

- Song 27 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Jehovah Foretold the New Covenant”:** (10 min.)
 Jer 31:31—The new covenant was foretold centuries in advance (*it-1* 524 ¶3-4)
 Jer 31:32, 33—The new covenant is different from the Law covenant (*jr* 173-174 ¶11-12)
 Jer 31:34—The new covenant makes possible complete forgiveness of sins (*jr* 177 ¶18)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Jer 29:4, 7—Why were Jewish exiles commanded to “seek the peace” of Babylon, and how can we apply the principle? (*w96* 5/1 11 ¶5)

Jer 29:10—How does this verse demonstrate the accuracy of Bible prophecy? (*g* 6/12 14 ¶1-2)

What has this week’s Bible reading taught you about Jehovah?

What other spiritual gems have you discovered in this week’s Bible reading?

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Jer 31:31-40

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

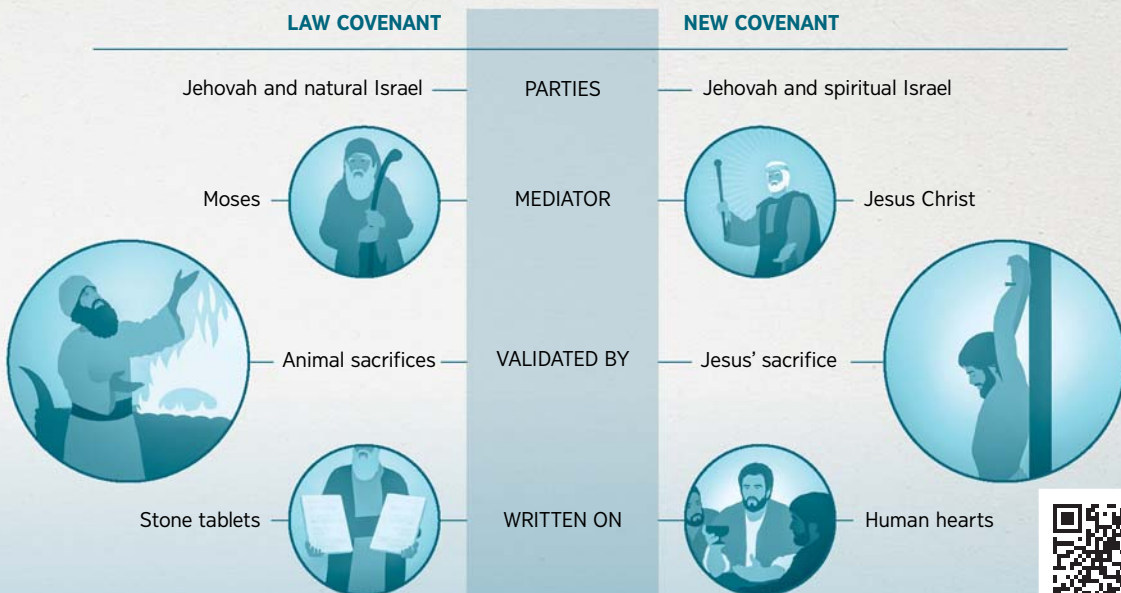
- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) Mt 6:10—Teach the Truth.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Isa 9:6, 7; Re 16:14-16—Teach the Truth.
- **Talk:** (6 min. or less) *w14* 12/15 21—Theme: What Did Jeremiah Mean When He Spoke of Rachel’s Weeping Over Her Sons?

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 129
- **Convention Reminders:** (15 min.) Talk. Review pertinent points from the April 2016 *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, pages 6 and 8. Play the video *Convention Reminders* (video category OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY). Encourage parents to write their cell phone number on the back of the badge card of their young children. This will help attendants to contact the parents if a child gets lost. Generate enthusiasm for the 2017 regional convention.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 11 ¶22-28, review box on p. 117
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 89 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 29-31 | Jehovah Foretold the New Covenant

Jehovah foretold that the Law covenant would be replaced by a new covenant with everlasting benefits.



27 *The Revealing of God's Sons* (Romans 8:19)

1. The time is near when God reveals
 His faithful chosen ones.
In heaven they will rule with Christ
 As mighty spirit sons.

(CHORUS)

*The sons of God will be revealed
 Along with Christ, their Lord.
They'll join him in his victory
 And share in his reward.*

2. And soon the last remaining ones
 Will hear his final call.
The King of kings and Lord of lords
 Will then collect them all.

(Chorus)

(BRIDGE)

And then with Christ, these sons of God
 Will wage the final war.
The joyous marriage to the Lamb
 Will last forevermore.

(Chorus)

Jeremiah 29-31

29 These are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the rest of the elders among the exiled people, the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Neb·u·chad·nez'zar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, ² after King Jec·o·ni'ah, the queen mother, the court officials, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the craftsmen and the metalworkers had gone out of Jerusalem. ³ He sent the letter by the hand of El·a'sah the son of Sha'phan and Gem·a·ri'ah the son of Hil·ki'ah, whom King Zed·e·ki'ah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Neb·u·chad·nez'zar of Babylon. It said:

⁴ “This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says to all the exiled people, whom I have caused to go into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon, ⁵ ‘Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their fruit.

⁶ Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Become many there, and do not decrease. ⁷ 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. ⁸ For this is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: “Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to

the dreams that they are dreaming. ⁹ For ‘they are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,’ declares Jehovah.””

¹⁰ “For this is what Jehovah says, ‘When 70 years at Babylon are fulfilled, I will turn my attention to you, and I will make good my promise by bringing you back to this place.’

¹¹ “‘For I well know the thoughts that I am thinking toward you,’ declares Jehovah, ‘thoughts of peace, and not of calamity, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² And you will call me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.’

¹³ “‘You will seek me and find me, for you will search for me with all your heart. ¹⁴ And I will let you find me,’ declares Jehovah. ‘And I will gather your captives and collect you together out of all the nations and places to which I have dispersed you,’ declares Jehovah. ‘And I will bring you back to the place from which I caused you to go into exile.’

¹⁵ “But you have said, ‘Jehovah has raised up prophets for us in Babylon.’

¹⁶ “For this is what Jehovah says to the king sitting on the throne of David and to all the people dwelling in this city, your brothers who have not gone with you into exile, ¹⁷ ‘This is what Jehovah of armies says: “Here I am sending against them the sword, the famine, and

the pestilence, and I will make them like rotten figs that are so bad they cannot be eaten.”

¹⁸ “And I will pursue them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, and I will make them an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth, and a curse, and an object of astonishment, something to whistle at, and a reproach among all the nations to which I disperse them, ¹⁹ because they have not listened to my words that I sent to them with my servants the prophets,’ declares Jehovah, ‘sending them again and again.’

“But you have not listened,’ declares Jehovah.

²⁰ “Therefore, hear the word of Jehovah, all you exiled people, whom I have sent away from Jerusalem to Babylon. ²¹ This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says concerning A'hab the son of Ko-lai'ah and concerning Zed·e·ki'ah the son of Ma·a·sei'ah, who are prophesying lies to you in my name, ‘Here I am giving them into the hand of King Neb·u·chad·nez'zar of Babylon, and he will strike them down before your eyes. ²² And what happens to them will become a curse spoken by all the exiles of Judah in Babylon: “May Jehovah make you like Zed·e·ki'ah and like A'hab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire!” ²³ for they have acted disgracefully in Israel, committing adultery with the wives of their neighbors

and speaking false words in my name that I did not command them.

““I am the One who knows, and I am a witness,” declares Jehovah.””

²⁴ “And to She-mai'ah of Ne-hel'am you will say,
²⁵ ‘This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: “Because you sent in your name letters to all the people who are in Jerusalem, to Zeph-a-ni'ah son of Ma-a-sei'ah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying,
²⁶ ‘Jehovah has made you priest instead of Je-hoi'a-da the priest to become the overseer of the house of Jehovah, to be in charge of any madman who acts like a prophet and to put him into the stocks and into the pillory; ²⁷ why, then, have you not rebuked Jeremiah of An'a-thoth, who is acting as a prophet for you? ²⁸ For he even sent to us at Babylon, saying: “It will be a long time! Build houses and live in them. Plant gardens and eat their fruit,—”””””

²⁹ When Zeph-a-ni'ah the priest read this letter in the hearing of Jeremiah the prophet, ³⁰ the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying: ³¹ “Send to all the exiled people, saying, ‘This is what Jehovah says concerning She-mai'ah of Ne-hel'am: “Because She-mai'ah prophesied to you, though I did not send him, and he tried to make you trust in lies, ³² therefore this is what Jehovah says, ‘Here I am turning my attention to She-mai'ah of Ne-hel'am and his

descendants. Not one man of his will survive among this people, and he will not see the good that I will do for my people,' declares Jehovah, 'for he has urged rebellion against Jehovah.'""

30 The word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying: ² "This is what Jehovah the God of Israel says, 'Write in a book all the words that I speak to you. ³ For "look! the days are coming," declares Jehovah, "when I will gather the captives of my people, Israel and Judah," says Jehovah, "and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers, and they will possess it once again.'""

⁴ These are the words that Jehovah spoke to Israel and Judah.

⁵ This is what Jehovah says:

"We have heard the sounds of trembling;
There is terror, and no peace.

⁶ Ask, please, whether a man can give birth.
Why, then, do I see every strong man with his
hands on his stomach
Like a woman giving birth?
Why has every face turned pale?

⁷ Alas! For that day is a terrible one.
There is none like it,
A time of distress for Jacob.
But he will be saved out of it."

⁸ “And in that day,” declares Jehovah of armies, “I will break the yoke from off your neck, and your straps I will tear in two; and no more will strangers make him their slave. ⁹ They will serve Jehovah their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.”

¹⁰ “And you, my servant Jacob, do not be afraid,” declares Jehovah,
“And do not be terrified, O Israel.
For I will save you from far away
And your offspring from the land of their captivity.
Jacob will return and be calm and undisturbed,
With no one to make them afraid.”

¹¹ “For I am with you,” declares Jehovah, “to save you.
But I will make an extermination among all the nations to which I scattered you;
However, you I will not exterminate.
I will discipline you to the proper degree,
And I will by no means leave you unpunished.”

¹² For this is what Jehovah says:
“There is no cure for your breakdown.
Your wound is incurable.

¹³ There is no one to plead your cause,
No means of healing your ulcer.
There is no cure for you.

¹⁴ All your passionate lovers have forgotten you.

They no longer seek you out.
For with the stroke of an enemy I have struck
you,
With the punishment of someone cruel,
Because of your great guilt and your many sins.

¹⁵ Why do you cry out because of your breakdown?
Your pain is incurable!
Because of your great guilt and your many sins
I have done this to you.

¹⁶ Therefore all those devouring you will be devoured,
And all your enemies will also go into captivity.
Those pillaging you will be pillaged,
And I will hand all those plundering you over to
plundering.”

¹⁷ “But I will restore your health and heal your
wounds,” declares Jehovah,
“Though they called you an outcast:
‘Zion, for whom no one searches.’”

¹⁸ This is what Jehovah says:
“Here I am gathering the captives of the tents of
Jacob,
And I will have pity for his tabernacles.
The city will be rebuilt on her mound,
And the fortified tower will stand on its rightful
site.

- ¹⁹ And from them will come thanksgiving and the sounds of laughter.
I will multiply them, and they will not be few;
I will make them numerous,
And they will not be insignificant.
- ²⁰ His sons will become as in the past,
And before me his assembly will be firmly established.
I will deal with all his oppressors.
- ²¹ His majestic one will be one of his own,
And from his midst his ruler will emerge.
I will cause him to come near, and he will approach me.”
“For otherwise, who would dare to approach me?” declares Jehovah.
- ²² “And you will become my people, and I will be your God.”
- ²³ Look! A windstorm of Jehovah will burst out in fury,
A sweeping tempest that whirls down on the head of the wicked.
- ²⁴ The burning anger of Jehovah will not turn back
Until he has carried out and accomplished the intentions of his heart.
In the final part of the days you will understand this.

31 “At that time,” declares Jehovah, “I will become God to all the families of Israel, and they will become my people.”

² This is what Jehovah says:

“The people who survived the sword found favor
in the wilderness
When Israel was walking to his resting-place.”

³ From far away Jehovah appeared to me and said:
“I have loved you with an everlasting love.
That is why I have drawn you to me with loyal
love.

⁴ Yet again I will rebuild you and you will be rebuilt.
O virgin of Israel, you will again take up your
tambourines
And go forth dancing joyfully.

⁵ You will again plant vineyards in the mountains of
Sa-mar'i-a;
The planters will plant and enjoy their fruit.

⁶ For the day will come when the watchmen in the
mountains of E'phra-im will call out:
‘Rise up, let us go up to Zion, to Jehovah our
God.’”

⁷ For this is what Jehovah says:
“Cry out to Jacob with rejoicing.
Shout for joy because you are over the nations.
Proclaim it; offer praise and say,

‘O Jehovah, save your people, the remnant of Israel.’

⁸ I am bringing them back from the land of the north.
I will gather them together from the remotest parts of the earth.

Among them will be the blind and the lame,
The pregnant woman and the one giving birth, all together.

As a great congregation they will return here.

⁹ They will come weeping.

I will lead them as they beg for favor.

I will guide them to streams of water,

On a level path that will not make them stumble.

For I am a Father to Israel, and E'phra·im is my firstborn.”

¹⁰ Hear the word of Jehovah, you nations,

And proclaim it among the islands far away:

“The One who scattered Israel will gather him together.

He will watch over him as a shepherd does his flock.

¹¹ For Jehovah will redeem Jacob

And rescue him out of the hand of the one stronger than he is.

¹² They will come and shout joyfully on the height of Zion

And become radiant over the goodness of
Jehovah,
Over the grain and the new wine and the oil,
And over the young of the flock and the herd.
They will become like a well-watered garden,
And they will never languish again.”

13 “At that time the virgin will dance joyfully,
Also the young men and the old men together.
I will change their mourning into exultation.
I will comfort them and give them joy instead of
their grief.

14 I will satisfy the priests with plenty,
And my people will be satisfied with my
goodness,” declares Jehovah.

15 “This is what Jehovah says:
‘A voice is heard in Ra'mah, lamentation and
bitter weeping:
Rachel is weeping over her sons.
She has refused to be comforted over her sons,
Because they are no more.’”

16 This is what Jehovah says:
“‘Hold back your voice from weeping and your
eyes from tears,
For there is a reward for your activity,’ declares
Jehovah.
‘They will return from the land of the enemy.’

- 17 ‘And there is a hope for your future,’ declares
Jehovah.
‘Your sons will return to their own territory.’”
- 18 “I have surely heard E'phra-im's moaning,
‘You have corrected me, and I have been
corrected,
Like a calf that has not been trained.
Bring me back, and I will readily turn back,
For you are Jehovah my God.
- 19 For after my turning back I felt remorse;
After I was made to understand I struck my thigh
in grief.
I was ashamed and humiliated,
For I bore the reproach of my youth.’”
- 20 “Is E'phra-im not a precious son to me, a beloved
child?
For as often as I speak against him, I do
remember him still.
That is why my emotions are stirred for him.
And I will surely have pity on him,” declares
Jehovah.
- 21 “Set up road markers for yourself,
And put up signposts.
Pay attention to the highway, the way that you
have to go.

Return, O virgin of Israel, return to these cities of yours.

²² How long will you waver, O unfaithful daughter? For Jehovah has created something new in the earth:

A woman will eagerly pursue a man.”

²³ This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, says: “They will again say these words in the land of Judah and in its cities when I gather back their captives: ‘May Jehovah bless you, O righteous dwelling place, O holy mountain.’ ²⁴ And in it Judah and all its cities will dwell all together, farmers and those who lead the flocks. ²⁵ For I will satisfy the weary one and fill each one who is languishing.”

²⁶ At this I awoke and opened my eyes, and my sleep had been pleasurable to me.

²⁷ “Look! The days are coming,” declares Jehovah, “when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and with the seed of livestock.”

²⁸ “And just as I watched over them to uproot, to pull down, to tear down, to destroy, and to do harm, so I will watch over them to build up and to plant,” declares Jehovah. ²⁹ “In those days they will no longer say, ‘The fathers ate sour grapes, but the teeth of the sons were set on edge.’ ³⁰ But then each one will die for his own

error. Any man eating sour grapes will have his own teeth set on edge.”

³¹ “Look! The days are coming,” declares Jehovah, “when I will make with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their forefathers on the day I took hold of their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, ‘my covenant that they broke, although I was their true master,’ declares Jehovah.”

³³ “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares Jehovah. “I will put my law within them, and in their heart I will write it. And I will become their God, and they will become my people.”

³⁴ “And they will no longer teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know Jehovah!’ for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them,” declares Jehovah. “For I will forgive their error, and I will no longer remember their sin.”

³⁵ This is what Jehovah says,
Who gives the sun for light by day,
The laws of the moon and the stars for light by
night,
Who stirs up the sea and makes its waves
boisterous,
Whose name is Jehovah of armies:

³⁶ “‘If these regulations should ever fail,’ declares Jehovah,
‘Only then would the offspring of Israel cease as a nation before me always.’”

³⁷ This is what Jehovah says: “‘If the heavens above could be measured and the foundations of the earth below could be explored, only then could I reject all the offspring of Israel for all they have done,’ declares Jehovah.”

³⁸ “Look! The days are coming,” declares Jehovah, “when the city will be built to Jehovah from the Tower of Ha·nan'el to the Corner Gate. ³⁹ And the measuring line will go out straight ahead to the hill of Ga'reb, and it will turn toward Go'ah. ⁴⁰ And all the valley of the carcasses and of ashes and all the terraces as far as the Kid'ron Valley, clear to the corner of the Horse Gate toward the east, will be something holy to Jehovah. It will never again be uprooted or torn down.”

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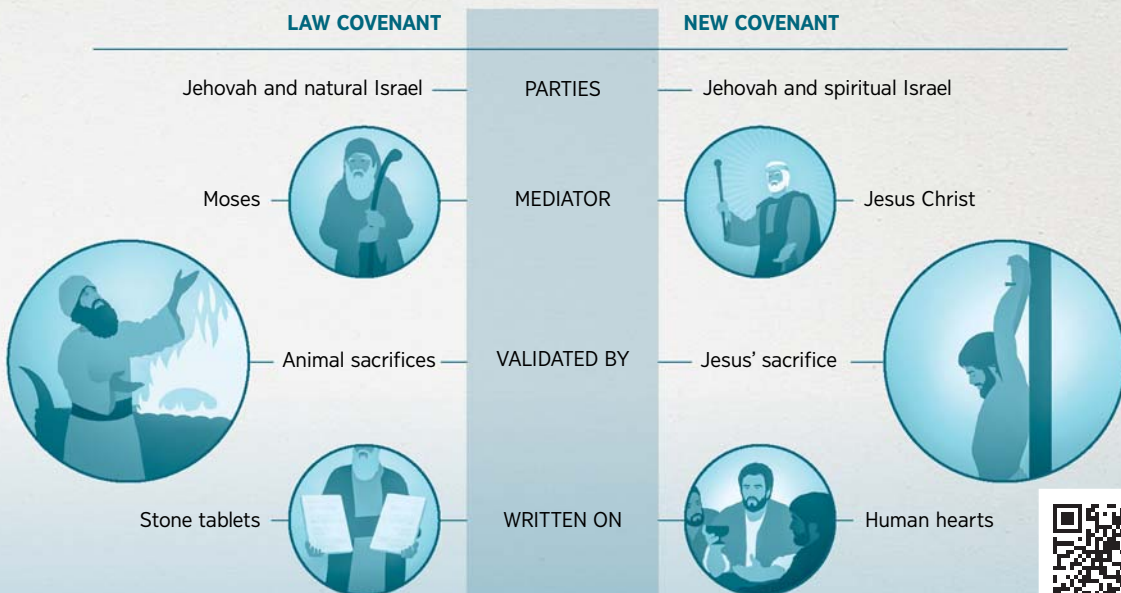
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JEREMIAH 29-31 | Jehovah Foretold the New Covenant

Jehovah foretold that the Law covenant would be replaced by a new covenant with everlasting benefits.



April 24-30

Living as Christians

Jeremiah 31:31—The new covenant was foretold centuries in advance

Reference: it-1 524 **paragraphs 3-4.**

New Covenant. Jehovah foretold the new covenant by the prophet Jeremiah in the seventh century B.C.E., stating that it would not be like the Law covenant, which Israel broke. (**Jeremiah 31:31-34**) On the night before his death, Nisan 14, 33 C.E., when he established the celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal, Jesus Christ announced the new covenant, to be validated by his sacrifice. (**Luke 22:20**) On the 50th day from his resurrection and 10 days after he had ascended to his Father, he poured out the holy spirit, which he had received from Jehovah, on his disciples gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem.—**Acts 2:1-4, 17, 33; 2 Corinthians 3:6, 8, 9; Hebrews 2:3,4.**

The parties to the new covenant are Jehovah, on one side, and “the Israel of God,” the spirit-begotten ones in union with Christ, making up his congregation or body, on the other side. (**Hebrews 8:10; 12:22-24; Galatians 6:15, 16; 3:26-28; Romans 2:28, 29**) The new covenant is made operative by the shed blood (the sacrifice of the human life) of Jesus Christ, the value of which was presented to Jehovah after Jesus' ascension to heaven. (**Matthew 26:28**) When one

is selected by God for the heavenly calling (**Hebrews 3:1**), God brings that one into His covenant over Christ's sacrifice. (**Psalm 50:5; Hebrews 9:14, 15, 26**) Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant (**Hebrews 8:6; 9:15**) and is the primary Seed of Abraham. (**Galatians 3:16**) By means of Jesus' mediatorship of the new covenant, he assists those in the covenant to become part of the *real* seed of Abraham (**Hebrews 2:16; Galatians 3:29**) through forgiveness of their sins. Jehovah declares them righteous.—**Romans 5:1, 2; 8:33; Hebrews 10:16, 17.**

Jeremiah 31:32, 33—The new covenant is different from the Law covenant

Reference: jr 173-174 **paragraphs 11-12.**

11 Would you like to know other distinctive aspects of the new covenant? One major difference between it and the Mosaic Law covenant is what they were written on. (Read Jeremiah 31:33.) The Ten Commandments of the Law covenant were written on stone tablets, which eventually disappeared. In contrast, Jeremiah prophesied that the law of the new covenant would be written in human hearts, and it would endure. Those who are parties to the new covenant, anointed Christians, truly appreciate this law. What of those who are not directly in the new covenant, the “other sheep,” who hope to live forever on earth? (John 10:16) These too delight in God's law. In a sense, they are like the alien

residents in Israel, who accepted and benefited from the Mosaic Law.—**Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:15.**

12 How would you reply if asked, ‘What is this law that is inscribed in the heart of anointed Christians?’ Well, this law is also called “the law of the Christ.” It was first given to spiritual Israelites, those in the new covenant. (**Galatians 6:2; Romans 2:28, 29**) You could sum up “the law of the Christ” in one word: love. (**Matthew 22:36-39**) How do those of the anointed get this law written in their heart? Key ways are by their studying God’s Word and approaching Jehovah in prayer. Accordingly, those aspects of true worship should be regular features of the lives of all true Christians, even those who are not in the new covenant but who want to benefit from it.

Jeremiah 31:34—The new covenant makes possible complete forgiveness of sins

Reference: jr 177 **paragraph 18.**

Accordingly, the new covenant highlights a wonderful aspect of Jehovah’s dealings with sinful humans, both the anointed, who are in the covenant, and those with an earthly hope. You can trust that once Jehovah has dealt with your sins, he will not bring them up again. God’s promise about the new covenant thus offers a lesson for each of us. Ask yourself, ‘Do I try to imitate Jehovah by not dredging up the

offenses of others, errors that I have already said I forgave?’ (Matthew 6:14, 15) This applies to small offenses as well as to very serious ones, such as a Christian mate’s sin of adultery. If the innocent one agrees to forgive the repentant adulterer, is it not right to ‘remember the sin no more’? Granted, our putting errors behind us may not be easy, yet it is one way that we can imitate Jehovah.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Jeremiah 29:4, 7—Why were Jewish exiles commanded to “seek the peace” of Babylon, and how can we apply the principle?

Reference: w96 5/1 11 paragraph 5.

Centuries later the faithful prophet Jeremiah was inspired by Jehovah to tell Jewish exiles to submit to the rulers when in exile in Babylon and even to pray for the peace of that city. In his letter to them, he wrote: “This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, has said to all the exiled people, . . . ‘Seek the peace of the city to which I have caused you to go into exile, and pray in its behalf to Jehovah, for in its peace there will prove to be peace for you yourselves.’” (Jeremiah 29:4, 7) At all times Jehovah’s people have reason to “seek peace” for themselves and the nation where they live, in order to have freedom to worship Jehovah.—1 Peter 3:11.

Jeremiah 29:10—How does this verse demonstrate the accuracy of Bible prophecy?

Reference: g 6/12 14 **paragraphs 1-2.**

Fulfillment: After 70 years of exile, from 607 to 537 B.C.E., King Cyrus of Persia released the Jewish captives and allowed them to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.—Ezra 1:2-4.

What history reveals:

- Did the Israelites remain captive in Babylon for 70 years as the Bible foretold? Note the comments of a leading Israeli archaeologist, Ephraim Stern. “From 604 B.C.E. to 538 B.C.E.—there is a complete gap in evidence suggesting occupation. In all that time, not a single town destroyed by the Babylonians was resettled.” The so-called gap in which there was no occupation or resettling of conquered territory corresponds closely to Israel’s exile in Babylon from 607 to 537 B.C.E.—**2 Chronicles 36:20, 21.**

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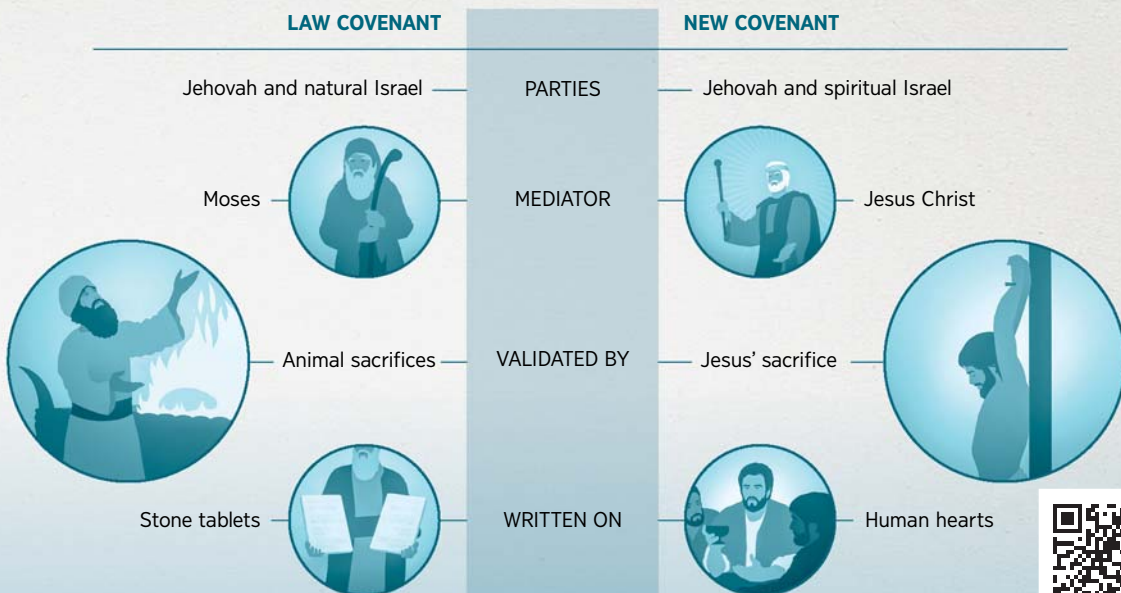
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- **Talk:** (6 min. or less) *w14* 12/15 21—Theme: What Did Jeremiah Mean When He Spoke of Rachel’s Weeping Over Her Sons?

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 129
- **Convention Reminders:** (15 min.) Talk. Review pertinent points from the April 2016 *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, pages 6 and 8. Play the video *Convention Reminders* (video category OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY). Encourage parents to write their cell phone number on the back of the badge card of their young children. This will help attendants to contact the parents if a child gets lost. Generate enthusiasm for the 2017 regional convention.
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *kr* chap. 11 ¶22-28, review box on p. 117
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 89 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 29-31 | Jehovah Foretold the New Covenant

Jehovah foretold that the Law covenant would be replaced by a new covenant with everlasting benefits.



QUESTIONS FROM READERS

What did Jeremiah mean when he spoke of Rachel's weeping over her sons?

▪ At Jeremiah 31:15, we read: “This is what Jehovah says: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping: Rachel is weeping over her sons. She has refused to be comforted over her sons, because they are no more.’”

Rachel's two sons did not die before she did. Consequently, what Jeremiah recorded 1,000 years after Rachel's death might seem to be inaccurate.

Rachel's first son was Joseph. (Gen. 30:22-24) Later, she had another son, who was named Benjamin. But Rachel died giving birth to that second son. Therefore, the question arises: Why does Jeremiah 31:15 say that she was weeping because her sons were “no more”?

It is noteworthy that the first son, Joseph, in time fathered Manasseh and Ephraim. (Gen. 41:50-52; 48:13-20) Later, Ephraim was the most prominent and influential tribe of the entire northern kingdom of Israel and came to represent all ten tribes. On the other hand, the tribe that descended from Rachel's second son, Benjamin, became part of the southern kingdom, along with Judah. In a sense, then, Rachel could be

spoken of as a symbol of *all* the mothers of Israel, of the northern kingdom and the southern one.

By the time the book of Jeremiah was written, the northern ten-tribe kingdom had already fallen to the Assyrians and many of its people had been taken away captive. However, some of Ephraim's descendants may have fled to the territory of Judah. In 607 B.C.E., the Babylonians conquered the southern two-tribe kingdom of Judah. It appears that as part of that conquest, many captives were assembled at Ramah, some five miles (8 km) north of Jerusalem. (Jer. 40:1) Perhaps some were slaughtered there in the territory of Benjamin where Rachel was buried. (1 Sam. 10:2) So Rachel's weeping over her sons could imply her figuratively mourning over the Benjamites in general or particularly those of Ramah. Another possibility is that it suggested that all the mothers of God's people wept over the death or exiling of Israel.

In any case, Jeremiah's expression concerning Rachel's weeping over her sons was prophetic of what happened centuries later when the life of young Jesus was in danger. King Herod commanded that all the boys up to two years old in Bethlehem, which was on the south side of Jerusalem, be put to death. Thus, those sons were no more; they were dead. Imagine the cries of grief from the mothers bereft of their sons! It

was as if those cries could be heard as far as Ramah, on the north side of Jerusalem.—Matt. 2:16-18.

Consequently, both in Jeremiah's time and in Jesus' time, Rachel's weeping over her sons was fitting language to express the grief of Jewish mothers over their slain children. Of course, those who died and went to "the land of the enemy" death may return from the grip of that enemy when the dead are resurrected.—Jer. 31:16; 1 Cor. 15:26.

We Will Keep Enduring

(Matthew 24:13)

1. How can we endure

When trials come, as Jesus said?
Through his pain he saw
The joy of better things ahead.
God's promise, God's justice,
Were thoughts on which he fed.

(CHORUS)

*We need to have endurance.
Our faith we must defend.
His love is our assurance.
So we will keep enduring to the end.*

2. Though the passing years

May bring us sorrow, bring us pain;
There beyond the tears,
We see the life that we can gain.
To be there, feel free there,
Determined we remain.

(Chorus)

3. We will not give up

Nor see the need for doubt or fear.
Faithfully we'll serve
Until Jehovah's day is here.
Let's keep on enduring.
That time is very near.

(Chorus)

- Song 27 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“Jehovah Foretold the New Covenant”:** (10 min.)
 Jer 31:31—The new covenant was foretold centuries in advance (*it-1* 524 ¶3-4)
 Jer 31:32, 33—The new covenant is different from the Law covenant (*jr* 173-174 ¶11-12)
 Jer 31:34—The new covenant makes possible complete forgiveness of sins (*jr* 177 ¶18)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Jer 29:4, 7—Why were Jewish exiles commanded to “seek the peace” of Babylon, and how can we apply the principle? (*w96* 5/1 11 ¶5)

Jer 29:10—How does this verse demonstrate the accuracy of Bible prophecy? (*g* 6/12 14 ¶1-2)

What has this week’s Bible reading taught you about Jehovah?

What other spiritual gems have you discovered in this week’s Bible reading?

- **Bible Reading:** (4 min. or less) Jer 31:31-40

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

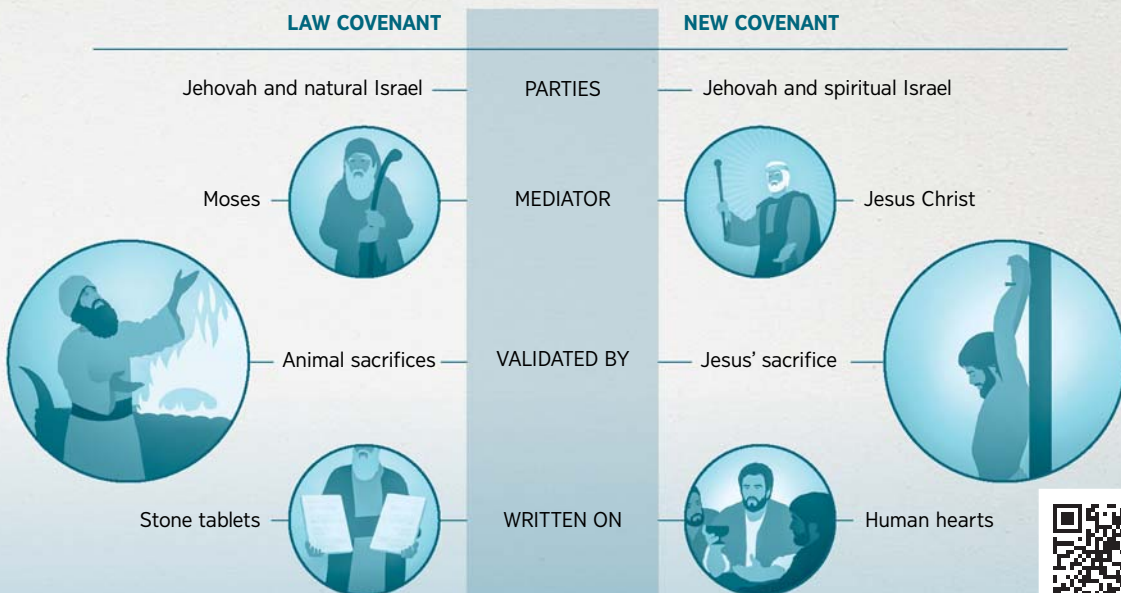
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- Song 129
- **Convention Reminders:** (15 min.) Talk. Review pertinent points from the April 2016 *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*, pages 6 and 8. Play the video *Convention Reminders* (video category OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY). Encourage parents to write their cell phone number on the back of the badge card of their young children. This will help attendants to contact the parents if a child gets lost. Generate enthusiasm for the 2017 regional convention.
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- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 89 and Prayer

JEREMIAH 29-31 | Jehovah Foretold the New Covenant

Jehovah foretold that the Law covenant would be replaced by a new covenant with everlasting benefits.



- Song 50 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

- **“A True Friend Gives Upbuilding Counsel”:** (10 min.)
 Job 33:1-5—Elihu showed respect for Job (*w95 2/15 29 ¶3-5*)
 Job 33:6, 7—Elihu was humble and kind (*w95 2/15 29 ¶3-5*)
 Job 33:24, 25—Elihu encouraged Job even while giving counsel (*w11 4/1 23 ¶3; w09 4/15 4 ¶8*)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)
 Job 33:24, 25—What might have been the “ransom” that Elihu mentioned? (*w11 4/1 23 ¶3-5*)

Job 34:36—To what extent was Job to be tested, and what does that teach us? (*w94 11/15 17 ¶10*)

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:** Job 33:1-25 (4 min. or less)

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** Offer the 2016 regional convention invitation using the sample presentation. (2 min. or less)
- **Return Visit:** *fg* lesson 12 ¶4-5—Demonstrate how to make a return visit on someone who accepted the convention invitation. Lay the groundwork for the next visit. (4 min. or less)
- **Bible Study:** *jl* lesson 11—Encourage the student to attend an upcoming convention. (6 min. or less)

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 124
- **“Convention Reminders”:** (8 min.) Talk. Play the video *Convention Reminders*. (Go to tv.jw.org, and look under VIDEO ON DEMAND > OUR ACTIVITIES.) Encourage all to finalize their plans to attend all three days. Outline local arrangements for the invitation campaign.
- **Local needs:** (7 min.)
- **Congregation Bible Study:** *ia* chap. 14 ¶1-13 (30 min.)
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 21 and Prayer

Convention Reminders

As at other times, we want to be guided by love for God and neighbor during the convention season. (Mt 22:37-39) First Corinthians 13:4-8 describes love in action: “Love is patient and kind. . . . [It] does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked. . . . Love never fails.” As you watch the video *Convention Reminders*, think about ways you can show love for others at the convention.

HOW CAN WE SHOW LOVE . . .



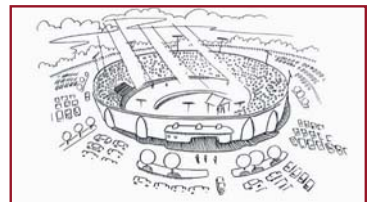
when saving seats?



when the musical program is about to begin?



at our lodgings in the convention city?



by volunteering to help?

Convention Invitation Campaign

Each year, anticipation builds for the spiritual feast that we enjoy at our regional conventions. So that others too may taste Jehovah's goodness, we will invite as many as possible to attend with us. (Ps 34:8) Each body of elders will determine how to make the best possible use of the invitations.

DETAILS TO KEEP IN MIND

When is my convention?

When does the campaign begin locally?

When are the local meetings for field service?

What are my goals for the campaign?

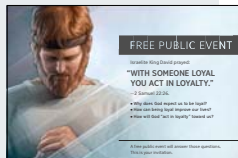
Whom do I plan to invite?



WHAT WILL YOU SAY?

After giving a customary greeting, you might say:

“We are involved in a global campaign to distribute this invitation to a very important event. The date, time, and address are printed on the invitation. We would enjoy having you present with us.”



HOW CAN YOU CULTIVATE INTEREST?

Although we want to invite as many people as possible to the convention, we should be alert to cultivate any interest shown.

On weekends, you may offer the magazine along with the invitation.



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thus assured of keeping Jehovah's favor. Remember, Jehovah promised: "No weapon formed against you will have any success." (Isa. 54:17) Do we loyally support the elders, who bear the heavy load of handling judicial cases?

Glorifying the One to Whom Every Family Owes Its Name

²² A third area in which Christ's followers have benefited from continual refinement has to do with marriage and family life. Has our view of the family been refined over the years? Yes. For example, when we read of God's servants in the early part of the 20th century, we cannot help but be impressed and even amazed at their spirit of self-sacrifice. We are profoundly grateful for the way they put their sacred service above all else in life. At the same time, though, we can readily see that more balance was needed. How so?

²³ It was not uncommon for brothers to undertake assignments in the ministry or the traveling work **22, 23. Why are we grateful to our fellow Christians of the early 20th century, yet what evidence is there that more balance was needed in regard to the family?**

that took them far from home for many months at a time. Marriage was, at times, discouraged with more force than the Scriptures warrant, while relatively little was said about how to build strong Christian marriages. Do the same conditions prevail among Christ's followers today? Hardly!

²⁴ Today, theocratic assignments are not to be pursued at the expense of family obligations. (**Read 1 Timothy 5:8.**) Further, Christ has ensured that his faithful followers on earth receive a steady stream of helpful, balanced Scriptural counsel regarding marriage and family life. (Eph. 3:14, 15) In 1978, the book *Making Your Family Life Happy* appeared. Some 18 years later came the book *The Secret of Family Happiness*. Moreover, *The Watchtower* has featured numerous articles designed to help married couples apply Scriptural principles in their relationship.

²⁵ And what about young ones? Through the years, their needs have received more and more atten-

24. How did Christ help his faithful people to gain a more balanced view of marriage and the family?

25-27. How have the needs of children of varying ages received ever greater attention through the years?

tion. Jehovah's organization has long provided good things for children of varying ages, but what was once a trickle has become a full, steady stream. For example, the "Juvenile Bible Study" feature appeared in *The Golden Age* from 1919 to 1921. After that came *The Golden Age ABC* brochure in 1920 and the book *Children* in 1941. In the 1970's, the books *Listening to the Great Teacher, Your Youth—Getting the Best out of It*, and *My Book of Bible Stories* were provided. In 1982, the *Awake!* series "Young People Ask" began, leading to the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, published in 1989.

²⁶ Today, we have two up-to-date volumes of *Young People Ask*, while the series continues on our Web site, jw.org. We also have the book *Learn From the Great Teacher*. Our Web site has plenty of features for the young, including Bible-character cards, Bible study activities for older and younger children, puzzles, videos, and illustrated Bible stories, as well as Bible lessons for children aged three and under. Clearly, Christ's view of young ones has not changed since he gathered the young children into his arms back in the first century. (Mark 10:13-16) He wants

the young ones among us to feel beloved and well-fed spiritually.

²⁷ Jesus also wants children to be protected from harm. As this morally degraded world has sunk deeper into depravity, the plague of child abuse has become more prevalent. Therefore, clear and direct material has been published to help parents keep their children safe from this vicious practice.*^[4]

²⁸ Is it not thrilling to contemplate how Christ has continued to refine his followers, training them to respect, live by, and benefit from Jehovah's lofty moral standards? Think again about the temple that Ezekiel saw in vision. Remember the lofty entrances. True, that temple is, not a physical place, but a spiritual one. Nevertheless, do we see it as real? We enter into it, not just by going to a Kingdom Hall or by opening a Bible or by ringing a doorbell in the ministry. Those are physical acts involving tangible things. A hypocrite could do those things without

^[4] For example, see chapter 32 of *Learn From the Great Teacher*; also see pages 3-11 of the October 2007 issue of *Awake!*

28. (a) What is required if we are to engage in pure worship, as illustrated by Ezekiel's temple vision? (b) What are you determined to do?

ever entering Jehovah's temple. However, if we do such things while at the same time living by Jehovah's exalted moral standards and taking part in pure worship with the right heart attitude, we have entered into and are serving in that most sacred of places—the arrangement for the pure worship of Jehovah God! Let us always cherish that precious privilege. Let us also keep doing our utmost to reflect Jehovah's holiness by upholding his righteous standards!

How Real Is the Kingdom to You?

- In what ways has Christ refined his followers as regards morals?
- How have Kingdom subjects been protected from the influence of willful wrongdoers?
- How has God's organization given ever greater attention to marriage and the family?
- Why should we be determined to adhere to the lofty moral standards required of pure worshippers?

89 *Listen, Obey, and Be Blessed*

(Luke 11:28)

1. If we have listened to Christ, will we show it?
His teaching shines as it shows us the way.
It makes us happy to hear and to know it,
But we'll be blessed if we know and obey.

(CHORUS)

*Listen, obey, and be blessed
When you hear God's will expressed.
If you'd be happy and enter his rest,
Listen, obey, and be blessed.*

2. Our way of life, like a house, gives protection
When it is built on the rock, not on sand.
If we apply Jesus' loving direction,
We'll build a life which on bedrock will stand.

(Chorus)

3. Just as a tree rooted deep by the waters
Gives of its fruit when each season arrives,
If we obey as God's own sons and daughters,
We'll all be blessed and enjoy endless lives.

(Chorus)

FEBRUARY 2017

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
APRIL 3-30, 2017

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

ETHIOPIA

A brother uses the Bible to share the Kingdom message with two villagers in the central highlands of Ethiopia. The men wear the handwoven cotton shawls typical of the area

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4 WEEK OF APRIL 3-9

Jehovah's Purpose Will Be Fulfilled!

16 WEEK OF APRIL 10-16

The Ransom—A “Perfect Present”
From the Father

Christ's ransom sacrifice is fundamental to our faith and to the outworking of Jehovah's original purpose for mankind. These two articles examine why the ransom became necessary, what it accomplished, and how we can show heartfelt gratitude for this most loving of all gifts from our heavenly Father.

POPULATION

99,391,000

PUBLISHERS

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

27 WEEK OF APRIL 17-23

Jehovah Leads His People

39 WEEK OF APRIL 24-30

Who Is Leading God's People Today?

For millenniums, Jehovah has directed men to take the lead. Why can we conclude that Jehovah has been supporting these men, and how do we know that he is backing the faithful and discreet slave today? These articles will consider three lines of evidence that have always identified God's representatives.

53 LIFE STORY

We Experienced God's
Undeserved Kindness in Many Ways

*Loyally Submitting
to Theocratic Order*
(1 Corinthians 14:33)

1. As Jehovah's people sound throughout the earth
Truths about the Kingdom and its priceless worth,
Theocratic order they must all obey
And remain united, loyalty display.

(CHORUS)

*Loyal submission in recognition,
This to our God we owe.
He gives protection, tender affection,
Loyalty to him we show.*

2. God provides his steward and his active force.
These will ever guide us in our Christian course.
So may we be steadfast, seeking God to please,
Loyally proclaiming all his wise decrees!

(Chorus)



Who Is Leading God's People Today?

“Remember those who are taking the lead among you.”—HEB. 13:7.

JESUS' apostles stood on the Mount of Olives, gazing at the sky. They had just seen their master and friend, Jesus, lifted up and obscured by a cloud. (Acts 1:9, 10) For some two years, Jesus had taught,

1, 2. After Jesus' ascension to heaven, what might his apostles have wondered?

SONGS:
123, 126

CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

In the first century and today, how have those taking the lead among God's people been . . .

empowered by holy spirit?

assisted by angels?

guided by God's Word?

encouraged, and led them. Now he was gone. What would they do?

² Jesus had given his followers a commission: “You will be witnesses of me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) How could they possibly complete that assignment? True, Jesus had assured them that they would soon receive holy spirit. (Acts 1:5) Still, an international preaching campaign required direction and organization. To direct and organize his people in ancient times, Jehovah used visible representatives. Hence, the apostles might have wondered, ‘Will Jehovah now appoint a new leader?’

³ Less than two weeks later, Jesus’ disciples consulted the Scriptures, prayed for divine direction, and chose Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot as the 12th apostle. (Acts 1:15-26) Why was this selection so important to them and to Jehovah? Matthias filled a vital organizational need.* Jesus had selected his apostles not merely to accompany him in his

* Evidently, Jehovah purposed to have 12 apostles form the future “12 foundation stones” of New Jerusalem. (Rev. 21:14) Thus, there was no need to replace any *faithful* apostle who later finished his earthly course.

3. (a) After Jesus’ ascension to heaven, what important decision did the faithful apostles make? (b) What will we consider in this article?

ministry but to play a crucial role among God’s people. What was that role, and how did Jehovah through Jesus equip them to fill it? What similar arrangement exists among God’s people today? And how can we “remember those who are taking the lead” among us, especially those who make up “the faithful and discreet slave”?—Heb. 13:7; Matt. 24:45.

A VISIBLE BODY UNDER AN INVISIBLE LEADER

⁴ At Pentecost 33 C.E., the apostles began to take the lead in the Christian congregation. On that occasion, “Peter stood up with the Eleven” and shared lifesaving truths with a large crowd of Jews and proselytes. (Acts 2:14, 15) Many of them became believers. Thereafter, these new Christians “continued devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles.” (Acts 2:42) The apostles managed the financial resources of the congregation. (Acts 4:34, 35) They cared for the spiritual needs of God’s people, stating: “We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:4) And they assigned experienced

4. What role did the apostles and other elders in Jerusalem play in the first century?

Christians to advance the evangelizing work in new territories. (Acts 8:14, 15) In time, other anointed elders joined the apostles in administering the affairs of the congregations. As a governing body, they gave direction to all the congregations.—Acts 15:2.

⁵ Christians in the first century recognized that the governing body was directed by Jehovah God through their Leader, Jesus. How could they be sure of this? First, *holy spirit* empowered the governing body. (John 16:13) Holy spirit was poured out on all anointed Christians, but it specifically enabled the apostles and other elders in Jerusalem to fulfill their role as overseers. For example, in 49 C.E., holy spirit guided the governing body to make a decision regarding the issue of circumcision. The congregations followed their direction and “continued to be made firm in the faith and to increase in number day by day.” (Acts 16:4, 5) The letter conveying that decision also reveals that the governing body manifested the fruitage of God’s spirit, including love and faith.—Acts 15:11, 25-29; Gal. 5:22, 23.

5, 6. (a) How did holy spirit empower the governing body? (See opening image.) (b) How did angels assist the governing body? (c) How did God’s Word guide the governing body?

⁶ Second, *angels* assisted the governing body. Before Cornelius was baptized as the first uncircumcised Gentile Christian, an angel directed him to send for the apostle Peter. After Peter preached to Cornelius and his relatives, holy spirit was poured out on them, although the men had not been circumcised. This prompted the apostles and other brothers to submit to God’s will and accept uncircumcised Gentiles into the Christian congregation. (Acts 11:13-18) Moreover, angels actively promoted and accelerated the preaching work that the governing body was overseeing. (Acts 5:19, 20) Third, *God’s Word* guided the governing body. Whether they were settling doctrinal issues or they were giving organizational direction, those spirit-anointed elders were led by the Scriptures.—Acts 1: 20-22; 15:15-20.

⁷ Although that governing body had authority in the early congregation, they acknowledged that their Leader was Jesus. “*He [Christ] gave some as apostles,*” wrote the apostle Paul. “Let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ.” (Eph. 4:11, 15) Instead of naming themselves after a prominent apostle, “the disciples

7. Why can we say that Jesus led the early Christians?

were by divine providence called Christians.” (Acts 11:26) True, Paul acknowledged the importance of “holding fast the traditions,” or Scripturally based practices, given by the apostles and other men who took the lead. Nevertheless, he added: “But I want you to know that the head of every man [including every member of the governing body] is the Christ; . . . in turn, the head of the Christ is God.” (1 Cor. 11:2, 3) Yes, under his Head, Jehovah God, the invisible and glorified Christ Jesus was leading the congregation.

“THIS IS NOT MAN’S WORK”

⁸ In the late 19th century, Charles Taze Russell and some of his associates endeavored to reestablish true Christian worship. To help them disseminate Bible truth in various languages, Zion’s Watch Tower Tract Society was legally incorporated in 1884, with Brother Russell as president.* He was an outstanding student of the Bible, and he fearlessly exposed as false such doctrines as the Trinity and the immortality of the soul. He discerned that

* Since 1955, that corporation has been known as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.

8, 9. Beginning in the late 19th century, what important role did Brother Russell play?

Christ would return invisibly and that “the appointed times of the nations” would end in 1914. (Luke 21:24) Brother Russell devoted his time, energy, and money unsparingly to share these truths with others. Clearly, at that pivotal time, Brother Russell was used by Jehovah and the head of the congregation.

⁹ Brother Russell did not seek glory from humans. In 1896, he wrote: “We want no homage, no reverence, for ourselves or our writings; nor do we wish to be called Reverend or Rabbi. Nor do we wish that any should be called by our name.” He later stated: “This is not man’s work.”

¹⁰ In 1919, three years after Brother Russell’s death, Jesus appointed “the faithful and discreet slave.” For what purpose? To give his domestics “food at the proper time.” (Matt. 24:45) Even in those early years, a small group of anointed brothers who served at headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, prepared and distributed spiritual food to Jesus’ followers. The expression “governing body” began appearing in our publications in the 1940’s,

10. (a) When did Jesus appoint “the faithful and discreet slave”? (b) Relate how the Governing Body has been progressively distinguished from the Watch Tower Society.

when it was understood to be closely connected with the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. However, in 1971, the Governing Body was distinguished from the Watch Tower Society—a legal in-

The governing body, 1950's



Since its appointment in 1919, the faithful slave has prepared spiritual food for God's people
(See paragraphs 10, 11)

strument rather than a Scriptural entity—and its directors. The Governing Body henceforth included anointed brothers who were not Society directors. In recent years, responsible brothers of the “other sheep” have served as directors of the legal Society and of other corporations used by God’s people, thus allowing the Governing Body to focus on providing spiritual instruction and direction. (John 10:16; Acts 6:4) The July 15, 2013, issue of *The Watchtower* explained that “the faithful and discreet slave” is a small group of anointed brothers who make up the Governing Body.

¹¹ The Governing Body makes important decisions collectively. How so? The members meet weekly, which fosters close communication and unity. (Prov. 20:18) Each year, they rotate chairmanship at those meetings, since no member of the Governing Body is considered to be more important than the other members. (1 Pet. 5:1) Each of the six committees of the Governing Body rotate chairmanship in the same way. And each member of that body views himself, not as the leader of his fellow brothers, but as one of the “domestics,” fed by the faithful slave and subject to its oversight.

11. How does the Governing Body function?

“WHO REALLY IS THE FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE?”

¹² The Governing Body is neither inspired nor infallible. Therefore, it can err in doctrinal matters or in organizational direction. In fact, the *Watch Tower Publications Index* includes the heading “Beliefs Clarified,” which lists adjustments in our Scriptural understanding since 1870. Of course, Jesus did not tell us that his faithful slave would produce perfect spiritual food. So how can we answer Jesus’ question: “Who really is the faithful and discreet slave?” (Matt. 24:45) What evidence is there that the Governing Body is filling that role? Let us consider the same three factors that directed the governing body in the first century.

¹³ *Evidence of holy spirit.* The holy spirit has helped the Governing Body to grasp Scriptural truths not previously understood. For example, reflect on the list of beliefs clarified that was referred to in the preceding paragraph. Surely, no human deserves credit for discovering and explaining these “deep things of God”! (Read 1 Corinthi-

12. Since the Governing Body is neither inspired nor infallible, what questions arise?

13. How has holy spirit helped the Governing Body?

ans 2:10.) The Governing Body echoes the apostle Paul, who wrote: “These things we also speak, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit.” (1 Cor. 2:13) After centuries of apostasy and spiritual darkness, can anything other than holy spirit explain the rapid increase in spiritual understanding since 1919?

¹⁴ *Evidence of angelic assistance.* The Governing Body today has the colossal task of overseeing an international preaching work involving over eight million evangelizers. Why has that work been so successful? For one, angels are involved. (Read Revelation 14:6, 7.) In many cases, publishers have called on individuals who had just been praying for help!* The overall growth of the preaching and disciple-making work despite fierce opposition in some lands has likewise been possible only with superhuman assistance.

¹⁵ *Reliance on God’s Word.* (Read John 17:17.) Consider what occurred in 1973. The June 1 issue of *The Watchtower* asked the question: “Do . . .

* See “*Bearing Thorough Witness*” *About God’s Kingdom*, pp. 58-59.

14. According to Revelation 14:6, 7, how do angels assist God’s people today?

15. What contrast exists between the Governing Body and Christendom’s leaders? Give an example.

persons who have not broken their addiction to tobacco qualify for baptism?” The answer was: “The Scriptural evidence points to the conclusion that they do not.” After citing several relevant scriptures, *The Watchtower* explained why an unrepentant smoker should be disfellowshipped. (1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Cor. 7:1) It said: “This represents no effort to act in an arbitrary, dictatorial manner. The strictness really proceeds from God, who expresses himself *through his written Word*.” Has any other religious organization been willing to rely fully on God’s Word, even when doing so presents a real challenge to some of its members? A recent book on religion in the United States notes: “Christian leaders have regularly revised their teachings to match the beliefs and opinions gaining support among their members and in the larger society.” If those of the Governing Body allow God’s Word rather than popular opinion to guide their decisions, who is really leading God’s people today?

“REMEMBER THOSE WHO ARE TAKING THE LEAD”

¹⁶ **Read Hebrews 13:7.** The word rendered “remember” can also be translated “mention.” There-

16. What is one way to remember the Governing Body?

fore, one way you can “remember those who are taking the lead” is by mentioning the Governing Body in your prayers. (Eph. 6:18) Reflect on their responsibility to supply spiritual food, to oversee the global preaching work, and to manage donated funds. Surely they need our persistent petitions in their behalf!

¹⁷ Of course, remembering the Governing Body involves not just words but also cooperation with its direction. The Governing Body provides the direction given in our publications and at our meetings, assemblies, and conventions. In addition, it appoints circuit overseers, who in turn appoint congregation elders. Circuit overseers and elders remember the Governing Body by sticking closely to guidelines given to them. All of us show respect for our Leader, Jesus, by being obedient and submissive to the men he is using to direct us.—Heb. 13:17.

¹⁸ Another way that we remember the Governing Body is by exerting ourselves in the preaching work. After all, Paul urged Christians to imitate the faith of those taking the lead among them. The

17, 18. (a) How do we cooperate with the Governing Body? (b) How does our preaching support the faithful slave and Jesus?

faithful slave has exercised outstanding faith by zealously promoting and spreading the Kingdom good news. Are you one of the other sheep who supports the anointed in this vital work? How happy you will feel when your Leader, Jesus, says: “To the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”—Matt. 25:34-40.

¹⁹ When Jesus returned to heaven, he did not abandon his followers. (Matt. 28:20) He knew firsthand how much the holy spirit, the angels, and God’s Word helped him to take the lead when he was on earth. Therefore, he has supplied the faithful slave today with the same assistance. As anointed Christians, the members of that slave “keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes.” (Rev. 14:4) As we follow their direction, therefore, we follow our Leader, Jesus. Soon, he will lead us to everlasting life. (Rev. 7:14-17) And no human leader can promise that!

19. Why are you determined to follow our Leader, Jesus?

126 *Stay Awake, Stand Firm, Grow Mighty*

(1 Corinthians 16:13)

1. Stay awake, stand firm, grow mighty,
Be determined to endure.
Carry on with manly courage,
For the victory is sure.
We obey Christ Jesus' clear command;
Under him we firmly take our stand.

(CHORUS)

*Stay awake, stand firm, and grow mighty!
Carry on right to the end!*

2. Stay awake, and keep your senses,
Always ready to obey.
Stay alert to Christ's direction
Through his faithful slave today.
Heed the counsel of the older men,
Who protect his sheep and truth defend.

(Chorus)

3. Stay awake, remain united
As the good news we defend.
Though our enemies will fight it,
We will preach until the end.
Join the shout of praise throughout the land.
Look! Jehovah's day is soon at hand!

(Chorus)

