

- Song 63 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Hezekiah’s Faith Was Rewarded”:** (10 min.)
Isa 36:1, 4-10, 15, 18-20—The Assyrians taunted Jehovah and threatened his people (*ip-1* 386-388 ¶7-14)
Isa 37:1, 2, 14-20—Hezekiah put his trust in Jehovah (*ip-1* 389-391 ¶15-17)
Isa 37:33-38—Jehovah acted in defense of his people (*ip-1* 391-394 ¶18-22)
 - **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
Isa 35:8—What was “the Way of Holiness,” and who qualified to walk on it? (*w08* 5/15 26 ¶4; 27 ¶1)
- Isa 36:2, 3, 22—How did Shebna set a good example of one who accepted discipline? (*w07* 1/15 8 ¶6)

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:** (4 min. or less) Isa 36:1-12

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Mt 24:3, 7, 14—Teach the Truth—Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) 2Ti 3:1-5—Teach the Truth—Leave a JW.ORG contact card.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *bh* 31-32 ¶11-12—Invite the person to the meeting.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 30
- **“O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You”:** (15 min.) Questions and answers. Begin by playing “O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You”—*Excerpt* (video category OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 7 ¶1-9
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 70 and Prayer

“O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You”



It is important for us to trust in Jehovah both in good times and in bad. (Ps 25:1, 2) In the eighth century B.C.E., the Jews in Judah faced a crisis that tested their trust in God. What occurred provides many lessons for us. (Ro 15:4) After watching the video “O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You,” how would you answer the following questions?

1. What crisis did Hezekiah face?

2. How did Hezekiah apply the principle found at Proverbs 22:3 when anticipating a possible siege?

3. Why did Hezekiah not consider surrendering to Assyria or making an alliance with Egypt?

4. How is Hezekiah a good example for Christians?

5. What situations today test *our* trust in Jehovah?

I WANT TO SHOW MORE TRUST IN JEHOVAH WHEN . . .

63 *We're Jehovah's Witnesses!*

(Isaiah 43:10-12)

1. Men make gods of wood and stone,
 But the true God they've not known.
He is God Almighty,
 As he's often shown.
Other gods just cannot see
 What in future days will be.
For witnesses they look all in vain,
 Since none their godship can maintain.

(CHORUS)

We're Jehovah's Witnesses.

We speak out in fearlessness.

Ours is the God of true prophecy;

What he foretells comes to be.

2. Proudly we declare God's name,
 Bearing witness to his fame.
News about his Kingdom,
 Boldly we proclaim.
We help others come to see
 How the truth can set them free.
As they grow strong, their voices they'll raise,
 Singing to God this song of praise.

(Chorus)

3. Witnessing exalts God's name,
Lifts therefrom reproach and shame.
And it warns the wicked,
Who God's name defame.
Pardon it holds out to men,
If they turn to God again.
Whole-souled devotion brings joy and peace;
Promise of life that will not cease.

(Chorus)

Isaiah 34-37

- 34** Come close to hear, you nations,
And pay attention, you peoples.
Let the earth and that which fills it listen,
The land and all its produce.
- ² For Jehovah's indignation is against all the nations,
And his wrath is against all their army.
He will devote them to destruction;
He will give them to the slaughter.
- ³ Their slain will be thrown out,
And the stench of their carcasses will ascend;
The mountains will melt because of their blood.
- ⁴ All the army of the heavens will rot away,
And the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll.
All their army will wither away,
As a withered leaf falls from the vine
And a shriveled fig from the fig tree.
- ⁵ "For in the heavens my sword will be drenched.
It will descend on E'dom in judgment,
On the people whom I devoted to destruction.
- ⁶ Jehovah has a sword; it will be covered with blood.
It will be covered with the fat,
With the blood of young rams and goats,
With the kidney fat of rams.
For Jehovah has a sacrifice in Boz'rah,

A great slaughter in the land of E'dom.

⁷ The wild bulls will go down with them,
The young bulls with the powerful ones.
Their land will be drenched in blood,
And their dust will be soaked with fat.”

⁸ For Jehovah has a day of vengeance,
A year of retribution for the legal case over Zion.

⁹ Her streams will be changed into pitch,
And her dust into sulfur,
And her land will become like burning pitch.

¹⁰ By night or by day it will not be extinguished;
Its smoke will keep ascending forever.
From generation to generation she will remain
devastated;
No one will pass through her forever and ever.

¹¹ The pelican and the porcupine will possess her,
And long-eared owls and ravens will reside in
her.
He will stretch out over her the measuring line of
emptiness
And the plumb line of desolation.

¹² None of her nobles will be called to the kingship,
And all her princes will come to nothing.

¹³ Thorns will grow in her fortified towers,
Nettles and thorny weeds in her fortresses.

She will become a lair of jackals,
An enclosure for ostriches.

¹⁴ Desert creatures will meet up with howling animals,
And the wild goat will call to its companion.
Yes, there the nightjar will settle and find a place
of rest.

¹⁵ There the arrow snake will make its nest and lay
eggs,
And it will hatch them and gather them in its
shadow.
Yes, there the kites will gather, each one with
her mate.

¹⁶ Search in the book of Jehovah and read it out loud:
Not one of them will be missing;
None of them will be lacking a mate,
For it is the mouth of Jehovah that has given the
order,
And it is his spirit that has gathered them
together.

¹⁷ He is the One who has cast the lot for them,
And his own hand has measured out their
assigned place.
They will possess it for all time;
They will reside in it throughout all generations.

35 The wilderness and the parched land will exult,

And the desert plain will be joyful and blossom
as the saffron.

² Without fail it will blossom;
It will rejoice and shout for joy.
The glory of Leb'a-non will be given to it,
The splendor of Car'mel and of Shar'on.
They will see the glory of Jehovah, the splendor
of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands,
And make firm the knees that are shaking.

⁴ Say to those who are anxious at heart:
"Be strong. Do not be afraid.
Look! Your own God will come with vengeance,
God will come with retribution.
He will come and save you."

⁵ At that time the eyes of the blind will be opened,
And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

⁶ At that time the lame will leap like the deer,
And the tongue of the speechless will shout for
joy.
For waters will burst forth in the wilderness,
And streams in the desert plain.

⁷ The heat-parched ground will become a reedy
pool,
And the thirsty ground springs of water.

In the lairs where jackals rested,
There will be green grass and reeds and
papyrus.

⁸ And a highway will be there,
Yes, a way called the Way of Holiness.
The unclean one will not travel on it.
It is reserved for the one walking on the way;
No one foolish will stray onto it.

⁹ No lion will be there,
And no vicious wild beasts will come on it.
They will not be found there;
Only the repurchased ones will walk there.

¹⁰ Those redeemed by Jehovah will return and come
to Zion with a joyful cry.
Unending joy will crown their heads.
Exultation and rejoicing will be theirs,
And grief and sighing will flee away.

36 In the 14th year of King Hez·e·ki'ah,
Sen·nach'er·ib the king of As·syr'i·a came up against
all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. ² The
king of As·syr'i·a then sent the Rab'sha·keh with a vast
army from La'chish to King Hez·e·ki'ah in Jerusalem.
They took up a position by the conduit of the upper
pool, which is at the highway of the laundryman's field.
³ Then E·li'a·kim son of Hil·ki'ah, who was in charge of

the household, Sheb'na the secretary, and Jo'ah son of A'saph the recorder came out to him.

⁴ So the Rab'sha-keh said to them: "Please, say to Hez-e-ki'ah, 'This is what the great king, the king of As-syr'i-a, says: "What is the basis for your confidence?" ⁵ You are saying, 'I have a strategy and the power to wage war,' but these are empty words. In whom have you put trust, so that you dare to rebel against me? ⁶ Look! You trust in the support of this crushed reed, Egypt, which if a man should lean on it would enter into his palm and pierce it. That is the way Phar'aoh king of Egypt is to all those who trust in him. ⁷ And if you should say to me, 'We trust in Jehovah our God,' is he not the one whose high places and altars Hez-e-ki'ah has removed, while he says to Judah and Jerusalem, 'You should bow down before this altar'?" ⁸ So now make this wager, please, with my lord the king of As-syr'i-a: I will give you 2,000 horses if you are able to find enough riders for them. ⁹ How, then, could you drive back even one governor who is the least of my lord's servants, while you put your trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? ¹⁰ Now is it without authorization from Jehovah that I have come up against this land to destroy it? Jehovah himself said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'"

¹¹ At this E-li'a-kim and Sheb'na and Jo'ah said to the Rab'sha-keh: "Speak to your servants, please, in the Ar-a-ma'ic language, for we can understand it; do not speak to us in the language of the Jews in the hearing of the people on the wall." ¹² But the Rab'sha-keh said: "Is it just to your lord and to you that my lord sent me to speak these words? Is it not also to the men who sit on the wall, those who will eat their own excrement and drink their own urine along with you?"

¹³ Then the Rab'sha-keh stood and called out loudly in the language of the Jews, saying: "Hear the word of the great king, the king of As-syr'i-a. ¹⁴ This is what the king says, 'Do not let Hez-e-ki'ah deceive you, for he is not able to rescue you. ¹⁵ And do not let Hez-e-ki'ah cause you to trust in Jehovah by saying: "Jehovah will surely rescue us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of As-syr'i-a." ¹⁶ Do not listen to Hez-e-ki'ah, for this is what the king of As-syr'i-a says: "Make peace with me and surrender, and each of you will eat from his own vine and from his own fig tree and will drink the water of his own cistern, ¹⁷ until I come and take you to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards. ¹⁸ Do not let Hez-e-ki'ah mislead you by saying, 'Jehovah will rescue us.' Have any of the gods of the nations rescued their land out of the hand of the king of As-syr'i-a? ¹⁹ Where are the gods of Ha'math and

Ar'pad? Where are the gods of Seph-ar-va'im? And have they rescued Sa-mar'i-a out of my hand? ²⁰ Who among all the gods of these lands have rescued their land out of my hand, so that Jehovah should rescue Jerusalem out of my hand?"

²¹ But they kept silent and did not say a word to him in reply, for the order of the king was, "You must not answer him." ²² But E-li'a-kim son of Hil-ki'ah, who was in charge of the household, Sheb'na the secretary, and Jo'ah son of A'saph the recorder came to Hez-e-ki'ah with their garments ripped apart and told him the words of the Rab'sha-keh.

37 As soon as King Hez-e-ki'ah heard this, he ripped his garments apart and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of Jehovah. ² Then he sent E-li'a-kim, who was in charge of the household, Sheb'na the secretary, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah, the son of A'moz. ³ They said to him: "This is what Hez-e-ki'ah says, 'This day is a day of distress, of rebuke, and of disgrace; for the children are ready to be born, but there is no strength to give birth. ⁴ Perhaps Jehovah your God will hear the words of the Rab'sha-keh, whom the king of As-syr'i-a his lord sent to taunt the living God, and he will call him to account for the words that

Jehovah your God has heard. So offer up a prayer in behalf of the remnant who have survived.”

⁵ So the servants of King Hez·e·ki'ah went in to Isaiah, ⁶ and Isaiah said to them: “This is what you should say to your lord, ‘This is what Jehovah says: “Do not be afraid because of the words that you heard, the words with which the attendants of the king of As·syr'i·a blasphemed me. ⁷ Here I am putting a thought in his mind, and he will hear a report and return to his own land; and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.”””

⁸ After the Rab'sha·keh heard that the king of As·syr'i·a had pulled away from La'chish, he returned to him and found him fighting against Lib'nah. ⁹ Now the king heard it said about King Tir·ha'kah of E·thi·o'pi·a: “He has come out to fight against you.” When he heard this, he sent messengers again to Hez·e·ki'ah, saying: ¹⁰ “This is what you should say to King Hez·e·ki'ah of Judah, ‘Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you by saying: “Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of As·syr'i·a.”

¹¹ Look! You have heard what the kings of As·syr'i·a did to all the lands by devoting them to destruction. Will you alone be rescued? ¹² Did the gods of the nations that my forefathers destroyed rescue them? Where are Go'zan, Ha'ran, Re'zeph, and the people of E'den who

were in Tel-as'sar? ¹³ Where is the king of Ha'math, the king of Ar'pad, and the king of the cities of Seph-ar-va'im, and of He'na, and of Iv'vah?"

¹⁴ Hez-e-ki'ah took the letters out of the hand of the messengers and read them. Hez-e-ki'ah then went up to the house of Jehovah and spread them out before Jehovah. ¹⁵ And Hez-e-ki'ah began to pray to Jehovah and say: ¹⁶ "O Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, sitting enthroned above the cherubs, you alone are the true God of all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth. ¹⁷ Incline your ear, O Jehovah, and hear! Open your eyes, O Jehovah, and see! Hear all the words that Sen-nach'er-ib has sent to taunt the living God. ¹⁸ It is a fact, O Jehovah, that the kings of As-syr'i-a have devastated all the lands, as well as their own land. ¹⁹ And they have thrown their gods into the fire, because they were not gods but the work of human hands, wood and stone. That is why they could destroy them. ²⁰ But now, O Jehovah our God, save us out of his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone are God, O Jehovah."

²¹ Isaiah son of A'moz then sent this message to Hez-e-ki'ah: "This is what Jehovah the God of Israel says, 'Because you prayed to me concerning King

Sen-nach'er-ib of As-syr'i-a, ²² this is the word that Jehovah has spoken against him:

“The virgin daughter of Zion despises you, she scoffs at you.

The daughter of Jerusalem shakes her head at you.

²³ Whom have you taunted and blasphemed?
Against whom have you raised your voice
And lifted your arrogant eyes?
It is against the Holy One of Israel!

²⁴ Through your servants you have taunted Jehovah
and said,
‘With the multitude of my war chariots
I will ascend the heights of mountains,
The remotest parts of Leb'a-non.
I will cut down its lofty cedars, its choice juniper
trees.
I will enter its highest retreats, its densest
forests.

²⁵ I will dig wells and drink waters;
I will dry up the streams of Egypt with the soles
of my feet.’

²⁶ Have you not heard? From long ago it was
determined.
From days gone by I have prepared it.
Now I will bring it about.

You will turn fortified cities into desolate piles of ruins.

²⁷ Their inhabitants will be helpless;
They will be terrified and put to shame.
They will become as vegetation of the field and
green grass,
As grass of the roofs that is scorched by the
east wind.

²⁸ But I well know when you sit, when you go out,
when you come in,
And when you are enraged against me,

²⁹ Because your rage against me and your roaring
have reached my ears.
So I will put my hook in your nose and my bridle
between your lips,
And I will lead you back the way you came.”

³⁰ ““And this will be the sign for you: This year you will
eat what grows on its own; and in the second year, you
will eat grain that sprouts from that; but in the third year
you will sow seed and reap, and you will plant
vineyards and eat their fruitage. ³¹ Those of the house
of Judah who escape, those who are left, will take root
downward and produce fruit upward. ³² For a remnant
will go out of Jerusalem and survivors from Mount Zion.
The zeal of Jehovah of armies will do this.

³³ “Therefore this is what Jehovah says about the king of As-syr'i-a:

“He will not come into this city
Or shoot an arrow there
Or confront it with a shield
Or cast up a siege rampart against it.”

³⁴ ‘By the way he came he will return;
He will not come into this city,’ declares
Jehovah.

³⁵ ‘I will defend this city and save it for my own sake
And for the sake of my servant David.’”

³⁶ And the angel of Jehovah went out and struck down 185,000 men in the camp of the As-syr'i-ans. When people rose up early in the morning, they saw all the dead bodies. ³⁷ So King Sen-nach'er-ib of As-syr'i-a departed and returned to Nin'e-veh and stayed there. ³⁸ And as he was bowing down at the house of his god Nis'roch, his own sons A-dram'me-lech and Shar-e'zer struck him down with the sword and then escaped to the land of Ar'a-rat. And his son E'sar-had'don became king in his place.

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Isa 36:1, 4-10, 15, 18-20—The Assyrians taunted Jehovah and threatened his people (*ip-1* 386-388 ¶7-14)
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“O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You”



It is important for us to trust in Jehovah both in good times and in bad. (Ps 25:1, 2) In the eighth century B.C.E., the Jews in Judah faced a crisis that tested their trust in God. What occurred provides many lessons for us. (Ro 15:4) After watching the video “O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You,” how would you answer the following questions?

1. What crisis did Hezekiah face?

2. How did Hezekiah apply the principle found at Proverbs 22:3 when anticipating a possible siege?

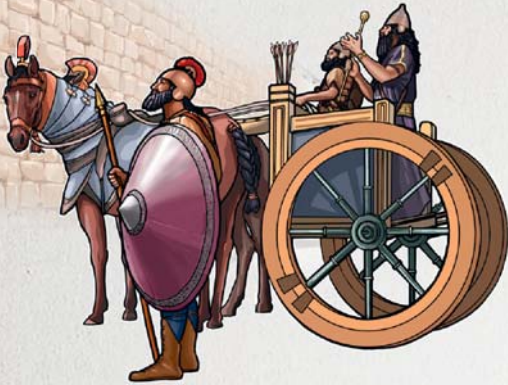
3. Why did Hezekiah not consider surrendering to Assyria or making an alliance with Egypt?

4. How is Hezekiah a good example for Christians?

5. What situations today test *our* trust in Jehovah?

I WANT TO SHOW MORE TRUST IN JEHOVAH WHEN . . .

ISAIAH 34-37 | Hezekiah's Faith Was Rewarded



King Sennacherib of Assyria sent the Rabshakeh to Jerusalem to demand the city's surrender. The Assyrians used various arguments in an attempt to make the Jews give up without a fight.

- 1 **Isolation.** Egypt will be of little help to you.—Isa 36:6
- 2 **Doubt.** Jehovah will not fight for you because he is displeased with you.—Isa 36:7, 10
- 3 **Intimidation.** You do not stand a chance against the powerful Assyrian army.—Isa 36:8, 9
- 4 **Temptation.** Surrendering to Assyria will improve the quality of your life.—Isa 36:16, 17



37:1, 2, 14-20, 36

Hezekiah showed unwavering faith in Jehovah

- He did what he reasonably could to prepare the city for the siege
- He prayed to Jehovah for deliverance and encouraged the people to do the same
- His faith was rewarded when Jehovah sent an angel to strike down 185,000 Assyrian warriors in one night



January 16-22

Treasures From God's Word

Isaiah 36:1, 4-10, 15, 18-20—The Assyrians taunted Jehovah and threatened his people

Reference: *ip-1* 386-388 paragraphs 7-14.

Rabshakeh Presents His Case

7 Sennacherib dispatches Rabshakeh (a military title, not a personal name) along with two other dignitaries to Jerusalem to demand the city's surrender. (2 Kings 18:17) These are met outside the city wall by three of Hezekiah's representatives, Eliakim the overseer of Hezekiah's household, Shebna the secretary, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.—Isaiah 36:2, 3.

8 Rabshakeh's aim is simple—convince Jerusalem to surrender without a fight. Speaking in Hebrew, he first cries out: “What is this confidence in which you have trusted? . . . In whom have you put trust, that you have rebelled against me?” (Isaiah 36:4, 5) Then Rabshakeh taunts the frightened Jews, reminding them that they are completely isolated. To whom can they turn for support? To that “crushed reed,” Egypt? (Isaiah 36:6) At this time, Egypt does resemble a crushed reed; in fact, that former world power has been temporarily conquered by Ethiopia, and Egypt's present Pharaoh, King Tirhakah, is not an Egyptian but an Ethiopian. And

he is about to be defeated by Assyria. (2 Kings 19:8, 9) Since Egypt cannot save itself, it will be of little help to Judah.

9 Rabshakeh now argues that Jehovah will not fight for His people because He is displeased with them.

Rabshakeh says: “In case you should say to me, ‘It is Jehovah our God in whom we have trusted,’ is he not the one whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has removed?” (Isaiah 36:7) Of course, far from rejecting Jehovah by tearing down the high places and the altars in the land, the Jews have actually returned to Jehovah.

10 Next Rabshakeh reminds the Jews that militarily they are hopelessly outclassed. He issues this arrogant challenge: “Let me give you two thousand horses to see whether you are able, on your part, to put riders upon them.” (Isaiah 36:8) In reality, though, does it matter whether Judah’s trained cavalry are many or few? No, for Judah’s salvation does not depend upon superior military strength. Proverbs 21:31 explains matters this way: “The horse is something prepared for the day of battle, but salvation belongs to Jehovah.” Then Rabshakeh claims that Jehovah’s blessing is with the Assyrians, not the Jews. Otherwise, he argues, the Assyrians could never have penetrated so far into Judah’s territory.—Isaiah 36:9, 10.

11 Hezekiah's representatives are concerned about the effect that Rabshakeh's arguments will have on the men who can hear him from the top of the city wall. These Jewish officials request: "Speak, please, to your servants in the Syrian language, for we are listening; and do not speak to us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that are on the wall." (Isaiah 36:11) But Rabshakeh has no intention of speaking in the Syrian language. He wants to sow seeds of doubt and fear in the Jews so that they will surrender and Jerusalem can be conquered without a fight! (Isaiah 36:12) Hence the Assyrian speaks again in "the Jews' language." He warns the inhabitants of Jerusalem: "Do not let Hezekiah deceive you people, for he is not able to deliver you." Following this, he tries to tempt those listening by painting a picture of life as it could be for the Jews under Assyrian rule: "Make a capitulation to me and come out to me and eat each one from his own vine and each one from his own fig tree and drink each one the water of his own cistern, until I come and actually take you to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards."—Isaiah 36:13-17.

12 There will be no harvest for the Jews this year—the Assyrian invasion has prevented them from planting crops. The prospect of eating succulent grapes and of drinking cool water must be very appealing to the men

listening on the wall. But Rabshakeh has not yet finished trying to weaken the Jews.

13 From his arsenal of arguments, Rabshakeh draws another verbal weapon. He warns the Jews against believing Hezekiah should he say: “Jehovah himself will deliver us.” Rabshakeh reminds the Jews that the gods of Samaria were unable to prevent the ten tribes from being overcome by the Assyrians. And what of the gods of the other nations Assyria has conquered? “Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?” he demands. “Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?”—Isaiah 36:18-20.

14 Of course, Rabshakeh, a worshiper of false gods, does not understand that there is a big difference between apostate Samaria and Jerusalem under Hezekiah. Samaria’s false gods had no power to save the ten-tribe kingdom. (2 Kings 17:7, 17, 18) On the other hand, Jerusalem under Hezekiah has turned its back on false gods and has returned to serving Jehovah. However, the three Judean representatives do not try to explain this to Rabshakeh. “They continued to keep silent and did not answer him a word, for the commandment of the king was, saying: ‘You must not answer him.’” (Isaiah 36:21) Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah return to Hezekiah and make an official report of the words of Rabshakeh.—Isaiah

36:22.

Isaiah 37:1, 2, 14-20—Hezekiah put his trust in
Jehovah

Reference: *ip-1* 389-391 paragraphs 15-17.

Hezekiah Makes a Decision

15 King Hezekiah now has a decision to make. Will Jerusalem surrender to the Assyrians? join forces with Egypt? or stand her ground and fight? Hezekiah is under great pressure. He goes to Jehovah's temple, while dispatching Eliakim and Shebna, along with the older men of the priests, to inquire of Jehovah through the prophet Isaiah. (**Isaiah 37:1, 2**) Dressed in sackcloth, the king's emissaries approach Isaiah, saying: "This day is a day of distress and of rebuke and of scornful insolence . . . Perhaps Jehovah your God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his lord sent to taunt the living God, and he will actually call him to account for the words that Jehovah your God has heard." (Isaiah 37:3-5) Yes, the Assyrians are challenging the living God! Will Jehovah give attention to their taunts? Through Isaiah, Jehovah reassures the Jews: "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard with which the attendants of the king of Assyria spoke abusively of me. Here I am

putting a spirit in him, and he must hear a report and return to his own land; and I shall certainly cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.”—**Isaiah 37:6, 7.**

16 Meanwhile, Rabshakeh is called away to be at Sennacherib’s side while the king wages war at Libnah. Sennacherib will deal with Jerusalem later. (Isaiah 37:8) Still, Rabshakeh’s departure brings no letup of pressure on Hezekiah. Sennacherib sends threatening letters describing what the inhabitants of Jerusalem can expect if they refuse to surrender: “You yourself have heard what the kings of Assyria did to all the lands by devoting them to destruction, and will you yourself be delivered? Have the gods of the nations that my forefathers brought to ruin delivered them? . . . Where is the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad and the king of the city of Sepharvaim—of Hena and of Ivvah?” (Isaiah 37:9-13) Basically, the Assyrian is saying that it is senseless to resist—resistance will only bring more trouble!

17 Deeply concerned about the consequences of the decision he must make, Hezekiah spreads Sennacherib’s letters out before Jehovah in the temple. (Isaiah 37:14) In heartfelt prayer he implores Jehovah to give ear to the Assyrian’s threats, concluding his prayer with the words: “And now, O Jehovah our God, save us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Jehovah, are God alone.”

(Isaiah 37:15-20) From this it is clear that Hezekiah is primarily concerned, not with his own deliverance, but with the reproach that will be heaped upon Jehovah's name if Assyria defeats Jerusalem.

Isaiah 37:33-38—Jehovah acted in defense of his people

Reference: *ip-1* 391-394 **paragraphs 18-22**.

18 Jehovah's answer to Hezekiah's prayer comes through Isaiah. Jerusalem must not surrender to Assyria; she must stand her ground. Speaking as to Sennacherib, Isaiah boldly states Jehovah's message to the Assyrian: "The virgin daughter of Zion has despised you, she has held you in derision. Behind you the daughter of Jerusalem has wagged her head [mockingly]." (**Isaiah 37:21, 22**) Jehovah then adds, in effect: 'Who are you to taunt the Holy One of Israel? I know your deeds. You have great ambitions; you make great boasts. You have trusted in your military power and have conquered much land. But you are not invincible. I will frustrate your plans. I will conquer you. Then I will do to you as you have done to others. I will put a hook in your nose and lead you back to Assyria!'—Isaiah 37:23-29.

“This Will Be the Sign for You”

19 What guarantee does Hezekiah have that Isaiah’s prophecy will be fulfilled? Jehovah answers: “This will be the sign for you: There will be an eating this year of the growth from spilled kernels, and in the second year grain that shoots up of itself; but in the third year sow seed, you people, and reap, and plant vineyards and eat their fruitage.” (Isaiah 37:30) Jehovah will provide food for the trapped Jews. Although unable to plant seed because of the Assyrian occupation, they will be able to eat from the gleanings of the preceding year’s harvest. The following year, a sabbath year, they must let their fields lie fallow, despite their desperate situation. (Exodus 23:11) Jehovah promises that if the people obey his voice, enough grain will sprout in the fields to sustain them. Then, in the following year, men will sow seed in the usual way and enjoy the fruitage of their labor.

20 Jehovah now compares his people to a plant that cannot easily be uprooted: “Those who escape of the house of Judah . . . will certainly take root downward and produce fruitage upward.” (**Isaiah 37:31, 32**) Yes, those who trust in Jehovah have nothing to fear. They and their offspring will remain firmly established in the land.

21 What of the Assyrian’s threats against Jerusalem?

Jehovah answers: “He will not come into this city, nor will he shoot an arrow there, nor confront it with a shield, nor cast up a siege rampart against it. By the way by which he came he will return, and into this city he will not come.” (Isaiah 37:33, 34) There will be no battle between Assyria and Jerusalem after all. Surprisingly, it will be the Assyrians, not the Jews, who are defeated without a fight.

22 True to his word, Jehovah sends an angel who strikes down the cream of Sennacherib’s troops—185,000 men. This apparently happens at Libnah, and Sennacherib himself wakes up to find the leaders, chiefs, and mighty men of his army dead. Shamefaced, he returns to Nineveh, but despite his resounding defeat, he stubbornly remains devoted to his false god Nisroch. Some years later, while worshiping in the temple of Nisroch, Sennacherib is assassinated by two of his sons. Once again, lifeless Nisroch proves powerless to save.—Isaiah 37:35-38.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Isaiah 35:8—What was “the Way of Holiness,” and who qualified to walk on it?

Reference: *w08 5/15 26* **paragraph 4**.

Jehovah foretold that his people who were in Babylonian exile would be restored to their homeland. The prophecy of restoration contained this guarantee: “There will certainly come to be a highway there, even a way; and the Way of Holiness it will be called.” (**Isaiah 35:8a**) These words show that Jehovah not only opened the way for the Jews to get home but assured them of his protection along the way.

Reference: *w08 5/15 27* **paragraph 1**.

In 537 B.C.E., the returning Jews had to meet an important requirement. Regarding those qualified to walk on “the Way of Holiness,” Isaiah 35:8b states: “The unclean one will not pass over it. And it will be for the one walking on the way, and no foolish ones will wander about on it.” Since the purpose of the Jews’ return to Jerusalem was to reestablish pure worship, there would be no place for those who had selfish motives, lacked respect for sacred things, or were

spiritually unclean. The returnees needed to maintain Jehovah's high moral standards. Those desiring God's favor today need to meet the same requirement. They must pursue "holiness in God's fear." (2 Corinthians 7:1) What unclean practices, then, ought we to shun?

Isaiah 36:2, 3, 22—How did Shebna set a good example of one who accepted discipline?

Reference: w07 1/15 8 paragraph 6.

Though dismissed from serving as a steward, Shebna was allowed to continue in the king's service as a secretary to his replacement. (Isaiah 22:15, 19) If we are removed from a position of responsibility in Jehovah's organization for some reason, should we not continue to serve God in whatever capacity he permits?

- Song 63 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Hezekiah’s Faith Was Rewarded”:** (10 min.)
Isa 36:1, 4-10, 15, 18-20—The Assyrians taunted Jehovah and threatened his people (*ip-1* 386-388 ¶7-14)
Isa 37:1, 2, 14-20—Hezekiah put his trust in Jehovah (*ip-1* 389-391 ¶15-17)
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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:** (4 min. or less) Isa 36:1-12

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Mt 24:3, 7, 14—Teach the Truth—Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) 2Ti 3:1-5—Teach the Truth—Leave a JW.ORG contact card.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) *bh* 31-32 ¶11-12—Invite the person to the meeting.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 30
- **“O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You”:** (15 min.) Questions and answers. Begin by playing “O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You”—*Excerpt* (video category OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 7 ¶1-9
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 70 and Prayer

“O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You”



It is important for us to trust in Jehovah both in good times and in bad. (Ps 25:1, 2) In the eighth century B.C.E., the Jews in Judah faced a crisis that tested their trust in God. What occurred provides many lessons for us. (Ro 15:4) After watching the video “O Jehovah, . . . I Trust in You,” how would you answer the following questions?

1. What crisis did Hezekiah face?

2. How did Hezekiah apply the principle found at Proverbs 22:3 when anticipating a possible siege?

3. Why did Hezekiah not consider surrendering to Assyria or making an alliance with Egypt?

4. How is Hezekiah a good example for Christians?

5. What situations today test *our* trust in Jehovah?

I WANT TO SHOW MORE TRUST IN JEHOVAH WHEN . . .

WHERE DID JESUS COME FROM?

¹⁰ The Bible teaches that Jesus lived in heaven before he came to earth. Micah prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and also said that His origin was “from early times.” (Micah 5:2) On many occasions, Jesus himself said that he lived in heaven before being born as a human. (John 3:13; 6:38, 62; 17:4, 5) As a spirit creature in heaven, Jesus had a special relationship with Jehovah.

¹¹ Jesus is Jehovah’s most precious Son—and for good reason. He is called “the firstborn of all creation,” for he was God’s first creation.* (Colossians 1:15) There is something else that makes this Son special. He is the “only-begotten Son.” (John 3:16) This means that Jesus is the only one directly created by God. Jesus is also the only one whom God used when He created all other things. (Colossians

* Jehovah is called a Father because he is the Creator. (Isaiah 64:8) Since Jesus was created by God, he is called God’s Son. For similar reasons, other spirit creatures and even the man Adam are called sons of God.—Job 1:6; Luke 3:38.

10. What does the Bible teach about Jesus’ existence before he came to earth?

11. How does the Bible show that Jesus is Jehovah’s most precious Son?

1:16) Then, too, Jesus is called “the Word.” (John 1:14) This tells us that he spoke for God, no doubt delivering messages and instructions to the Father’s other sons, both spirit and human.

¹² Is the firstborn Son equal to God, as some believe? That is not what the Bible teaches. As we noted in the preceding paragraph, the Son was created. Obviously, then, he had a beginning, whereas Jehovah God has no beginning or end. (Psalm 90:2) The only-begotten Son never even considered trying to be equal to his Father. The Bible clearly teaches that the Father is greater than the Son. (John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 11:3) Jehovah alone is “God Almighty.” (Genesis 17:1) Therefore, he has no equal.*

¹³ Jehovah and his firstborn Son enjoyed close association for billions of years—long before the starry heavens and the earth were created. How they must have loved each other! (John 3:35; 14:31) This

* For further proof that the firstborn Son is not equal to God, see the Appendix, pages 257-60.

12. How do we know that the firstborn Son is not equal to God?

13. What does the Bible mean when it refers to the Son as “the image of the invisible God”?

- Song 63 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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I WANT TO SHOW MORE TRUST IN JEHOVAH WHEN . . .

30 *My Father, My God and Friend*

(Hebrews 6:10)

1. Life in this world can be hard.

Life in this world can bring tears and pain.
Still ev'ry day I will say,
"My life is not in vain."

(CHORUS)

*For God is not unrighteous,
And he remembers the love I've shown.
So he is ever near me;
With Jehovah, I'm not alone.
Yes, God is my provider
and my protector down to the end.
Yes, Jehovah is my Father,
My God and Friend.*

2. Gone are the days of my youth;
Days of calamity now are here.
Still through the eyes of my faith,
My hope is bright and clear.

(Chorus)

- Song 63 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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I WANT TO SHOW MORE TRUST IN JEHOVAH WHEN . . .

7 Methods of Preaching

Using Every Means to Reach People

FOCUS OF CHAPTER

God's people use a variety of methods of preaching to reach the largest audience possible

CROWDS gather around Jesus on the shore of a lake, but he boards a boat and pulls away a short distance. Why? He knows that the surface of the water will amplify his voice and that the large audience will be able to hear his message more clearly.—**Read Mark 4:1, 2.**

² In the decades surrounding the Kingdom's birth, faithful disciples of Christ followed his example, using novel techniques to spread the good news of the Kingdom to large audiences. Under the direction of the King, God's people continue to innovate and adapt as circumstances change and new technologies become available. We want to reach as many as possible. **1, 2. (a) What technique did Jesus use in order to speak to a large audience? (b) How have faithful disciples of Christ followed his example, and why?**

sible before the end comes. (Matt. 24:14) Consider just some of the methods we have used to reach people, no matter where they live. Think, too, of ways that you can imitate the faith of those who spread the good news in the early days.

Reaching Large Audiences

³ **Newspapers.** Brother Russell and his associates had been publishing the *Watch Tower* since 1879, bringing the Kingdom message to many people. In the decade prior to 1914, however, Christ seems to have maneuvered matters so that the good news would reach an even wider audience. The chain of events began in 1903. In that year, Dr. E. L. Eaton, a spokesman for a group of Protestant ministers in Pennsylvania, challenged Charles Taze Russell to a series of debates on Bible doctrine. In a letter to Russell, Eaton wrote: “I have thought that a public debate of some of those questions about which you and I differ . . . would be of immense interest to the public.” Russell and his associates also thought the public would be interested, so they arranged to have the debates published in a leading newspaper, *The*

3. How were enemies of the truth frustrated by our use of newspapers?

Pittsburgh Gazette. The newspaper articles were so popular and Russell's clear explanation of Bible truth so compelling that the paper offered to publish Russell's lectures every week. How that development must have frustrated enemies of the truth!

⁴ More newspapers soon wanted to carry Russell's lectures. By 1908, the *Watch Tower* could report that the sermons were published in "eleven newspapers regularly." However, brothers familiar with newspaper work advised Russell that if he moved the Society's offices from Pittsburgh to a city that was better known, more newspapers would carry the Bible-based articles. After weighing that advice and other factors, Russell moved the offices to Brooklyn, New York, in 1909. The result? Just months after that move, some 400 newspapers were publishing the lectures, with more constantly being added to the list. By the time the Kingdom was established in 1914, over 2,000 newspapers in four languages were publishing Russell's sermons and articles!

⁵ What important lesson does that development

4, 5. What quality did Russell display, and how can those with positions of responsibility imitate his example?

provide? Those who have a measure of authority in God's organization today do well to imitate Russell's humility. In what way? When making important decisions, consider the advice of others.—**Read Proverbs 15:22.**

⁶ The Kingdom truths published in those newspaper articles changed people's lives. (Heb. 4:12) For example, Ora Hetzel, who was baptized in 1917, was one of many who first learned the truth through such articles. "After I was married," said Ora, "I went to visit my mother in Rochester, Minnesota. When I arrived, I found her cutting out articles from a newspaper. They were sermons by Russell. Mother explained the things she had learned from them." Ora accepted the truths she learned and for some six decades was a faithful proclaimer of God's Kingdom.

⁷ In 1916, two key events caused those taking the lead to reassess the use of newspapers in spreading the good news. First, the Great War that was raging at the time made printing supplies difficult to obtain.

6. How did the truths published in newspaper articles affect one person?

7. Why did those taking the lead reassess the use of newspapers?

In 1916, a report from our newspaper department in Britain highlighted the challenge, saying: “There are just over 30 papers publishing the Sermons at the present time. It is quite likely that this number will be greatly reduced shortly owing to the increasingly high price of paper.” The second event was the death of Brother Russell on October 31, 1916. Thus, *The Watch Tower* of December 15, 1916, announced: “Now that Brother Russell has passed beyond, the sermon feature [in the newspapers] will be discontinued entirely.” Although this avenue of preaching came to an end, other methods, such as the “Photo-Drama of Creation,” continued to have great success.

⁸ Picture presentations. Russell and his associates worked for some three years to produce the “Photo-Drama of Creation,” which was released in 1914. (Prov. 21:5) The Drama, as it was called, was an innovative combination of moving pictures, sound recordings, and colored glass slides. Hundreds of people took part in reenacting Bible scenes that were captured on film, and even animals were involved. “The largest part of the population of one of the

8. What was involved in producing the “Photo-Drama of Creation”?

large zoological gardens,” says a report from 1913, “was brought into use in order to reproduce in Motion talking pictures Noah’s part in the big show.” As for the hundreds of different glass slides used in the production, artists in London, New York, Paris, and Philadelphia colored each one by hand.

⁹ Why was so much time and expense poured into making the “Photo-Drama”? A resolution adopted at the 1913 series of conventions explains: “The unprecedented success of the American newspapers in moulding public opinion by the aid of cartoons and illustrations in their news and magazine sections, together with the wonderful popularity and adaptability of moving pictures, has fully demonstrated their worth and, we believe, fully justifies us, as progressive preachers and Bible class teachers, in giving our unqualified endorsement of moving pictures and stereopticon slides as an effective and desirable method for evangelists and teachers.”

¹⁰ During 1914, the “Photo-Drama” was shown in 80 cities each day. Almost eight million people in

9. Why was so much time and expense poured into making the “Photo-Drama”?

10. How widely was the “Photo-Drama” shown?

70 *Search Out Deserving Ones* (Matthew 10:11-15)

1. In preaching the Kingdom and teaching the truth,
Our Lord showed us how to proceed:
'Search out those deserving and ready to hear,
Those aware of their spiritual need.
By greeting the household and wishing it peace,
Then it may be that peace you'll impart.
But when they refuse you or turn you away,
Shake the dust from your feet and depart.'
2. All those who receive you receive him as well,
Respond when their heart opens wide.
Their right disposition for unending life
Will impel them to serve at your side.
And never be anxious about what to say,
For Jehovah will help you to speak.
Your answer when gracious and seasoned with salt
Will appeal to the humble and meek.

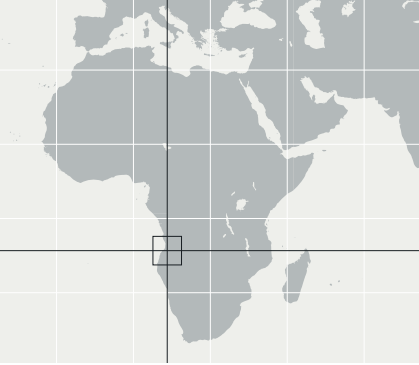
NOVEMBER 2016

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
DECEMBER 26, 2016–JANUARY 29, 2017



COVER IMAGE:
ANGOLA

In the city of Benguela, special pioneers are conducting a Bible study in sign language, using the brochure *Listen to God and Live Forever*. The 10 deaf publishers in that city were delighted that 62 people attended the Memorial there in 2015

PUBLISHERS
115,948

BIBLE STUDIES
502,848

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2015)
529,827

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9 WEEK OF JANUARY 2-8 Organized in Harmony With God’s Own Book

14 WEEK OF JANUARY 9-15 Do You Highly Esteem Jehovah’s Own Book?

These articles answer the following questions: Why should we expect Jehovah’s worshippers to be organized? How can we be organized in harmony with God’s own Book? How can we show that we loyally support Jehovah’s organization?

19 “The Work Is Great”

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26 WEEK OF JANUARY 23-29 They Broke Free From False Religion

These articles explain when God’s people came into Babylonian captivity and what efforts anointed Christians made in the late 1800’s to understand Jehovah’s Word correctly. We will also consider the firm stand the Bible Students took regarding Babylon the Great, and we will learn when the Babylonian captivity ended.

31 FROM OUR ARCHIVES

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

To make a donation, please visit www.jw.org.



Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

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Vol. 137, No. 17 ENGLISH

The Light Gets Brighter

(Proverbs 4:18)

1. The prophets of old sought to learn of the Christ,
The hope of all groaning creation.
God's spirit revealed that Messiah would come,
Providing the means of salvation.

The time has arrived, the Messiah now reigns,
The proof of his presence is clear.
How great is the favor of learning such things;
Into these even angels would peer!

(CHORUS)

*Our path now becomes ever brighter;
We walk in the full light of day.
Behold what our God is revealing;
He guides us each step of the way.*

2. Our Lord has appointed a trustworthy slave,
Through whom He gives food in due season.
The light of the truth has grown brighter with time,
Appealing to heart and to reason.

Our path ever clearer, our steps ever firm,
We walk in the brightness of day.
All thanks to Jehovah, the Source of all truth,
We most gratefully walk in his way.

(Chorus)

Called Out of Darkness

“[Jehovah] called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”—1 PET. 2:9.

SONGS: 95, 74

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

In what sense did God’s people come into Babylonian captivity from the second century C.E. onward?

In the mid-15th century, what factors contributed to a slight loosening of false religion’s grip on the people?

In the late 1800’s, what efforts did the anointed make to understand God’s Word correctly?

IN 607 B.C.E., a massive Babylonian army under the command of King Nebuchadnezzar II invaded the city of Jerusalem. Regarding the bloodbath that followed, the Bible says: “[Nebuchadnezzar] killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary; he felt

1. Describe the events that occurred at the destruction of Jerusalem.



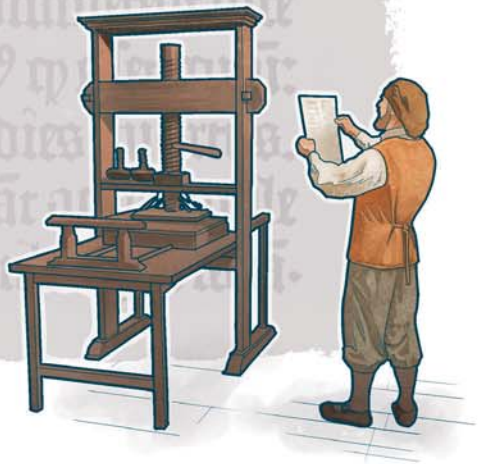
Called Out of Darkness

"[Jehovah] called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

—1 PET. 2:9.



Innovations in printing
and courageous Bible translators
helped loosen Babylon's grip
(See paragraphs 12, 13)



no compassion for young man or virgin, old or infirm. . . . He burned down the house of the true God, tore down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its fortified towers with fire, and destroyed everything of value.”—2 Chron. 36: 17, 19.

2 The destruction of Jerusalem should have come as no surprise to its inhabitants. For years, God’s prophets had warned the Jews that if they continued to disregard God’s Law, they would be delivered into the hands of the Babylonians. Many Jews would die by the edge of the sword; any who escaped death would likely have to spend the rest of their lives in exile in Babylon. (Jer. 15:2) What was life like for exiles there? Does the Babylonian captivity find a parallel in Christian times? If so, when?

2. What warning of Jerusalem’s impending destruction did Jehovah give, and what would happen to the Jews?

LIFE IN EXILE

3 What the prophets had foretold came to pass. Through Jeremiah, Jehovah advised the future exiles to accept their new situation and make the most of it. He said: “Build houses [in Babylon] and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their fruit. And seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you, and pray in its behalf to Jehovah, for in its peace you will have peace.” (Jer. 29:5, 7) Those who submitted to the will of God lived a relatively normal life in Babylon. Their captors allowed them to administer their own affairs to some extent. The exiles even had freedom to move about the country. Babylon was a center of trade and commerce in the ancient world, and documents that have been unearthed indicate that many Jews learned the art of buying

3. How did exile in Babylon differ from the slavery the Israelites had experienced in Egypt?

and selling there, while others became skilled craftsmen. Some Jews even became prosperous. Exile in Babylon was nothing like the slavery in Egypt that the Israelites had experienced centuries before.—Read Exodus 2:23-25.

4 Although the material needs of the exiled Jews were being met, what of their spiritual needs? Jehovah's temple with its altar had been destroyed, and the priesthood was no longer functioning in an organized manner. Among the exiles were faithful servants of God who had done nothing deserving of punishment, but they had to suffer along with the rest of the nation. Nevertheless, they did what they could to observe God's Law. For example, in Babylon, Daniel and three of his companions—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—abstained from foods that were

4. Besides rebellious Israelites, who were affected by captivity in Babylon, and what limitations were placed on their ability to worship God acceptably?

forbidden to Jews. And we know that Daniel maintained regular communication with God in prayer. (Dan. 1:8; 6:10) Still, under a pagan administration, it was impossible for a God-fearing Jew to do everything the Law required.

5 Would the Israelites ever again be able to worship God in a completely acceptable way? At the time, it seemed most unlikely that they would. Babylon never released its captives. That policy, however, did not take Jehovah God into account. He had promised that his people would be liberated, and so they were. God's word of promise never fails.—Isa. 55:11.

IS THERE A MODERN-DAY PARALLEL?

6 Have Christians ever experienced anything comparable to the Babylonian captivity? For

5. What hope did Jehovah give his people, and why was this promise remarkable?

6, 7. Why is it appropriate for us to clarify our understanding of the modern-day Babylonian captivity?

many years, this journal suggested that God's modern-day servants entered into Babylonian captivity in 1918 and that they were released from Babylon in 1919. However, for the reasons that we shall outline in this article and in the one following, a reexamination of the subject was necessary.

7 Consider: Babylon the Great is the world empire of false religion. Thus, in order to be subject to Babylonian captivity in 1918, God's people would have had to become enslaved to false religion in some way at that time. The facts show, however, that in the decades leading up to World War I, God's anointed servants were actually breaking free from Babylon the Great, not becoming enslaved to it. While it is true that the anointed were persecuted during the first world war, the tribulation they experienced was caused mainly by the *secular authorities*, not by Bab-

ylon the Great. So it does not really seem that Jehovah's people entered into captivity to Babylon the Great in 1918.

BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY—BUT WHEN?

8 At Pentecost 33 C.E., thousands of Jews and proselytes were anointed with holy spirit. These new Christians became “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession.” (Read 1 Peter 2:9, 10.) The apostles kept careful watch over the congregations of God's people as long as they lived. However, especially after the death of the apostles, men arose who spoke “twisted things” in order to “draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:30; 2 Thess. 2:6-8) Many of these men had responsible positions in the congregations, serving as overseers and later as “bishops.” A clergy class

8. Explain how genuine Christianity came to be corrupted. (See opening picture of the standard edition.)

was taking shape, although Jesus had said to his followers: “All of you are brothers.” (Matt. 23:8) Prominent men who were enamored of the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato introduced false religious ideas, gradually replacing the pure teachings of God’s Word.

9 In 313 C.E., this apostate form of Christianity was granted legal recognition by the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine. From that time on, Church and State began working hand in hand. For example, after the Council of Nicaea, Constantine, who was present at the council, ordered Arius, a dissenting priest, into exile because Arius refused to acknowledge Jesus as God. Later, under Emperor Theodosius I (379-395 C.E.), the Catholic Church, as the contaminated form of Christianity came to be known, be-

9. Describe how apostate Christianity received the backing of the Roman State and what resulted.

came the official religion of the Roman Empire. Historians refer to pagan Rome as having been “Christianized” in the fourth century. The truth is that by that time an apostate form of Christianity had joined the pagan religious organizations of the Roman Empire as members of Babylon the Great. Even so, a small number of anointed wheatlike Christians were doing their best to worship God, but their voices were being drowned out. (Read Matthew 13:24, 25, 37-39.) They truly were in Babylonian captivity!

10 Still, for the first few centuries of our Common Era, many people could read the Bible in either Greek or Latin. They were thus in a position to compare the teachings of God’s Word with the dogmas of the church. On the basis of what they read in the Bible, some among them rejected

10. On what basis could sincere people question church teachings during the first few centuries of our Common Era?

the unscriptural creeds of the church, but it was dangerous—even fatal—to express such opinions openly.

11 In time, Bible languages fell into disuse by the masses, and the church opposed efforts to translate God’s Word into the common tongues. As a result, only the clergy and some other educated people could read the Bible for themselves, although not all of the clergy could read and write well. Any dissent from what the church taught was severely punished. Faithful anointed servants of God had to meet together in discreet groups—if they could meet at all. As was the case in the earlier Babylonian exile, the anointed “royal priesthood” could not function in an organized way. Babylon the Great held the people in a vise-like grip!

11. How did the Bible come to be under the control of the clergy?

THE LIGHT BEGINS TO APPEAR

12 Would true Christians ever be free to worship God openly and acceptably? Yes! Glimmers of spiritual light began to penetrate the darkness, thanks to two important factors. The first was the invention in the mid-15th century of a printing press that used movable type. Before printing was brought to the Western world, the Bible was painstakingly copied by hand. Copies of the Bible were rare and expensive. It has been said that it would take ten months for a skilled copyist to produce just one handwritten copy of the Bible! In addition, the materials on which the copyists wrote (vellum or parchment) were costly. In contrast, using a press and paper—a more practical alternative—a skilled printer could produce 1,300 pages per day!

12, 13. What two factors contributed to a slight loosening of the grip of Babylon the Great on the people? Explain.

13 The second notable factor was the decision by a few courageous men at the dawn of the 16th century to translate God's Word into the languages spoken by the common people. Many translators undertook this work at the risk of their lives. The church was horrified. A Bible in the hands of a God-fearing man or woman could be a dangerous weapon—or so the church leaders feared! And as the Bible became available, people did read it. As they read, they asked questions: 'Where in God's Word is there mention of purgatory? of paid masses for the dead? of popes and cardinals?' From the point of view of the church, this was an outrage. How dare the multitudes question church leaders! The church fought back. Men and women were condemned for heresy because they rejected teachings of the church, some of which were based on the pagan philosophies of Aristotle and Plato—men who lived be-

fore Jesus Christ was born. The church handed down the death sentence; the State carried it out. The goal was to discourage people from reading the Bible and questioning the church. For the most part, the scheme worked. Nevertheless, a few brave souls refused to be cowed by Babylon the Great. They had now had a taste of God's Word—and they wanted more! The stage was being set for a future deliverance from false religion.

14 Many who thirsted for Bible truth fled to countries where the influence of the church was less pervasive. They wanted to read and study and converse with one another without being told what to think. It was in one such country, the United States, that Charles Taze Russell and a few associates began their systematic study of the

14. (a) What conditions contributed to a greater understanding of Bible truth in the late 1800's? (b) Describe Brother Russell's quest for the truth.

Bible in the late 1800's. Initially, Brother Russell's goal was to ascertain which of the prevailing religions was teaching the truth. He had carefully compared the teachings of many different religions, even non-Christian religions, with what the Bible says. He soon realized that not one of those religions completely adhered to God's Word. At one point, he met with a number of local clergymen in hopes that these men would accept the truths that Russell and his associates had discovered from the Bible and teach them to members of their congregations. The clergymen were not interested. The Bible Students would have to face the facts: There could be no partnership with those determined to hold on to false religion.—Read 2 Corinthians 6:14.

15 Thus far we have seen that true Christians

15. (a) When did Christians come under the yoke of Babylon the Great? (b) What questions remain for the next article to answer?

came into Babylonian captivity soon after the death of the last of the apostles. However, a number of questions arise: What additional evidence is there that in the decades leading up to 1914, the anointed were actually breaking free from Babylon the Great, no longer being enslaved by her? Is it true that Jehovah was displeased with his servants because they had slowed down in their preaching activity during World War I? And did some of our brothers during that period compromise their Christian neutrality and thereby incur Jehovah's displeasure? Finally, if Christians went into bondage to false religion from the second century C.E. onward, when did they get freed? Excellent questions these. They will be answered in the next article.

Join in the Kingdom Song!

(Psalm 98:1)

1. This is a song, a happy song of vict'ry;
It magnifies the One who is supreme.
The words give hope and prompt all to be loyal.
Come sing with us; enjoy its Kingdom theme:

(CHORUS)

*'Come worship God Before his throne.
His Son is King; Let's make it known!
Come learn this song, this song about the Kingdom;
Bow down to God, and praise his holy name.'*

2. With this new song, we advertise the Kingdom.
Christ Jesus rules; the earth is his domain.
And as foretold, there is a newborn nation:
The Kingdom heirs, who welcome Jesus' reign:

(Chorus)

3. This Kingdom song, all humble ones can master.
The words are clear, their message warm and bright.
In all the earth, a multitude have learned it,
And they in turn still others now invite:

(Chorus)