; Luke 7:11-17; John 11:39-44.



Please send me a copy of *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

For more information, see chapter 6 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses

Also available at www.jw.org

LANGUAGE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

For mailing address, see page 2



Free downloads of this magazine and past issues

Bible available online in some 130 languages

Visit www.jw.org, or scan code



wp16:1-E
151001

Ezr 3:1-6—Jehovah's prophecies never fail
(w06 1/15 19 2)

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.

Ezr 5:1-7—Jehovah can maneuver matters for the success of his people
(w06 1/15 19 4)

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

(w86 1/15 9 2)

5:5—Why did the opposers not stop the building work?

Jehovah's watchcare was upon his faithful servants. (2 Chronicles 16:9) Strengthened by God's spirit, the elders refused to be intimidated. They referred to the long-forgotten decree of Cyrus. Since Persian law was unalterable, the adversaries feared opposing a royal decree. (Daniel 6:8, 15) Jehovah's direction was evident, and the work continued.

(w86 2/1 29 box)

Jehovah's Eye "Proved to Be Upon the Older Men"

ELDERS today often must make decisions that seem beyond the scope of their knowledge and experience. However, consider a situation that faced some Jewish elders in the days of Ezra.

Following the return of the Jewish remnant from Babylon, a 16-year-long period of inactivity set in. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah managed to shake the Jews out of their apathy, and the work of rebuilding Jehovah's temple was resumed. Soon, though, this work was challenged by Persian officials. "Who put an order through to you to build this house?" asked the opposers.—Ezra 5:1-3.

The reply to this inquiry was critical. If the elders allowed themselves to be intimidated, the temple restoration would abruptly come to a halt. If the elders antagonized these officials, an immediate ban on the work could be imposed. So the elders (doubtless led by Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua) phrased a tactful but effective reply. They reminded the officials of the long-forgotten decree of Cyrus that had granted the Jews royal permission to go forward with this work. Knowing the Persian policy of never altering stated law, these officials shrewdly chose to avoid opposing a royal decree. The work was thus allowed to continue until King Darius later gave his official go-ahead!—Ezra 5:11-17; 6:6-12.

Was this astounding result due to human wisdom? On the contrary, Ezra's account says that "the eye of their God proved to be upon the older men of the Jews." (Ezra 5:5) Clearly, Jehovah directed both their reply and the favorable response from the Persian king. Christian elders today can likewise look to Jehovah for guidance and direction when facing difficult decisions or dealing with opposers. Assures Jehovah at Psalm 32:8: "I shall make you have insight and instruct you in the way you should go. I will give advice with my eye upon you."

Ezr 1:3-6—Why were the Israelites who did not volunteer to return to Jerusalem not necessarily weak in faith? (w06 1/15 17 5)

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.

(w06 1/15 19 1)

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.

Ezr 4:1-3—Why was an offer of help rejected? (w06 1/15 19 3)

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.

the businessman's thoughts and instructions. Hence, it is really *his* letter, not the secretary's. In a similar way, the Bible contains God's message, not that of the men who wrote it down. Thus, the entire Bible truthfully is "the word of God."—1 Thessalonians 2:13.

HARMONIOUS AND ACCURATE

⁶ The Bible was written over a 1,600-year period. Its writers lived at different times and came from many walks of life. Some were farmers, fishermen, and shepherds. Others were prophets, judges, and kings. The Gospel writer Luke was a doctor. Despite the varied backgrounds of its writers, the Bible is harmonious from beginning to end.*

⁷ The first book of the Bible tells us how mankind's problems began. The last book shows that the whole earth will become a paradise, or garden. All the material in the Bible covers thousands of years of history and relates in some way to the unfolding of God's purpose. The harmony of the Bible is impressive, but that is what we would expect of a book from God.

⁸ The Bible is scientifically accurate. It even contains information that was far ahead of its time. For example, the book of Leviticus contained laws for ancient Israel on quarantine and hygiene when surrounding nations knew nothing about such matters. At a time when there were wrong ideas about the shape of the earth, the Bi-

* Although some people say that certain parts of the Bible contradict other parts of it, such claims are unfounded. See chapter 7 of the book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

6, 7. Why is the harmony of the material in the Bible particularly noteworthy?

8. Give examples showing that the Bible is scientifically accurate.

ble referred to it as a circle, or sphere. (Isaiah 40:22) The Bible accurately said that the earth is suspended “upon nothing.” (Job 26:7) Of course, the Bible is not a science textbook. But when it touches on scientific matters, it is accurate. Is this not what we would expect of a book from God?

⁹ The Bible is also historically accurate and reliable. Its accounts are specific. They include not only the names but also the ancestry of individuals.* In contrast to secular historians, who often do not mention the defeats of their own people, Bible writers were honest, even recording their own failings and those of their nation. In the Bible book of Numbers, for instance, the writer Moses admits his own serious error for which he was severely reprimanded. (Numbers 20:2-12) Such honesty is rare in other historical accounts but is found in the Bible because it is a book from God.

A BOOK OF PRACTICAL WISDOM

¹⁰ Because the Bible is inspired of God, it is “beneficial for teaching, for reproof, for setting things straight.” (2 Timothy 3:16) Yes, the Bible is a practical book. It reflects a keen understanding of human nature. No wonder, for its Author, Jehovah God, is the Creator! He understands our thinking and emotions better than we do. Furthermore, Jehovah knows what we need in order to be happy. He also knows what pathways we should avoid.

* For example, note the detailed ancestral line of Jesus set out at Luke 3:23-38.

9. (a) In what ways does the Bible show itself to be historically accurate and reliable? (b) What does the honesty of its writers tell you about the Bible?

10. Why is it not surprising that the Bible is a practical book?

40 *Keep On Seeking First the Kingdom* (Matthew 6:33)

1. Something precious to Jehovah,
Bringing him such keen delight,
Is his Kingdom by Christ Jesus,
Which will set all matters right.

(CHORUS)

*Keep on seeking first the Kingdom
And Jehovah's righteousness.
Sing his praise among the nations,
Serving him in faithfulness.*

2. Why be anxious for tomorrow
Lest we hunger, lest we thirst?
For our God will make provision
If we seek his Kingdom first.

(Chorus)

3. So proclaim the Kingdom good news;
Help deserving ones to see
That their hope is in Jehovah
And in his Theocracy.

(Chorus)

- Song 85 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Jehovah Keeps His Promises”:** (10 min.) [Play the video entitled *Introduction to Ezra*.] Ezr 3:1-6—Jehovah’s prophecies never fail (w06 1/15 19 ¶2) Ezr 5:1-7—Jehovah can maneuver matters for the success of his people (w06 1/15 19 ¶4; w86 1/15 9 ¶2; w86 2/1 29 box)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.) Ezr 1:3-6—Why were the Israelites who did not volunteer to return to Jerusalem not necessarily weak in faith? (w06 1/15 17 ¶5; 19 ¶1)

Ezr 4:1-3—Why was an offer of help rejected? (w06 1/15 19 ¶3)

What does this week’s Bible reading teach me about Jehovah?

What points from this week’s Bible reading can I use in the field ministry?

- **Bible Reading:** Ezr 3:10–4:7 (4 min. or less)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Present the last article of the current *Watchtower*. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Demonstrate how to make a return visit on someone who responded well to the presentation that featured the last article of the current *Watchtower*. Lay the groundwork for the next visit.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) Demonstrate a Bible study. (bh 20-21 ¶6-8)

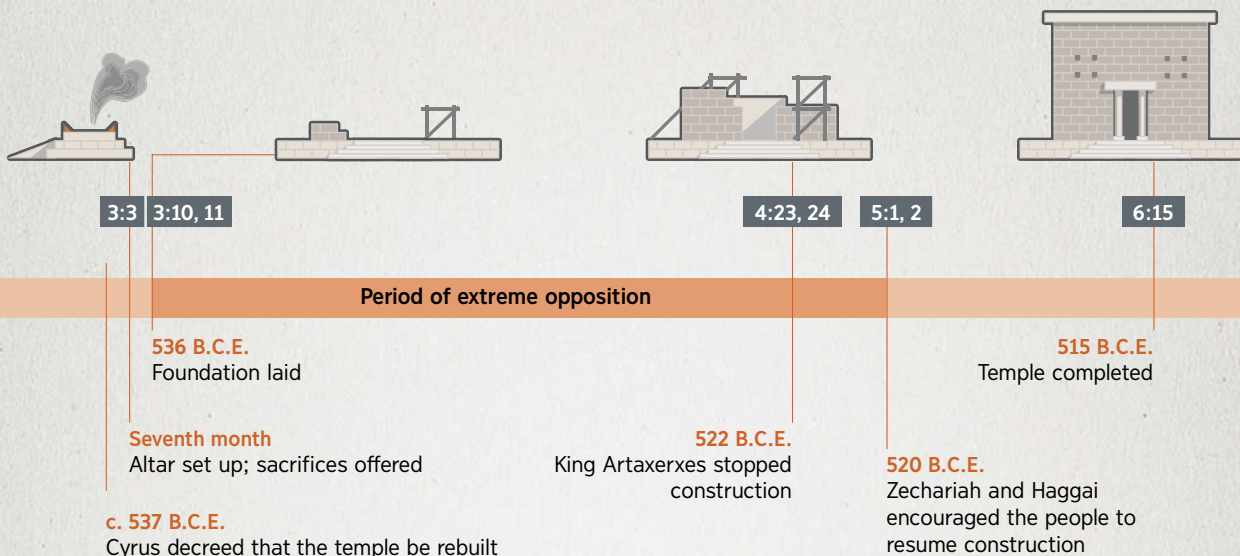
LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 40
- **“All These Other Things Will Be Added to You”:** (5 min.) Talk based on Matthew 6:33 and Luke 12:22-24. Invite publishers to relate experiences in which Jehovah fulfilled his promise to care for their material needs when they put the Kingdom first.
- **Your Speech—“‘Yes’ and yet ‘No’”?:** (10 min.) Discussion. (w14 3/15 30-32)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** ia chap. 7 ¶1-14 (30 min.)
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 41 and Prayer



EZRA 1-5 | Jehovah Keeps His Promises

Jehovah promised a restoration of true worship at the temple in Jerusalem. But after the exiles returned from Babylon, there were numerous obstacles, including a royal decree to halt construction. Many feared that the work would never be completed.



c. 537 B.C.E. Cyrus decreed that the temple be rebuilt

YOUR SPEECH

“ ‘Yes’ and yet ‘No’ ”?

Consider this scenario: An elder who is a member of a Hospital Liaison Committee has arranged to work with a young brother in the field service on Sunday morning. That morning the elder gets an urgent phone call from a brother whose wife has just been in a car accident and was rushed to the hospital. He asks the elder to help him find a doctor who will cooperate on the matter of blood. So the elder cancels his field service arrangement with the young brother in order to provide loving support to a family facing an emergency.

Imagine another scenario: A single mother with two children receives an invitation from a couple in her congregation to spend an evening with them. When she tells her children about it, their faces light up. They eagerly look forward to the evening. However, the day before the visit, the couple tell the mother that something unexpected has come up and that they have to cancel the invitation. She later learns why the couple canceled. After inviting her, the couple were invited by some friends to come to their home that same evening, and they accepted.

As Christians we should, of course, keep our word. We should never find ourselves saying, as it were, “‘yes’ and yet ‘no.’” (2 Cor. 1:18) However, as the two examples illustrate, not all situations are the same. There may be times when it seems that we have no choice but to cancel an arrangement we have made. The apostle Paul once found himself in such a situation.

PAUL ACCUSED OF FICKLENESS

In 55 C.E., while Paul was in Ephesus during his third missionary tour, he intended to cross the Aegean Sea to Corinth and from there travel on to Macedonia. On his way back to Jerusalem, he planned to visit the Corinthian congregation a second time, evidently to collect their kind gift for the brothers in Jerusalem. (1 Cor. 16:3) This is clear from 2 Corinthians 1:15, 16, where we read: “With this confidence, I was intending to come first to you, so that you might have a second occasion for joy; for I intended to visit you on my way to Macedonia, to return to you from Macedonia, and then to have you send me off to Judea.”

It appears that Paul in a previous letter had informed the Corinthian brothers of his plan. (1 Cor. 5:9) Shortly after writing that letter, however, Paul heard through the



household of Chloe that there were serious dissensions in the congregation. (1 Cor. 1: 10, 11) Paul decided to adjust his original plan, and he wrote the letter that we now know as 1 Corinthians. In it Paul lovingly provided counsel and correction. He also mentioned that he had changed his itinerary, informing them that he would first go to Macedonia and then to Corinth.—1 Cor. 16:5, 6.*

It seems that when the brothers in Corinth received his letter, some of the “superfine apostles” in that congregation accused him of being fickle, of not keeping his promises. In his defense Paul asked: “Well, when I had such an intention, I did not view the matter lightly, did I? Or do I purpose things in a fleshly way, so that I am saying ‘Yes, yes’ and then ‘No, no?’” —2 Cor. 1:17; 11:5.

We might ask, In these circumstances was the apostle Paul really ‘viewing the matter lightly’? Of course not! The word translated “lightly” has the sense of fickleness, as if a person was unreliable, not keeping his promises. Paul’s rhetorical question “do I purpose things in a fleshly way?” should have made it clear to the Christians in Corinth that Paul’s decision to change his plans was not because he was unreliable.

Paul emphatically refuted the accusation, writing: “But God can be relied on that what we say to you is not ‘yes’ and yet ‘no.’” (2 Cor. 1:18) Certainly, Paul had the best interests of his brothers and sisters in Corinth at heart when he changed his arrangements. At 2 Corinthians 1:23, we read that ‘it was to spare them’ that he changed his original plan to go to Corinth. Indeed, he had given them an opportuni-

ty to put things straight *before* being with them in person. As he had hoped, while he was in Macedonia, Paul heard from Titus that his letter had indeed moved them to sorrow and repentance, which gave him great joy.—2 Cor. 6:11; 7:5-7.

THE “AMEN” SAID TO GOD

The accusation of fickleness might have implied that if Paul could not be relied on to keep his promises in everyday life, neither could he be trusted in his preaching work. However, Paul reminded the Corinthians that he had preached Jesus Christ to them. “The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you through us, that is, through me and Silvanus and Timothy, did not become ‘yes’ and yet ‘no,’ but ‘yes’ has become ‘yes’ in his case.” (2 Cor. 1:19) Was Paul’s exemplar, Jesus Christ, in any way unreliable? No! Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus always spoke the truth. (John 14:6; 18:37) If what Jesus preached was completely true and reliable and Paul preached the same message, then the apostle’s preaching was reliable too.

Of course, Jehovah is “the God of truth.” (Ps. 31:5) We see this from what Paul next writes: “No matter how many the promises of God are, they have become ‘yes’ by means of him,” that is, by means of Christ. Jesus’ flawless integrity while on earth cleared up any possible cause for doubt concerning Jehovah’s promises. Paul continues: “Therefore, also through him [Jesus] is the ‘Amen’ said to God, which brings him glory through us.” (2 Cor. 1: 20) Jesus is the personal guarantee, or the “Amen,” that every promise Jehovah God makes will come true!

Just as Jehovah and Jesus always speak the truth, so Paul always meant what he said. (2 Cor. 1:19) He was not fickle, one who made promises “in a fleshly way.”

* A short time after writing 1 Corinthians, Paul did indeed travel via Troas to Macedonia, where he wrote 2 Corinthians. (2 Cor. 2:12; 7:5) Later on, he did visit Corinth.

(2 Cor. 1:17) Rather, he ‘walked by spirit.’ (Gal. 5:16) In his dealings with others, he had their best interests at heart. His Yes meant Yes!

DOES YOUR YES MEAN YES?

Nowadays, it is common for people who do not live according to Bible principles to make promises and then break them if a minor problem arises or something more appealing turns up. In business matters “yes” does not always mean “yes,” even when agreements have been confirmed in writing. Many no longer view marriage, an agreement between two parties, as a life-long commitment. Rather, the skyrocketing divorce rate shows that many view marriage as a casual union that can easily be abandoned.—2 Tim. 3:1, 2.

What about you? Does *your* Yes mean Yes? True, as considered in the opening part of this article, it may happen that you have to cancel an appointment, not because of fickleness on your part, but because of circumstances beyond your control. But if you as a Christian make a promise or a commitment, you really should do all you can to keep it. (Ps. 15:4; Matt. 5:37) If you do, you will become known as someone who is trustworthy, a person of your word, one who consistently speaks the truth. (Eph. 4:15, 25; Jas. 5:12) When people realize that you can be trusted in everyday matters, they may be more willing to listen when you share with them the truth about God’s Kingdom. Therefore, let us make sure that our Yes really means Yes!



CHAPTER SEVEN

He “Continued Growing Up With Jehovah”

SAMUEL looked into the faces of his people. The nation had gathered at the town of Gilgal, summoned by this faithful man who had served as prophet and judge for decades. It was May or June by modern reckoning; the dry season was well along. The fields in the region were golden with wheat ready for harvest. Silence fell over the crowd. How could Samuel reach their hearts?

² The people did not understand how serious their situation was. They had insisted on having a human king to rule over them. They did not grasp that they had shown gross disrespect to their God, Jehovah, and to his prophet. They were, in effect, rejecting Jehovah as their King! How could Samuel move them to repentance?

³ Samuel spoke. “I have grown old and gray,” he

1, 2. In what setting did Samuel address the people of Israel, and why did he need to move them to repentance?

3, 4. (a) Why did Samuel speak of his youth? (b) Why is Samuel’s example of faith useful for us today?

told the crowd. His whitening hair added weight to his words. He then said: “I have walked before you from my youth until this day.” (1 Sam. 11:14, 15; 12:2) Though Samuel was old, he had not forgotten his youth. His memories of those early days were still vivid. The decisions he had made back then, as a growing boy, had led him to a life of faith and devotion to his God, Jehovah.

⁴ Samuel had to build and maintain faith, although again and again he was surrounded by people who were faithless and disloyal. Today, it is just as challenging to build faith, for we live in a faithless and corrupt world. (*Read Luke 18:8.*) Let us see what we can learn from Samuel’s example, starting in his early boyhood.

“Ministering Before Jehovah, as a Boy”

⁵ Samuel had an unusual childhood. Shortly after he was weaned, at perhaps three years of age or a little more, he began a life of service at the sacred tabernacle of Jehovah at Shiloh, over 20 miles from his home in Ramah. His parents, Elkanah and Hannah, dedicated their boy to Jehovah in a special

5, 6. How was Samuel’s childhood unusual, but why were his parents sure that he was cared for?

form of service, making him a lifelong Nazirite.* Did this mean that Samuel was cast off, unloved by his parents?

⁶ Far from it! They knew that their son would be cared for at Shiloh. High Priest Eli no doubt supervised matters, for Samuel worked closely with him. There were also a number of women who served in some connection with the tabernacle, evidently in an organized way.—Ex. 38:8; Judg. 11:34-40.

⁷ Furthermore, Hannah and Elkanah never forgot their beloved firstborn, whose very birth was an answer to a prayer. Hannah had asked God for a son, promising to dedicate the boy to God in a life of sacred service. When visiting each year, Hannah brought Samuel a new sleeveless coat she had made for his tabernacle service. The little boy surely cherished those visits. He no doubt thrived on his parents' loving encouragement and guidance as they

* Nazirites were under a vow that included a ban on drinking alcoholic beverages and on cutting their hair. Most undertook such vows for only a set period of time, but a few, such as Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist, were lifelong Nazirites.

7, 8. (a) Year by year, how did Samuel's parents give him loving encouragement? (b) What can parents today learn from Samuel's parents?

taught him what a privilege it was to serve Jehovah in that unique place.

⁸ Parents today can learn a lot from Hannah and Elkanah. It is common for parents to focus all their childrearing efforts on material concerns while ignoring spiritual needs. But Samuel's parents put spiritual matters first, and that had a great bearing on the kind of man their son grew up to be.—*Read Proverbs 22:6.*

⁹ We can picture the boy growing bigger and exploring the hills around Shiloh. As he gazed down on the town and the valley that spread out below it on one side, his heart likely swelled with joy and pride when he caught sight of Jehovah's tabernacle. That tabernacle was a sacred place indeed.* Built

* The sanctuary was a rectangular structure, basically a great tent on a wooden framework. However, it was made of the finest of materials—sealskins, beautifully embroidered cloths, and costly woods plated with silver and gold. The sanctuary sat within a rectangular courtyard that included an impressive altar for sacrifices. Over time, other chambers evidently were erected at the sides of the tabernacle for the use of the priests. Samuel, it seems, slept in such a chamber.

9, 10. (a) Describe the tabernacle and young Samuel's feelings about that sacred place. (See also footnote.) (b) What might Samuel's responsibilities have included, and how do you think young ones today might imitate his example?

nearly 400 years earlier under the direction of Moses himself, it was the one center for the pure worship of Jehovah in all the world.

¹⁰ Young Samuel grew to love the tabernacle. In the account he later wrote, we read: “Samuel was ministering before Jehovah, as a boy, having a linen ephod girded on.” (1 Sam. 2:18) That simple sleeveless garment evidently indicated that Samuel assisted the priests at the tabernacle. Although not of the priestly class, Samuel had duties that included opening the doors to the tabernacle courtyard in the morning and attending to elderly Eli. As much as he enjoyed the privileges, though, in time his innocent heart became troubled. Something was terribly wrong at Jehovah’s house.

Staying Pure in the Face of Corruption

¹¹ At a young age, Samuel witnessed genuine wickedness and corruption. Eli had two sons, named Hophni and Phinehas. Samuel’s account reads: “The sons of Eli were good-for-nothing men; they did not acknowledge Jehovah.” (1 Sam. 2:12) The two

11, 12. (a) Hophni and Phinehas manifested what principal failing? (b) What kind of wickedness and corruption did Hophni and Phinehas practice at the tabernacle? (See also footnote.)

thoughts in this verse go hand in hand. Hophni and Phinehas were “good-for-nothing men”—literally “sons of worthlessness”—because they had no regard for Jehovah. They thought nothing of his righteous standards and requirements. From that one failing sprang all their other sins.

¹² God’s Law was specific about the priests’ duties and the way that they were to offer sacrifices at his tabernacle. For good reason! Those sacrifices represented God’s provisions to forgive sins so that people could be clean in his eyes, eligible for his blessing and guidance. But Hophni and Phinehas led their fellow priests to treat the offerings with great disrespect.*

¹³ Imagine young Samuel watching, wide-eyed,

* The account provides two examples of disrespect. For one thing, the Law specified which pieces of a sacrificial offering were to go to the priests to eat. (Deut. 18:3) But at the tabernacle, the wicked priests had set up a very different practice. They would have their attendants simply jab a great fork into the cauldron where the meat was boiling, taking whatever choice morsel came out! For another thing, when people brought their sacrifices to be burned at the altar, the wicked priests would have an attendant bully the offerer, demanding the raw meat even before the fat of the sacrifice was offered to Jehovah.—Lev. 3:3-5; 1 Sam. 2:13-17.

13, 14. (a) How were sincere people no doubt affected by the wickedness at the tabernacle? (b) How did Eli fail, both as a father and as high priest?

as such gross abuses went on uncorrected. How many people did he see—including poor, humble, downtrodden folk—approaching that sacred tabernacle in hopes of finding some spiritual comfort and strength, only to leave disappointed, hurt, or humiliated? And how did he feel when he learned that Hophni and Phinehas also disregarded Jehovah’s laws on sexual morality, as they had relations with some of the women who were serving there at the tabernacle? (1 Sam. 2:22) Perhaps he looked hopefully to Eli to do something about it.

¹⁴ Eli was in the best position to address the growing disaster. As high priest, he was responsible for what took place at the tabernacle. As a father, he had an obligation to correct his sons. After all, they were hurting themselves as well as countless others in the land. However, Eli failed on both counts, as a father and as high priest. He offered his sons only a bland, weak scolding. (*Read 1 Samuel 2:23-25.*) But his sons needed far stronger discipline. They were committing sins worthy of death!

¹⁵ Matters reached such a point that Jehovah sent

15. Jehovah sent what strong message to Eli, and how did Eli’s family respond to the warning?

- Song 10 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- “Jehovah Wants Willing Servants”: (10 min.)

Ezr 7:10—Ezra prepared his heart

Ezr 7:12-28—Ezra made preparations to return to Jerusalem

Ezr 8:21-23—Ezra trusted in Jehovah to protect His servants

- Digging for Spiritual Gems: (8 min.)

Ezr 9:1, 2—How serious a threat was intermarriage with “the peoples of the lands”? (w06 1/15 20 ¶1)

Ezr 10:3—Why were the children sent away along with the wives? (w06 1/15 20 ¶2)

What does this week’s Bible reading teach me about Jehovah?

What points from this week’s Bible reading can I use in the field ministry?

- Bible Reading: Ezr 7:18-28 (4 min. or less)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Present the *Good News* brochure, and discuss lesson 8, question 1, paragraph 1. Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Demonstrate how to make a return visit on someone who accepted the *Good News* brochure. Discuss lesson 8, question 1, paragraph 2. Lay the groundwork for the next visit.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) Demonstrate a Bible study, using the *Good News* brochure, lesson 8, question 2.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 138
- “Improving Our Skills in the Ministry—Laying the Groundwork for a Return Visit”: (7 min.) Discussion. Demonstrate the main points by playing the *January Skills* video, which shows publishers laying the groundwork for a return visit after placing *The Watchtower* and after placing the *Good News* brochure.
- Local needs: (8 min.)
- Congregation Bible Study: *ia* chap. 7 ¶15-27, review on p. 66 (30 min.)
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 120 and Prayer

IMPROVING OUR SKILLS IN THE MINISTRY

Laying the Groundwork for a Return Visit

WHY IMPORTANT:

We want to water the seeds of truth that we plant. (1Co 3:6) When we find someone who shows interest, it is good to leave a question that we can discuss when we return. This will build his anticipation and simplify our preparation for the return visit. When we return, we can tell him that we are there to answer the question we raised the last time we visited.



HOW TO DO IT:

- When preparing your house-to-house presentation, include a follow-up question to be answered on the next visit. It could be something that is answered in the literature you are offering. Or it could be a question that is answered in one of our study publications that you plan to introduce when you return.
- When concluding your conversation with someone who shows interest, let him know of your desire to talk to him again and then share the follow-up question you prepared. Obtain contact information if possible.
- If you tell him that you will return at a specific time, keep your appointment. —Mt 5:37.

41 *Worship Jehovah During Youth*

(Ecclesiastes 12:1)

- 1. Precious to God are you daughters and sons;
Great his affection for you, our dear ones.
Loving attention to you he extends
Through us, your parents, your fam'ly, and friends.**
- 2. Honor your parents who care for your life,
Giving no cause for contention or strife.
If you gain favor with God and with men,
Days of your youth will be happiest then.**
- 3. Always remember your God in your youth;
Grow ever stronger in love of the truth.
By your devotion to God you will bring
Joy to the heart of Jehovah, our King.**

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

DECEMBER 28–JANUARY 3

Train Your Child
to Serve Jehovah

PAGE 3

JANUARY 4-10

Train Your Teenager
to Serve Jehovah

PAGE 8

JANUARY 11-17

Jehovah Is
the God of Love

PAGE 16

JANUARY 18-24

Do You “Love
Your Neighbor
as Yourself”?

PAGE 21

JANUARY 25-31

One Hundred Years
Under Kingdom
Rulership!

PAGE 26



73 *Love Intensely From the Heart* (1 Peter 1:22)

1. Love must come from deep in our hearts,
There is the place affection starts;
Real fellow feeling it imparts
For all our brothers dear.
We will find the way to express
Loving intentions we possess,
Practicing God's large heartedness,
Proving our love sincere.
Let us love in word and deed,
Being generous to those in need,
Letting goodness take the lead
With each opportunity.
Honor and respect we display;
Kindly concern will be our way.
Our brothers' faults we won't betray.
Ever loyal we will be,
Guarding precious unity.
2. When our love is pure and intense,
We will be slow to take offense;
Reason we have for confidence
In all our brothers true.
Loyal friendships, we cultivate;
Each other we appreciate.
Pleasurably we congregate,
Gaining our strength anew.

Day by day we all transgress;
Thoughtless words can often cause distress.
So we must show tenderness
To those whom our God does love.
True companions we'll ever be,
Strengthening bonds with constancy.
Let love be your identity.
Magnifying God above,
Imitate Jehovah's love.

(See also 1 Pet. 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; 1 John 3:11.)

Do You “Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”?

“You must love your neighbor as yourself.”
—MATT. 22:39.

SONGS: 73, 36

CAN YOU ANSWER?

Why should Jehovah’s servants reflect his love?

How important is love in marriage?

What bearing has love of neighbor had on the relationship of God’s people with fellow believers and others?

LOVE is Jehovah God’s dominant quality. (1 John 4:16) His first creation was Jesus, who existed with him in heaven for many aeons and learned God’s loving ways. (Col. 1:15) By his entire course, including his life on earth, Jesus showed that he fully understands what a loving God Jehovah is, and he imitates that love. Thus, we can be confident that the rulership exercised by Jehovah and Jesus will forever be guided by the quality of love.

2 When asked which was the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus stated: “‘You must love Jehovah your God

1, 2. How do the Scriptures show the importance of love?

with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. The second, like it, is this: ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’”—Matt. 22:37-39.

3 Notice that Jesus placed love of neighbor second only to love of Jehovah. This shows how important it is to display love in all our relationships. But who is our “neighbor”? If we are married, our closest neighbor is our marriage mate. Also close to us are those who make up the Christian congregation, that is, fellow worshippers of the true God. Others are the individuals whom we meet in the ministry. How is love for neighbor to be demonstrated by those who worship Jehovah and follow the teachings of his Son?

SHOWING LOVE FOR OUR MARRIAGE MATE

4 Jehovah performed the first marriage by creating Adam and Eve and bringing them together. He purposed for them to have a happy, enduring union and to fill the earth with their offspring. (Gen. 1:27, 28) However, rebellion against Jehovah’s sovereignty marred the first marriage and brought sin and death to all mankind. (Rom. 5:12) Nevertheless, the Scriptures tell us how we can succeed in marriage. They

3. Who is our “neighbor”?

4. Why can marriage be successful despite human imperfection?

contain the very best counsel on this subject because they originate with Jehovah, the Originator of marriage.—Read **2 Timothy 3:16, 17.**

5 God’s Word shows that love—warm personal attachment or deep affection—is essential for humans to enjoy happy relationships. This is certainly true in marriage. In words directed to the congregation, the apostle Paul said: “Love is patient 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. It does not rejoice over unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” (1 Cor. 13:4-8) Reflecting on and applying such inspired words will surely increase the joys of marriage.

6 Because of the headship principle that exists throughout God’s arrangement of things, love is especially important. Paul explained: “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) But headship is not to be exercised in a domineering way. For example, Jehovah exercises his headship over Christ in a

5. How important is love in a marriage?

6, 7. (a) What does the Bible say about headship? (b) How must a Christian husband treat his wife?

kind, unselfish way, and Jesus responds to it. He appreciates God's loving headship, for he declared: "I love the Father." (John 14:31) It is unlikely that Jesus would have felt that way had Jehovah been harsh or dictatorial in his dealings with his beloved Son.

7 Although a husband is the head of his wife, the Bible instructs him to 'assign her honor.' (1 Pet. 3:7) One way husbands can honor their wives is by taking into consideration their needs and giving them first choice in some matters. Indeed, God's Word states: "Husbands, continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and gave himself up for it." (Eph. 5:25) Yes, Jesus even gave his life for his followers. When a husband imitates the loving way in which Jesus exercises headship, it is much easier for a wife to love and respect him and be in subjection to him.—Read Titus 2:3-5.

HAVE LOVE FOR FELLOW WORSHIPPERS

8 Throughout the earth, there are millions who worship Jehovah and bear witness to his name and purpose. How should each worshipper of Jehovah view his fellow Witnesses? God's Word answers: "Let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Gal. 6:10; read Romans 12:10.) The apostle Peter wrote:

8. How should worshippers of Jehovah view fellow Christians?

“Now that you have purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth with unhypocritical brotherly affection as the result, love one another intensely from the heart.” Peter also told fellow believers: “Above all things, have intense love for one another.”—1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8.

9 Because we have intense love for our fellow servants of Jehovah, we make up a unique worldwide organization. Moreover, because we love Jehovah and obey his laws, he supports us with the most powerful force in the universe, his holy spirit, or active force. This enables us to enjoy wonderful unity as a truly international brotherhood.—Read 1 John 4:20, 21.

10 Highlighting the need for love among Christians, Paul wrote: “Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, humility, mildness, and patience. Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely even if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Just as Jehovah freely forgave you, you must also do the same. But besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union.” (Col. 3:12-14) How thankful we are that love—“a perfect bond of union”—prevails among us regardless of our background or national origin!

9, 10. Why do God’s people have unity among themselves?

11 Genuine love and unity identify Jehovah’s servants as the ones who practice the true religion, for Jesus said: “By this all will know that you are my disciples—if you have love among yourselves.” (John 13:34, 35) And the apostle John wrote: “The children of God and the children of the Devil are evident by this fact: Whoever does not practice righteousness does not originate with God, nor does the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” (1 John 3:10, 11) Love that results in extraordinary unity marks Jehovah’s Witnesses as Christ’s true followers, the ones whom God is using to serve his purpose to have the good news of the Kingdom preached in all the inhabited earth.—Matt. 24:14.

GATHERING “A GREAT CROWD”

12 The vast majority of Jehovah’s servants are part of “a great crowd . . . out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues.” They are “standing before the throne [of God] and before the Lamb [Jesus Christ].” Who are they? “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,” for they exercise faith in Jesus’ ransom sacri-

11. How do love and unity identify Jehovah’s organization?

12, 13. What is the “great crowd” now doing, and what will its members soon experience?

face. Members of the growing “great crowd” love Jehovah and his Son and “are rendering [God] sacred service day and night.”—Rev. 7:9, 14, 15.

13 Soon God will destroy this wicked world in the “great tribulation.” (Matt. 24:21; read Jeremiah 25:32, 33.) But because of his love for his servants, Jehovah will preserve them as a group and will usher them into his new world. As foretold nearly 2,000 years ago, God “will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.” Do you yearn to live in Paradise after “the former things have passed away”?—Rev. 21:4.

14 When the last days began in 1914, there were only a few thousand servants of Jehovah worldwide. Motivated by love for neighbor, and with the backing of God’s spirit, a small remnant of anointed Christians persevered in the Kingdom-preaching work. As a result, today a great crowd with an earthly hope is being gathered. Our ranks have grown to about 8,000,000 Witnesses associated with more than 115,400 congregations throughout the earth, and we continue to grow in number. For example, over 275,500 new Witnesses were baptized during the 2014 service year—an average of some 5,300 each week.

14. How large has the great crowd become?

15 The scope of the preaching work is remarkable. Our Bible-based literature is now published in over 700 languages. *The Watchtower* is the most widely distributed magazine in the world. Over 52,000,000 copies are printed each month, and the magazine is published in 247 languages. Upwards of 200,000,000 copies of our Bible study book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* have been printed in more than 250 languages.

16 The remarkable growth that we see today is the result of our faith in God and full acceptance of the Bible—Jehovah’s miraculously inspired Word. (1 Thess. 2:13) Especially outstanding is the spiritual prosperity of Jehovah’s people—despite the hatred and opposition of Satan, “the god of this system of things.”—2 Cor. 4:4.

ALWAYS SHOW LOVE FOR OTHERS

17 What attitude is required of Jehovah’s servants toward those who do not worship the only true God? In our preaching work, we meet with varied responses—some favorable, some hostile. Regardless of how people react, however, God’s Word shows the standard that his servants must maintain. It

15. Describe the scope of the Kingdom-preaching work that is now being done.

16. What accounts for the spiritual prosperity of the earthly part of Jehovah’s organization?

17, 18. What attitude should God’s servants have toward unbelievers?

states: “Let your words always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should answer each person.” (Col. 4:6) When we make a defense before everyone who demands of us a reason for our hope, we do so “with a mild temper and deep respect” because we are motivated by neighbor love.—1 Pet. 3:15.

18 We show love of neighbor even if our message is rejected by an angry householder who berates us. We imitate Jesus: “When he was being insulted, he did not insult in return. When he was suffering, he did not threaten, but he entrusted himself to the One [Jehovah] who judges righteously.” (1 Pet. 2:23) Whether we are with fellow believers or others, we show humility and apply the counsel: “Do not pay back injury for injury or insult for insult. Instead, repay with a blessing.”—1 Pet. 3:8, 9.

19 By maintaining a humble attitude, Jehovah’s people obey an important principle given by Jesus. In his Sermon on the Mount, he declared: “You heard that it was said: ‘You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ However, I say to you: Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those who persecute you, so that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens, since he makes his sun rise on both the wicked and the good and makes it

19. What principle did Jesus give regarding opposers?

rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Matt. 5: 43-45) Yes, as God’s servants, we must learn to ‘love our enemies,’ regardless of their attitude toward us.

20 In all areas of life, Jehovah’s people must show by their attitude and actions that they love Jehovah and their neighbor. For instance, even if some do not respond favorably to the Kingdom message, we show neighbor love when they are in need. The apostle Paul wrote: “Do not owe anything to anyone except to love one another; for whoever loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. For the law code, ‘You must not commit adultery, you must not murder, you must not steal, you must not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there is, is summed up in this saying: ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does not work evil to one’s neighbor; therefore, love is the law’s fulfillment.” (Rom. 13:8-10) As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we show genuine love in this disunited, violent, wicked world that is under Satan’s control. (1 John 5:19) Surely, love will dominate every activity on earth in the new world after Satan, his demons, and rebellious humans have been removed from the scene. What a blessing it will be when all inhabitants of the earth love God and their neighbor!

20. Why will love of God and neighbor permeate the new world? (See opening image of the standard edition.)

36 “What God Has Yoked Together”

(Matthew 19:5, 6)

1. With dignity and joy,
A threefold cord is bound.
With God and men to witness,
These sacred vows resound.
He vowed before Jehovah
To love her from the heart.

(CHORUS)

*“What God has yoked together
Let no man put apart.”*

2. They both have searched God’s Word
To learn to do his will,
And now they seek his blessing,
Their promise to fulfill.
She vowed before Jehovah
To love him from the heart.

(Chorus)