

- Song 26 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Take Firm Hold of the Robe of a Jew”:** (10 min.) [Play the video *Introduction to Zechariah.*] Zec 8:20-22—People of all the languages of the nations seek Jehovah’s favor (w14 11/15 27 ¶14) Zec 8:23—Those with an earthly hope willingly accompany and support the anointed remnant (w16.01 23 ¶4; w09 2/15 27 ¶14)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.) Zec 5:6-11—What is our responsibility regarding wickedness today? (w17.10 25 ¶18)

Zec 6:1—What do the two copper mountains represent? (w17.10 27-28 ¶7-8)

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) Zec 8:14-23

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

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- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) fg lesson 5 ¶1-2.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 70
- **“Improving Our Skills in the Ministry—Contacting Everyone in Our Territory”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Preaching in “the Most Distant Part of the Earth”* (video category OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) kr chap. 22 ¶17-24, review box on p. 240
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
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ZECHARIAH 1-8 | “Take Firm Hold of the Robe of a Jew”



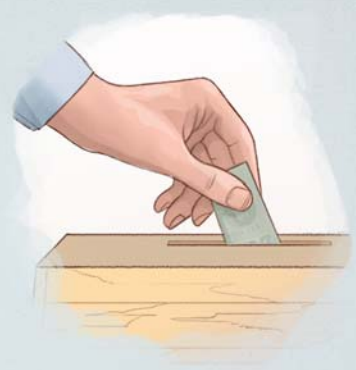
8:20-23

Ten men out of all the languages of the nations would take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: “We want to go with you.” During these last days, people of all nations are flocking to worship Jehovah along with anointed Christians

What are some ways in which the other sheep support the anointed today?



- They wholeheartedly share in the preaching work



- They wholeheartedly support the work financially

You Did It for Me

(Matthew 25:34-40)

1. Other sheep Jesus has, and they serve alongside those anointed to be Christ's heavenly bride.
All the things that are done
for their comfort and aid
Are things he considers that must be repaid.

(CHORUS)

"If you comforted them, you comforted me.

If you did it for them, you did it for me.

Your labors for them were your labors for me.

You did it for them; you did it for me.

If you did it for them, you did it for me."

2. "Yes, you comforted me in my hunger and thirst,
and whatever my need, you came to me first."
"Tell us, when did we do this?"
these ones will reply.
The King will then answer them, telling them why:

(Chorus)

3. "You've been loyal to me, doing works that are fine,
as you preach alongside these brothers of mine."
So the King will then say
to the sheep on his right:
"Inherit the earth and perfection of life."

(Chorus)

Sechariah 1-8

1 In the eighth month in the second year of Da-ri'us, the word of Jehovah came to the prophet Zech-a-ri'ah son of Ber-e-chi'ah son of Id'do, saying: **2** “Jehovah grew greatly indignant at your fathers.

3 “Say to them, ‘This is what Jehovah of armies says: “Return to me,’ declares Jehovah of armies, ‘and I will return to you,’ says Jehovah of armies.””

4 ““Do not become like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed: “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘Turn away, please, from your evil ways and your evil deeds.’””

“But they did not listen, and they paid no attention to me,’ declares Jehovah.

5 ““Where are your fathers now? And did the prophets live forever? **6** However, my words and my decrees that I commanded my servants, the prophets, caught up with your fathers, did they not?’ So they returned to me and said: ‘Jehovah of armies has dealt with us according to our ways and our deeds, just as he had determined to do.’”

7 On the 24th day of the 11th month, that is, the month of She'bat, in the second year of Da-ri'us, the word of Jehovah came to the prophet Zech-a-ri'ah son of Ber-e-chi'ah son of Id'do, saying: **8** “I saw a vision in the night. There was a man riding on a red horse, and

he stood still among the myrtle trees in the ravine; and behind him there were red, reddish-brown, and white horses.”

⁹ So I said: “Who are these, my lord?”

The angel who was speaking with me replied: “I will show you who these are.”

¹⁰ Then the man who was standing still among the myrtle trees said: “These are the ones whom Jehovah has sent out to walk about in the earth.” ¹¹ And they said to the angel of Jehovah who was standing among the myrtle trees: “We have walked about in the earth, and look! the whole earth is quiet and undisturbed.”

¹² So the angel of Jehovah said: “O Jehovah of armies, how long will you withhold your mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with whom you have been indignant these 70 years?”

¹³ Jehovah answered the angel who was speaking with me, with kind and comforting words. ¹⁴ Then the angel who was speaking with me told me: “Call out, ‘This is what Jehovah of armies says: “I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great zeal. ¹⁵ With great indignation I am indignant with the nations that are at ease, because I felt indignant to a small extent, but they added to the calamity.””

¹⁶ “Therefore this is what Jehovah says: “I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and my own house will be

built in her,” declares Jehovah of armies, “and a measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem.”

¹⁷ “Call out once more and say, ‘This is what Jehovah of armies says: “My cities will again overflow with goodness; and Jehovah will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.”’”

¹⁸ Then I looked up and saw four horns. ¹⁹ So I asked the angel who was speaking with me: “What are these?” He replied: “These are the horns that dispersed Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.”

²⁰ Jehovah then showed me four craftsmen. ²¹ I asked: “What are these coming to do?”

He said: “These are the horns that dispersed Judah to such an extent that no one was able to raise his head. These others will come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations that lifted up their horns against the land of Judah, in order to disperse her.”

2 And I looked up and saw a man with a measuring line in his hand. ² So I asked: “Where are you going?”

He replied: “To measure Jerusalem, to see what is her width and what is her length.”

³ And look! the angel who was speaking with me went out, and another angel came to meet him. ⁴ Then he said to him: “Run over there and tell that young man, “Jerusalem will be inhabited as open rural country, because of all the men and livestock within

her. ⁵ And I will become to her,” declares Jehovah, “a wall of fire all around, and I will become the glory in her midst.””

⁶ “Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north,” declares Jehovah.

“For I have scattered you to the four winds of the heavens,” declares Jehovah.

⁷ “Come, Zion! Make your escape, you who are dwelling with the daughter of Babylon. ⁸ For this is what Jehovah of armies says, who after being glorified has sent me to the nations that were plundering you:

‘Whoever touches you touches the pupil of my eye.

⁹ For now I will wave my hand against them, and they will become plunder for their own slaves.’ And you will certainly know that Jehovah of armies has sent me.

¹⁰ “Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion; for I am coming, and I will reside in your midst,” declares Jehovah.

¹¹ “Many nations will join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and they will become my people; and I will reside in your midst.” And you will have to know that Jehovah of armies has sent me to you. ¹² Jehovah will take possession of Judah as his portion on the holy ground, and he will again choose Jerusalem. ¹³ Be silent, all flesh, before Jehovah, for he is taking action from his holy dwelling.

3 And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan was standing

at his right hand to resist him. ² Then the angel of Jehovah said to Satan: “May Jehovah rebuke you, O Satan, yes, may Jehovah, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this one a burning log snatched out of the fire?”

³ Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments and standing before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those standing before him, “Remove his filthy garments.” Then he said to him, “See, I have caused your error to pass away from you, and you will be clothed with fine garments.”

⁵ So I said: “Let a clean turban be put on his head.” And they put the clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments; and the angel of Jehovah was standing nearby. ⁶ The angel of Jehovah then declared to Joshua: ⁷ “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘If you will walk in my ways and carry out your responsibilities before me, then you will serve as a judge in my house and take care of my courtyards; and I will give you free access among these who are standing here.’”

⁸ “Hear, please, O High Priest Joshua, you and your companions who sit before you, for these men serve as a sign; look! I am bringing in my servant Sprout! ⁹ See the stone that I have set before Joshua! On the one stone are seven eyes; and I am engraving an

inscription on it,' declares Jehovah of armies, 'and I will take away the guilt of that land in one day.'

¹⁰ "In that day,' declares Jehovah of armies, 'Each of you will invite your neighbor to come under your vine and under your fig tree.'"

4 The angel who had been speaking with me came back and woke me up, as when waking someone from sleep. ² Then he said to me: "What do you see?"

So I said: "I see, and look! a lampstand entirely of gold, with a bowl on top of it. There are seven lamps on it, yes, seven, and the lamps, which are at the top of it, have seven pipes. ³ And next to it are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and one on the left."

⁴ Then I asked the angel who was speaking with me: "What do these things mean, my lord?" ⁵ So the angel who was speaking with me asked: "Do you not know what these things mean?"

I replied: "No, my lord."

⁶ He then said to me: "This is the word of Jehovah to Ze-rub'ba-bel: "Not by a military force, nor by power, but by my spirit," says Jehovah of armies. ⁷ Who are you, O great mountain? Before Ze-rub'ba-bel you will become a level land. And he will bring out the top stone amid shouts of: "How wonderful! How wonderful!"'"

⁸ The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying:
⁹ "The hands of Ze-rub'ba-bel have laid the foundation

of this house, and his own hands will finish it. And you will have to know that Jehovah of armies has sent me to you. ¹⁰ For who has despised the day of small beginnings? For they will rejoice and see the plumb line in the hand of Ze-rub'ba-bel. These seven are the eyes of Jehovah, which are roving about in all the earth.”

¹¹ Then I asked him: “What is the meaning of these two olive trees on the right and on the left of the lampstand?” ¹² I asked him a second time: “What is the meaning of the two bunches of twigs of the olive trees that are pouring out the golden liquid through the two golden tubes?”

¹³ So he asked me: “Do you not know what these things mean?”

I replied: “No, my lord.”

¹⁴ He said: “These are the two anointed ones who are standing alongside the Lord of the whole earth.”

5 Again I looked up, and I saw a flying scroll. ² He asked me: “What do you see?”

I replied: “I see a flying scroll, which is 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide.”

³ Then he said to me: “This is the curse that is going out over the face of all the earth, because everyone who steals, as written on its one side, has gone unpunished; and everyone who makes a sworn oath,

as written on its other side, has gone unpunished. ⁴ 'I have sent it out,' declares Jehovah of armies, 'and it will enter into the house of the thief and into the house of the one who makes a false oath in my name; and it will remain inside that house and consume it and its timbers and its stones.'"

⁵ Then the angel who was speaking with me came forward and said to me: "Look up, please, and see what is going out."

⁶ So I asked: "What is it?"

He replied: "This is the e'phah container that is going out." He continued: "This is their appearance in all the earth." ⁷ And I saw that the round lid of lead was lifted up, and there was a woman sitting inside the container. ⁸ So he said: "This is Wickedness." Then he threw her back into the e'phah container, after which he thrust the lead weight over its mouth.

⁹ Then I looked up and saw two women coming forward, and they were soaring in the wind. They had wings like the wings of a stork. And they lifted up the container between the earth and heaven. ¹⁰ So I asked the angel who was speaking with me: "Where are they taking the e'phah container?"

¹¹ He replied: "To the land of Shi'nar to build her a house; and when it is prepared, she will be deposited there in her proper place."

6 Then I looked up again and saw four chariots coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were of copper. ² The first chariot had red horses, and the second chariot, black horses. ³ The third chariot had white horses, and the fourth chariot, speckled and dappled horses.

⁴ I asked the angel who was speaking with me: “What are these, my lord?”

⁵ The angel answered me: “These are the four spirits of the heavens that are going out after having taken their station before the Lord of the whole earth. ⁶ The one with the black horses is going out to the land of the north; the white ones are going out beyond the sea; and the speckled ones are going out to the land of the south. ⁷ And the dappled ones were eager to go out to walk about through the earth.” Then he said: “Go, walk about through the earth.” And they began walking about through the earth.

⁸ He then called out to me and said: “See, those going out to the land of the north have caused the spirit of Jehovah to rest in the land of the north.”

⁹ The word of Jehovah again came to me, saying: ¹⁰ “Take from Hel'dai, To-bi'jah, and Je-da'iah what they brought from the people in exile; and on that day, you must go to the house of Jo-si'ah the son of Zeph-a-ni'ah along with these who have come from Babylon. ¹¹ You should take silver and gold and make

a crown and put it on the head of Joshua son of Je-hoz'a-dak, the high priest. ¹² And say to him,

“This is what Jehovah of armies says: “Here is the man whose name is Sprout. He will sprout from his own place, and he will build the temple of Jehovah. ¹³ He is the one who will build the temple of Jehovah, and he is the one who will assume the majesty. He will sit down on his throne and rule, and he will also be a priest on his throne, and there will be a peaceable agreement between the two. ¹⁴ And the crown will serve as a memorial for He'lem, To-bi'jah, Je-da'iah, and Hen the son of Zeph-a-ni'ah, in the temple of Jehovah. ¹⁵ And those who are far away will come and take part in building the temple of Jehovah.” And you will have to know that Jehovah of armies has sent me to you. And it will occur—if you do not fail to listen to the voice of Jehovah your God.”

7 And in the fourth year of King Da-ri'us, the word of Jehovah came to Zech-a-ri'ah on the fourth day of the ninth month, that is, the month of Chis'lev. ² The people of Beth'el sent Shar-e'zer and Re'gem-mel'ech and his men to beg for the favor of Jehovah, ³ saying to the priests of the house of Jehovah of armies and to the prophets: “Should I weep in the fifth month and abstain from food, as I have done for so many years?”

⁴ The word of Jehovah of armies again came to me, saying: ⁵ “Say to all the people of the land and to the

priests, 'When you fasted and wailed in the fifth month and in the seventh month for 70 years, did you really fast for me? ⁶ And when you would eat and drink, were you not eating for yourselves and drinking for yourselves? ⁷ Should you not obey the words that Jehovah proclaimed through the former prophets, while Jerusalem and her surrounding cities were inhabited and at peace, and while the Neg'eb and the She-phe'lah were inhabited?'"

⁸ The word of Jehovah again came to Zech-a-ri'ah, saying: ⁹ "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'Judge with true justice, and deal with one another in loyal love and mercy. ¹⁰ Do not defraud the widow or the fatherless child, the foreigner or the poor; and do not scheme evil against one another in your hearts.' ¹¹ But they kept refusing to pay attention, and they stubbornly turned their backs, and they stopped up their ears so as not to hear. ¹² They made their heart like a diamond and would not obey the law and the words that Jehovah of armies sent by his spirit through the former prophets. So there came great indignation from Jehovah of armies."

¹³ "'Just as they did not listen when I called, so I would not listen when they called,' says Jehovah of armies. ¹⁴ 'And I scattered them with a storm wind throughout all the nations that they had not known, and the land was left desolate behind them, with no one

passing through or returning; for they turned the desirable land into an object of horror.”

8 The word of Jehovah of armies again came, saying:
² “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘I will be zealous for Zion with a great zeal, and with great wrath I will be zealous for her.’”

³ “This is what Jehovah says, ‘I will return to Zion and reside in Jerusalem; and Jerusalem will be called the city of truth, and the mountain of Jehovah of armies, the holy mountain.’”

⁴ “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘Old men and women will again sit in the public squares of Jerusalem, each with his staff in his hand because of his great age. ⁵ And the public squares of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing there.’”

⁶ “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘Although it may seem too difficult to the remaining ones of this people in those days, should it seem too difficult also to me?’ declares Jehovah of armies.”

⁷ “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘Here I am saving my people from the lands of the east and the west. ⁸ And I will bring them in, and they will reside in Jerusalem; and they will become my people, and I will become their God in truth and in righteousness.’”

⁹ “This is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘Let your hands be strong, you who now hear these words from

the mouth of the prophets, the same words that were spoken on the day the foundation of the house of Jehovah of armies was laid for the temple to be built.

¹⁰ For before that time, there were no wages being paid either for man or for beast; and it was not safe to come and go because of the adversary, for I turned all men one against another.’

¹¹ “‘But now I will not deal with the remaining ones of this people as in the former days,’ declares Jehovah of armies. ¹² ‘For the seed of peace will be sown; the vine will produce its fruit and the earth its yield, and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remaining ones of this people to inherit all these things.

¹³ And just as you became an object of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you will become a blessing. Do not be afraid! Let your hands be strong.’

¹⁴ “For this is what Jehovah of armies says, “‘Just as I had determined to bring calamity on you because your forefathers made me indignant,” says Jehovah of armies, “and I felt no regret, ¹⁵ so at this time I have determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not be afraid!””

¹⁶ “‘These are the things you should do: Speak the truth with one another, and the judgments in your gates must promote truth and peace. ¹⁷ Do not scheme calamity against one another in your hearts, and do not

love any false oath; for these are all things that I hate,' declares Jehovah."

¹⁸ The word of Jehovah of armies again came to me, saying: ¹⁹ "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'The fast of the fourth month, the fast of the fifth month, the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month will be occasions for exultation and joy for the house of Judah—festivals of rejoicing. So love truth and peace.'

²⁰ "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'It will yet come to pass that peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will come; ²¹ and the inhabitants of one city will go to those of another and say: "Let us earnestly go to beg for the favor of Jehovah and to seek Jehovah of armies. I am also going." ²² And many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah.'

²³ "This is what Jehovah of armies says, 'In those days ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: "We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people.'"

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ZECHARIAH 1-8 | “Take Firm Hold of the Robe of a Jew”



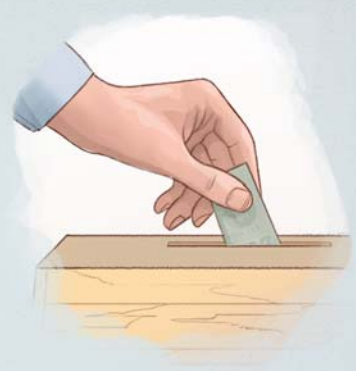
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Ten men out of all the languages of the nations would take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: “We want to go with you.” During these last days, people of all nations are flocking to worship Jehovah along with anointed Christians

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December 11-17

Treasures From God's Word

Zechariah 8:20-22—People of all the languages of the nations seek Jehovah's favor

Reference: *w14 11/15 27* **paragraph 14**.

The flocking of many humans to worship Jehovah with his people in this time of the end was foretold by two ancient prophets. Isaiah prophesied: “Many peoples will go and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.’ For law will go out of Zion, and the word of Jehovah out of Jerusalem.” (**Isaiah 2:2, 3**) Likewise, the prophet Zechariah foretold that “many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to beg for the favor of Jehovah.” He depicted them as “ten men out of all the languages of the nations” who, symbolically speaking, would take hold of the robe of spiritual Israel, saying: “We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people.” — **Zechariah 8:20-23**.

Zechariah 8:23—Those with an earthly hope willingly accompany and support the anointed remnant

Reference: *w16.01 23* **paragraph 4**.

If it is not possible to know with certainty the names of all spiritual Israelites on earth today, how can members of the other sheep “go with” them? Notice what the prophecy in Zechariah states concerning the figurative ten men. These ones would “take firm hold of the robe of a *Jew*, saying: ‘We want to go with *you*, for we have heard that God is with *you people*.’” Although only one Jew is mentioned here, in both instances the pronoun “you” refers to more than one person. This spiritual Jew must, then, be a composite person, not just one individual! So it is not necessary to identify every spiritual Jew and then go with him or her. Rather, we need to identify these ones *as a group* and then support them as such. In no way do the Scriptures encourage us to follow an individual. Jesus is our Leader.—**Matthew 23:10**.

Reference: w09 2/15 27 **paragraph 14**.

Jesus Christ considers the loyal support given to his brothers as being given to him. (Read Matthew 25:40.) In what way, then, can those who have the earthly hope support Christ's spirit-anointed brothers? Principally by helping them with the Kingdom-preaching work. (**Matthew 24:14**; John 14:12) While the number of anointed ones on the earth has decreased over the decades, the number of the other sheep has increased. When those who have an earthly hope share in the witness work, serving if possible as full-time evangelizers, they support the spirit-anointed ones in fulfilling the disciple-making assignment. (**Matthew 28:19, 20**) Not to be overlooked are the opportunities to support this work by making financial contributions in various ways.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

Zechariah 5:6-11—What is our responsibility regarding wickedness today?

Reference: w17.10 25 **paragraph 18**.

However, the vision also reminded the Jews of their responsibility to maintain the purity of their worship. Wickedness cannot and will not be allowed to creep into and dwell among Jehovah's people. After we have been brought into the protective and loving care of God's clean organization, we have the responsibility to help maintain it. Are we moved to keep our "house" clean? Wickedness in any form does not belong in our spiritual paradise.

Zechariah 6:1—What do the two copper mountains represent?

Reference: w17.10 27-28 **paragraphs 7-8**.

7 In the Bible, mountains can represent kingdoms, or governments. The mountains in Zechariah's account are similar to two mountains described in Daniel's prophecy. One mountain represents Jehovah's universal and eternal rulership. The other

mountain represents the Messianic Kingdom in the hands of Jesus. (**Daniel 2:35, 45**) Since Jesus' enthronement in the autumn of 1914, both mountains have been present and have played a special role in the fulfillment of God's will on earth.

8 Why are the mountains made of copper? Like gold, copper is a metal that is highly valued.

Jehovah directed that this shiny metal be used in the construction of the tabernacle and later in the temple in Jerusalem. (**Exodus 27:1-3; 1 Kings 7:13-16**) Appropriately, then, the copper of the two symbolic mountains reminds us of the excellent quality of Jehovah's universal sovereignty and of the Messianic Kingdom, which will provide stability and blessings to all mankind.

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ZECHARIAH 1-8 | “Take Firm Hold of the Robe of a Jew”



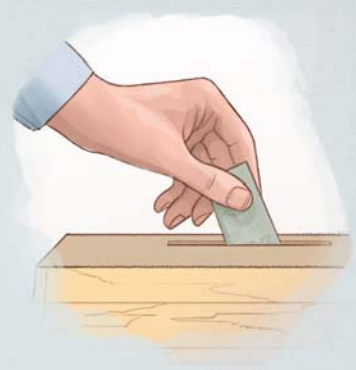
8:20-23

Ten men out of all the languages of the nations would take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: “We want to go with you.” During these last days, people of all nations are flocking to worship Jehovah along with anointed Christians

What are some ways in which the other sheep support the anointed today?



- They wholeheartedly share in the preaching work



- They wholeheartedly support the work financially

Awake!

No. 6 2017



IS THE WORLD OUT OF CONTROL?



3 COVER SUBJECT Is the World out of Control?

Why does the world seem to be spinning out of control?

The Bible says: “It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step.”—Jeremiah 10:23.

This issue of “Awake!” explains why many believe in a better future for our world.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

8 HELP FOR THE FAMILY
Teaching Children Humility

10 LANDS AND PEOPLES
A Visit to New Zealand

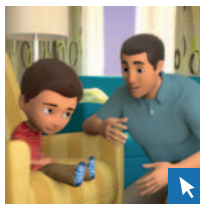
12 PORTRAITS FROM THE PAST
Alhazen

14 THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT
God's Name

16 Subject Index for 2017 *Awake!*



MORE ONLINE



CHILDREN

Be Truthful

Help your children learn to tell the truth.

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > CHILDREN)



BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

How Can I Find the True Religion?

The Bible describes clearly how to tell the difference between true and false religion.

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)



COVER SUBJECT

IS THE WORLD OUT OF CONTROL OR NOT?

THE year 2017 began with a dismal proclamation by the scientific community. In January a group of scientists declared that the world just got closer to the worst catastrophe ever. Using the symbolic Doomsday Clock to illustrate mankind's proximity to a global disaster, scientists moved the clock's minute hand forward by 30 seconds. The Doomsday Clock is now set at merely two and a half minutes to midnight—nearer to a global catastrophe than at any time in over 60 years!

In 2018, scientists plan to evaluate again how close we are to the end of the world as we know it. Will the Doomsday

Clock still signal an impending and unprecedented catastrophe? What do you think? Is the world out of control? You might find the question somewhat difficult to answer. After all, even experts are divided on this subject. Not everyone believes in an inevitable doomsday.

In fact, millions of people believe in a bright future. They profess to have evidence showing that mankind and our planet will survive indefinitely and that our quality of life will improve. Is that evidence credible? Is the world out of control or not?

“The Doomsday Clock is an internationally recognized design that conveys how close we are to destroying our civilization with dangerous technologies of our own

making. First and foremost among these are nuclear weapons, but the dangers include climate-changing technologies, emerging biotechnologies, and cybertech-

nology that could inflict irrevocable harm, whether by intention, miscalculation, or by accident, to our way of life and to the planet.”
—*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.*

IS THE WORLD OUT OF CONTROL?

Searching for Answers

IF YOU are apprehensive or scared outright by the barrage of bad news, you are not alone. In 2014, Barack Obama, who was then president of the United States, suggested that because of all the bad things reported in the press, many conclude “that the world is spinning . . . fast and nobody is able to control it.”

Yet, shortly after making that statement, he spoke passionately about current strategies to fix many of the world’s problems. He called certain government initiatives “good news” and said he was “fundamentally hopeful” and “profoundly optimistic.” In other words, he pointed to noble human endeavors as the means to control the world and avert a global catastrophe.

Many share his optimism. For instance, some put their trust in science, predicting rapid advancements in technologies that promise to fix the world. One expert in digital technology and innovation confidently predicted that by the year 2030, “our technology will be a thousand times more powerful and by 2045, it will be a million times more powerful.” He added: “We’re doing pretty well. While the problems we face have never been greater, our capacity to meet challenges is outpacing them.”

Exactly how bad are world conditions? Are we really at the brink of a great global disaster? Although some scientists and politicians preach a hopeful message, many people still feel uncertain about the future. Why?



WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION. Despite their best efforts, the United Nations and other organizations have failed to bring about nuclear disarmament. Instead, defiant leaders scoff at arms-control laws. Countries with a history of nuclear weap-

onry are frantically upgrading their old bombs and creating new deadlier ones. Countries that once had no mass-destruction capabilities are now able to destroy huge swaths of humanity.

This unprecedented nuclear preparedness makes the world a very dangerous

place, even in times of “peace.” “Lethal autonomous weapons systems that make ‘kill’ decisions without human input or supervision, for example, would be particularly worrisome,” warns the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

OUR HEALTH UNDER SIEGE.

Science can take us only so far when it comes to good health. High blood pressure, obesity, air pollution, and drug abuse—all risk factors for disease—are increasing.

More people are dying from an array of noncommunicable diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular disorders, and diabetes. Growing numbers are disabled by other diseases, including mental illness. And

recent years have witnessed the unpredictable outbreaks of such dangerous epidemics as the Ebola virus and the Zika virus. The bottom line: Sickness is out of the control of humans, and the end of it seems to be nowhere in sight!



HUMAN ATTACKS ON NATURE.

Factories continue to pollute earth's atmosphere. Millions of people die every year from breathing contaminated air.

Individuals, communities, and government agencies continue to dump sewage, medical and

agricultural waste, plastics, and other pollutants into the oceans. "These toxic pollutants poison marine animals and plants, as well as humans who eat contaminated sea life," explains the *Encyclopedia of Marine Science*.

And we are running out of fresh water. British science author Robin McKie aptly warns: "The world faces a water crisis that will touch every part of the globe." Politicians admit that water scarcity is largely a man-made problem and that it poses a grave danger.

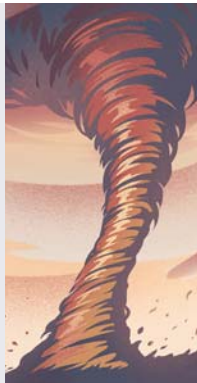


NATURE'S ATTACKS ON HUMANS.

Storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, typhoons, and earthquakes bring about devastating floods, crushing landslides, and other types of de-

struction. More people than ever are killed or are otherwise adversely affected by these forces of nature. A study published by the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administra-

tion points to a greater potential for "more intense storms, deadly heat waves, and more extreme flood-drought cycles." Will nature deal humankind a death-blow?



Surely you can think of other grave threats to our survival. Yet, you will not find satisfying answers about the future by analyzing all the bad things happening today. Some may say the same about listening to politicians and scientists. As men-

tioned in the preceding article, many have, however, found convincing answers to questions about world conditions and the future. Where are such answers to be found?

IS THE WORLD OUT OF CONTROL? What Does the Bible Say?

THE dire state of the world today was foretold in the Bible many centuries ago. And what is more, the Bible specifically predicted a bright future for mankind. **What the Bible says should not be quickly dismissed in view of the fact that so much of what it foretells has actually been fulfilled in amazing detail.**

For instance, consider the following Bible prophecies:

- “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another.”—Matthew 24:7.
- “In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.”—2 Timothy 3:1-4.

Those prophecies describe a world that some might say is spiraling out of control. In a sense, our world is indeed out of control—out of the control of humans. **According to the Bible, humans simply do not have the wisdom and power to bring about a permanent solution.** This is highlighted in the following scriptures:

- “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”—Proverbs 14:12.
- “Man has dominated man to his harm.”—Ecclesiastes 8:9.
- “It does not belong to man . . . even to direct his step.”—Jeremiah 10:23.

Left to its own devices, the world could very likely face a global catastrophe. But that is not going to happen! Why? This is what the Bible says:

- God “has established the earth on its foundations; it will not be moved from its place forever and ever.”—Psalm 104:5.
 - “A generation is going, and a generation is coming, but the earth remains forever.”—Ecclesiastes 1:4.
 - “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.”—Psalm 37:29.
 - “There will be an abundance of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains it will overflow.”—Psalm 72:16.
-



The predictions of the Doomsday Clock will not be fulfilled, because God promises a bright future for mankind and the earth

These Bible teachings provide clear answers. Mankind will not die off from pollution, lack of food and water, or a global pandemic. The world will not be destroyed in a nuclear holocaust. Why not? God is in control of our planet's future. Granted, God has allowed humans to exercise free will. However, they will reap the consequences for their decisions. (Galatians 6:7) The world is not like a runaway train, completely out of control and heading to a catastrophic end. God has established boundaries, or limits, on how much damage humans can inflict on themselves. —Psalm 83:18; Hebrews 4:13.

But God will do more. He will bring about an “abundance of peace.” (Psalm

37:11) The positive outlook explained in this article is just a glimpse of the bright future that millions of Jehovah's Witnesses have learned about by studying the Bible.

Jehovah's Witnesses are a global community of men and women of all ages and of every ethnic background. They worship the one true God, whose name is Jehovah, as revealed in the Bible. They are not afraid of the future because the Bible says: “This is what Jehovah says, the Creator of the heavens, the true God, the One who formed the earth, its Maker who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, but formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am Jehovah, and there is no one else.’” —Isaiah 45:18. ■



This article examined some of the Bible teachings regarding the future of the earth and humankind. For more information, see lesson 5 of the brochure *Good News From God!* published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available at www.jw.org

You may also watch the video *Why Did God Create the Earth?* available at www.jw.org. (Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS)




5

What Is God's Purpose for the Earth?



1. Why did God create the earth?

Jehovah gave the earth to men and women. It is our home. Therefore, the first human couple, Adam and Eve, were not created to populate the heavens—God had already created angels to live in heaven. (Job 38:4, 7) Rather, God took the first man and settled him in a delightful paradise called the garden of Eden. (Genesis 2:15-17) Jehovah gave him and his future offspring the prospect of enjoying life without end on earth.  *Read Psalm 37:29; 115:16.*


Originally, only the garden of Eden was a paradise. The first human couple were to fill the earth with their offspring. In time, they were to subdue the entire globe and make it a paradise. (Genesis 1:28) The earth will never be destroyed. It will always be mankind's home.

 *Read Psalm 104:5.*

2. Why is the earth not a paradise now?

Adam and Eve disobeyed God, so Jehovah put them out of the garden. Paradise was lost, and no man has succeeded in restoring it. The Bible says: “Earth itself has been given into the hand of the wicked one.”—Job 9:24.

 *Read Genesis 3:23, 24.*

Has Jehovah abandoned his original purpose for mankind? No! He is almighty. He cannot fail. (Isaiah 45:18) He will restore the human race to the way he meant it to be.  *Read Psalm 37:11, 34.*

3. How will Paradise be restored?

Paradise will be restored on earth during Jesus' rule as God's King. In a battle called Armageddon, Jesus will lead

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.

- Song 26 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD

- **“Take Firm Hold of the Robe of a Jew”:** (10 min.) [Play the video *Introduction to Zechariah.*] Zec 8:20-22—People of all the languages of the nations seek Jehovah’s favor (w14 11/15 27 ¶14) Zec 8:23—Those with an earthly hope willingly accompany and support the anointed remnant (w16.01 23 ¶4; w09 2/15 27 ¶14)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.) Zec 5:6-11—What is our responsibility regarding wickedness today? (w17.10 25 ¶18)

Zec 6:1—What do the two copper mountains represent? (w17.10 27-28 ¶7-8)

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) Zec 8:14-23

APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

- **Initial Call:** (2 min. or less) g17.6 cover—Lay the groundwork for a return visit.
- **Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) g17.6—The magazine was placed on the preceding visit. Demonstrate a return visit, and lay the groundwork for the next visit.
- **Bible Study:** (6 min. or less) fg lesson 5 ¶1-2.

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

- Song 70
- **“Improving Our Skills in the Ministry—Contacting Everyone in Our Territory”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Preaching in “the Most Distant Part of the Earth”* (video category OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) kr chap. 22 ¶17-24, review box on p. 240
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 139 and Prayer

ZECHARIAH 1-8 | “Take Firm Hold of the Robe of a Jew”



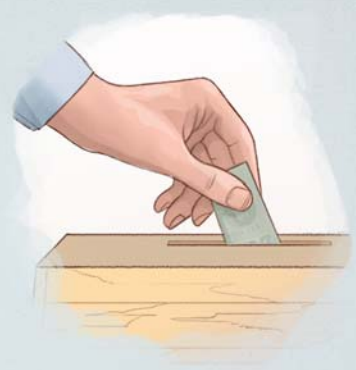
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What are some ways in which the other sheep support the anointed today?



- They wholeheartedly share in the preaching work



- They wholeheartedly support the work financially

IMPROVING OUR SKILLS IN THE MINISTRY

Contacting Everyone in Our Territory



WHY IMPORTANT: Zechariah prophesied that people out of all the languages of the nations would respond favorably to the good news. (Zec 8:23) But who will teach them? (Ro 10:13-15) We have the privilege and responsibility to share the good news with everyone in our territory.—od 84 ¶10-11.

HOW TO DO IT:

- Prepare. Do you encounter people who speak another language? You can use the *JW Language* app to learn a simple presentation. Or using your mobile device, you can show a person how he can find more information in his language on jw.org
- Be observant. If you are working from house to house, do not overlook opportunities to witness to passersby or those waiting in cars. If you are involved in public witnessing, stay focused on your objective to give a witness
- Be diligent. Keep trying to reach those who are not at home initially. Make an effort to contact someone at every residence, perhaps at a different time of the day or on a different day of the week. Some householders may need to be contacted by letter, telephone, or street witnessing
- Follow through. Return promptly to follow up on any interest shown. If the person speaks a different language, try to find someone who is qualified to help him in his language. You should continue calling on the person until he is contacted by publishers who speak his language.—od 94 ¶39-40

WATCH THE VIDEO PREACHING IN “THE MOST DISTANT PART OF THE EARTH,” AND THEN CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What preparations did the brothers and sisters make to contact people in remote territory? (1Co 9:22, 23)

- What obstacles did they have to overcome?

- What blessings did they enjoy?

- What efforts can you make to contact more people in your territory?

- ▶ The service overseer should make sure that all the congregation’s territory is regularly covered. Some bodies of elders have organized special days during the month so that publishers can spend an entire day working in an area that is not frequently covered.



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fulfillment even in a literal sense. Men, women, and children will be safe and secure wherever they go on earth. No creature, whether human or animal, will pose any threat. Imagine a time when you will see this entire planet as your home, where you can swim in the rivers, lakes, and seas; traverse the mountain ranges; and roam the grasslands in complete safety. And when night falls, you will not worry. The words of Ezekiel 34:25 will come true, so that it will even be possible for God's people to "dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the forests."

¹⁷ **Abundance.** Picture a time when there will be no such thing as poverty, malnutrition, famine, or welfare systems. The spiritual plenty that God's people enjoy today is a guarantee that the Messianic King will feed his subjects in every respect. When Jesus was on the earth, he demonstrated on a small scale that he can fulfill such promises, for he fed thousands of hungry people with just a few loaves and fish. (Matt. 14:17, 18; 15:34-36; Mark 8:19, 20) When God's Kingdom is ruling over the whole earth,

17. Why may we be sure that Jehovah will provide abundantly for our needs when the Kingdom is ruling over the whole earth?

prophecies like this one will see a literal fulfillment: “He will give the rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the bread that the ground produces will be abundant and rich. In that day your livestock will graze in spacious pastures.”—Isa. 30:23.

¹⁸ Today many people can hardly imagine owning a comfortable home or having rewarding, satisfying work to do. In this corrupt system, many feel that they work long and hard with little real benefit to themselves or their family, while the rich and greedy reap all the rewards. Imagine what it will be like when this prophecy comes true worldwide: “They will build houses and live in them, and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build for someone else to inhabit, nor will they plant for others to eat. For the days of my people will be like the days of a tree, and the work of their hands my chosen ones will enjoy to the full.”—Isa. 65:20-22.

¹⁹ What does it mean that our days will be “like the days of a tree”? When you stand at the base of a

18, 19. (a) What does the prophecy recorded at Isaiah 65:20-22 mean to you? (b) In what sense will our days be “like the days of a tree”?

massive tree, do you feel a sense of awe sweeping over you as you contemplate how long that living thing has been there—perhaps since long before your great-grandparents were born? It might occur to you that if you were to remain in your present imperfect state, such a tree would likely outlive you, still stretching out its long, peaceful existence even after you had become a mere memory. How kind of Jehovah to assure us that in the Paradise to come, our own days will be long and peaceful! (Ps. 37:11, 29) The day will come when even long-lived trees will seem to us as transient as the grass, coming and going while we continue living forever!

²⁰ **Perfect health.** Today, sickness and death cast their grim shadows over every aspect of this world. In a sense, we are *all* sick—infected with a terminal illness called sin. The only cure is Christ’s ransom sacrifice. (Rom. 3:23; 6:23) During the Millennial Reign, Jesus and his corulers will fully apply the benefits of that sacrifice, gradually eradicating all traces of sin from faithful humans. Isaiah’s prophecy will come true in the fullest sense: “No resident

20. How will loyal Kingdom subjects come to enjoy perfect health?

will say: ‘I am sick.’ The people dwelling in the land will be pardoned for their error.” (Isa. 33:24) Imagine a time when no one will be blind, deaf, or crippled. **(Read Isaiah 35:5, 6.)** No illness will prove to be beyond Jesus’ ability to heal—whether physical, mental, or emotional. Loyal Kingdom subjects will enjoy perfect health!

²¹ What, though, of the common outcome of sickness, the inevitable result of sin—death? That is our “last enemy,” the one foe against which all imperfect humans sooner or later prove powerless. (1 Cor. 15:26) But is death such a daunting adversary to Jehovah? Notice what Isaiah foretold: “He will swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will wipe away the tears from all faces.” (Isa. 25:8) Can you picture that time? No more funerals, no more cemeteries, no more tears of grief! Quite the contrary—there will be tears of joy as Jehovah fulfills his thrilling promise to bring back the dead! **(Read Isaiah 26:19.)** At last, countless wounds inflicted by death will heal.

21. What will become of death, and why do you find that promise comforting?



The Kingdom will fulfill all of Jehovah's promises regarding mankind and the earth

²² By the end of the Millennium, the Kingdom will have finished carrying out God's will on earth, and Christ will hand the rulership over to his Father. (1 Cor. 15:25-28) Humankind, perfected at last, will be ready to face a final test when Satan is released from his abyss of inactivity. Thereafter, Christ will finally crush that vile serpent and all his supporters. (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 20:3, 7-10) But all who loyally love Jehovah will face a bright prospect. Perhaps no words could paint a better picture than the ones we find in an inspired phrase. It is the promise that faithful ones will have "the glorious freedom of the children of God."—Rom. 8:21.

²³ Those promises are not based on mere hopes, wishes, or dreams. Fulfillment of Jehovah's promises is a certainty! Why? Remember the words of Jesus that we discussed in the opening chapter of this book. He taught his followers to pray to Jehovah: "Let your Kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth." (Matt. 6:9, 10) God's

22. What will happen when the Messianic Kingdom has finished carrying out God's will on earth?

23, 24. (a) Why is the fulfillment of God's promises a certainty?

(b) What are you determined to do?

Kingdom is not the product of someone's imagination. It is a reality! It rules in heaven right now. For a century now, it has fulfilled Jehovah's promises in ways that we can clearly see in the Christian congregation. We may be sure, then, that all of Jehovah's promises will be fulfilled when God's Kingdom comes to exert its full power toward the earth!

²⁴ We know that God's Kingdom will come. We know that Jehovah's every word of promise will come true. Why? Because **GOD'S KINGDOM RULES!** The question for each of us to ask is, 'Does the Kingdom rule *me*?' Let us do all we can to live as loyal subjects of that Kingdom now, so that we may benefit from its perfect, just rule forever!

How Real Is the Kingdom to You?

- How did Jehovah fulfill his promises regarding the Jews returning from exile?
- How has Jehovah allowed us to enjoy a spiritual paradise today?
- What aspects of life in Paradise appeal to you the most?
- What convinces you that God's Kingdom is real and is now ruling?

139 *See Yourself When All Is New* (Revelation 21:1-5)

1. Just see yourself, just see me too;
 Just see us all in a world that is new.
Think how you'll feel, how it will be,
 To live in peace, to be truly free.
No evil one will then prevail;
 Rule by our God cannot ever fail.
The time will have come for a new earthly start,
 The song of our praises
 will pour out from our heart:

(CHORUS)

*"We thank you, our God, for all you have done.
 All things are new by the rule of your Son.
The fullness of our heart overflows in our song;
 All glory and honor and praise to you belong."*

2. Now see yourself, and see me too;
 And look ahead to a world that is new.
No sight we see, no sound we hear
 Will cause alarm or give rise to fear.
All has come true, just as he said;
 Now over mankind, his tent is spread.
He now will awaken those sleeping in death;
 Their voices will join ours with
 ev'ry grateful breath:

(Chorus)

OCTOBER 2017

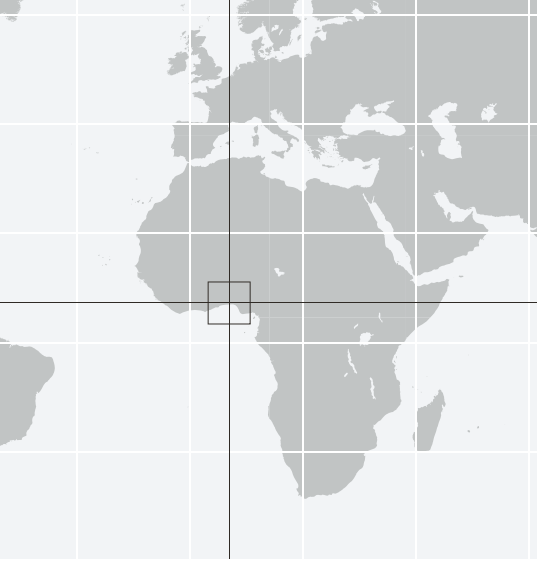
THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 24, 2017

LARGE
PRINT
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:

NIGERIA

One of the many metropolitan witnessing stands in Lagos, the most populous city in Africa. At this one location, an average of six Bible studies are requested every month

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“Love . . . in Deed and Truth”

Genuine love identifies true Christians. This article will consider nine ways that we can show love that is “free from hypocrisy.”—2 Cor. 6:6.

16 WEEK OF DECEMBER 4-10

The Truth Brings, “Not Peace, But a Sword”

The negative response of unbelieving relatives to the truth can make life difficult for Jehovah’s people. In this article, we will learn how we can successfully deal with the challenges of family opposition.

PUBLISHERS

370,336

BIBLE STUDIES

870,185

MEMORIAL

ATTENDANCE (2016)

774,874

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

28 WEEK OF DECEMBER 11-17

Visions of Zechariah—How They Affect You

39 WEEK OF DECEMBER 18-24

Chariots and a Crown Safeguard You

These articles discuss Zechariah's sixth, seventh, and eighth visions. The sixth and seventh visions will help us appreciate the privilege we have to serve in God's clean organization. The eighth vision will teach us how Jehovah provides secure protection in order for his worshippers to engage in true worship.

51 LIFE STORY

Blessings Come From Doing What Jehovah Asks

62 One Act of Christian Kindness

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)



SONGS:
89, 86

**HOW WOULD YOU
ANSWER?**

How does Jehovah view any kind of stealing?

How can we live up to our dedication to God “day after day”?

How can we do our part in keeping wickedness out of Jehovah’s house?

Visions of Zechariah —How They Affect You

“Return to me, . . . and I will return to you.”—ZECH. 1:3.

A FLYING scroll, a woman sealed inside a container, and two women soaring in the wind with wings like those of storks—such dramat-

1-3. (a) What was the situation of Jehovah’s people when Zechariah began prophesying? (b) Why did Jehovah ask his people to ‘return to him’?

ic images are found in the book of Zechariah. (Zech. 5:1, 7-9) Why did Jehovah give these striking visions to his prophet? What was the situation of the Israelites at that time? How does Zechariah's record of those visions affect us today?

² The year 537 B.C.E. was one of rejoicing for Jehovah's dedicated people. After 70 long years of captivity, they were freed from Babylon. With an initial burst of enthusiasm, they got to work on restoring true worship in Jerusalem. In 536 B.C.E., the foundation of the temple was laid. At that time the people were "shouting so loudly that the sound was heard from a great distance." (Ezra 3:10-13) However, opposition soon mounted against their construction project. Discouraged by the many challenges and difficulties, the people left off building the temple and began looking after their own homes and cultivating their fields. Sixteen years later, the building of Jehovah's temple was at a standstill. God's people needed to be reminded that they should return to Jehovah and stop putting their personal pursuits first. Jehovah wanted them to return to him, to resume their fearless, wholehearted worship of him.

³ To help his people recall why they were freed from Babylon in the first place, God sent his prophet

Zechariah in 520 B.C.E. The very name Zechariah, which means “Jehovah Has Remembered,” may have brought to mind a vital truth. Though they had forgotten Jehovah’s saving acts, God still remembered his people. (Read Zechariah 1:3, 4.) He lovingly assured them that he would help them to reestablish pure worship, but he also firmly warned them that he would not tolerate halfhearted worship. Let us see how, by means of Zechariah’s sixth and seventh visions, Jehovah stirred them to action. Also, what lessons can we today learn from this?

DIVINE PUNISHMENT FOR STEALING

⁴ Chapter 5 of Zechariah begins with an unusual vision. (Read Zechariah 5:1, 2.) Zechariah sees flying through the air a scroll nearly 30 feet (9 m) long and 15 feet (4.5 m) wide! It is unrolled, ready to be read. It contains a judgment message, which fills both sides of the scroll. (Zech. 5:3) Usually, only one side of a scroll was used, so this scroll clearly contains a weighty and serious message.

⁵ Read Zechariah 5:3, 4. While all of mankind are accountable to Jehovah, his name people are even

4. What did Zechariah see in his sixth vision, and what is significant about the scroll’s having writing on both sides? (See opening image 1.)

5, 6. How does Jehovah view any kind of stealing?



Stealing of any kind has no place among Christians
(See paragraphs 5-7)

more so. Those who love God realize that any form of stealing would “dishonor the name of [their] God.” (Prov. 30:8, 9) No matter what the motive or how excusable the theft might seem under the circumstances, a thief puts greedy desire above God, placing too much value on material possessions. He minimizes God’s law, disregarding Jehovah and His name as being of no force or importance.

⁶ Did you notice at Zechariah 5:3, 4 that “the curse . . . [would] enter into the house of the thief

... and it [would] remain inside that house and consume it”? Jehovah’s adverse judgment cannot be kept out by bars and locks. It can penetrate any hiding place to uncover wrongdoing among Jehovah’s people. Even if a person is able to conceal thievery from authorities, employers, elders, or parents, he cannot hide it from God, who guarantees that every theft will be exposed. (Heb. 4:13) How refreshing it is to associate with people who are ever conscious of being honest “in all things”—Heb. 13:18.

⁷ All forms of stealing are offensive to Jehovah. We view it as an honor to live up to Jehovah’s high moral standard, maintaining conduct that in no way brings reproach on his name. Thus, we may succeed in escaping Jehovah’s judgment against those who deliberately violate his law.

LIVING UP TO OUR WORD “DAY AFTER DAY”

⁸ The message written on the flying scroll next delivers a warning to those ‘who make a false oath in God’s name.’ (Zech. 5:4) An oath is a sworn statement to certify that something is true or a solemn

7. How can we escape the curse of the flying scroll?

8-10. (a) What is an oath? (b) What oath did King Zedekiah fail to keep?

promise that a person will or will not do a certain thing.

⁹ It is a very serious matter to swear an oath in the name of Jehovah. That is exactly what the last king to occupy the throne of Jerusalem did. Zedekiah swore by Jehovah that he would remain a loyal vassal to the king of Babylon. However, Zedekiah did not keep his sworn oath. As a result, Jehovah passed judgment on him in these words: “As surely as I am alive, . . . [Zedekiah] will die in Babylon, in the place where the king who made him king lives, the one whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke.”—Ezek. 17:16.

¹⁰ King Zedekiah owed it to Jehovah to live up to the oath that he had sworn in God’s name. (2 Chron. 36:13) Instead, Zedekiah turned to Egypt in a fruitless attempt to break free from Babylon’s yoke.—Ezek. 17:11-15, 17, 18.

¹¹ Jehovah also listens to the promises that we make. He takes our vows seriously, and we must fulfill them in order to have his approval. (Ps. 76:11) Of all the promises we make, the most important is the one we make when we dedicate ourselves to

11, 12. (a) What is the most important vow we will ever make?
(b) In what ways should our dedication vow affect our daily lives?

Jehovah. Dedication is a solemn vow to serve Jehovah unconditionally.

¹² How can we prove true to our dedication vow? Our stand during tests both large and small should show that we take seriously our pledge to praise Jehovah “day after day.” (Ps. 61:8) For example, when someone on the job or at school flirts with us, do we see this as an opportunity to “take pleasure in [Jehovah’s] ways” by rejecting such advances? (Prov. 23:26) If we live in a divided household, do we ask Jehovah for his help to maintain the Christian personality even when no one else around us is making such an effort? Do we daily approach our loving heavenly Father in prayer, thanking him for bringing us under his rulership and for loving us? Are we making time to read the Bible daily? Did we not, in effect, promise that we would do such things? It is a matter of obedience. Our full share in worship reveals that we love Jehovah and are truly dedicated to him. Our worship is a way of life, not a mere formality. Fulfilling our promise is for our own good; our faithfulness leads to a secure future. —Deut. 10:12, 13.

¹³ Zechariah’s sixth vision has helped us to see that lovers of Jehovah should not engage in any kind of

13. What can we learn from Zechariah’s sixth vision?

stealing or make false oaths. We also see that despite their failures, Jehovah did not give up on the Israelites. He understood the pressures they faced as they were surrounded by enemies. He sets the example for us by living up to his promises, and he will help us live up to ours. One way he offers help is by giving us the hope that he will soon put an end to all wickedness throughout the whole earth. Zechariah's next vision guarantees this bright hope.

WICKEDNESS IS 'PUT IN HER PROPER PLACE'

¹⁴ After seeing the flying scroll, Zechariah is told by an angel to “look up.” What will his seventh vision reveal? He now sees a container, called an “ephah,” going out. (Read Zechariah 5:5-8.) This medium-sized container has a “round lid of lead.” When the lid is removed, Zechariah sees “a woman sitting inside.” The angel explains that the woman in the container is “Wickedness.” Imagine Zechariah's horror as he sees her attempt to crawl out of her confinement! The angel takes swift action, throwing her back into the container and sealing it shut with the heavy lid. What does this mean?

14, 15. (a) In his seventh vision, what does Zechariah see? (See opening image 2.) (b) What does the woman inside the ephah container represent, and why is she confined and sealed away?

¹⁵ This part of the vision highlights that Jehovah will not tolerate wickedness of any kind among his people. He will see to it that it is contained and speedily removed. (1 Cor. 5:13) The angel assures us of this by thrusting the lead lid back over the container.

¹⁶ Next on the scene appear two women who have strong wings like those of a stork. (Read Zechariah 5:9-11.) How different these women are from the woman in the container! These women use their powerful wings to swoop in and lift up the container containing “Wickedness.” Where are they taking her? Wickedness is deposited in “the land of Shinar,” or Babylon. Why, though, would they take the container to Babylon?

¹⁷ To the Israelites of Zechariah’s day, Shinar would be a fitting place for Wickedness to be confined. Zechariah and his fellow Jews could confirm that Babylon was a place of wickedness in their day. Having grown up amid the filthy and idolatrous ways of this city, they had to fight every day to resist the

16. (a) What did Zechariah next see happen to the ephah container? (See opening image 3.) (b) Where do the women with wings take the ephah container?

17, 18. (a) Why is Shinar the “proper place” for “Wickedness” to reside? (b) What should be our resolve regarding wickedness?



Jehovah made every effort to keep pure worship clean
(See paragraphs 16-18)

spirit of that pagan world. What a relief this vision must have brought them—a guarantee that Jehovah would keep pure worship clean!

¹⁸ However, the vision also reminded the Jews of their responsibility to maintain the purity of their worship. Wickedness cannot and will not be allowed to creep into and dwell among Jehovah's people. After we have been brought into the protective and

loving care of God’s clean organization, we have the responsibility to help maintain it. Are we moved to keep our “house” clean? Wickedness in any form does not belong in our spiritual paradise.

CLEAN PEOPLE HONOR JEHOVAH

¹⁹ Zechariah’s sixth and seventh visions are a sober warning to those who persist in dishonest ways, a reminder that Jehovah does not tolerate wrongdoing. On the part of his sincere worshippers, there must be a genuine hatred of wickedness. These accounts are also a loving reassurance from our heavenly Father. If we diligently work to be the sort of people who have God’s approval and protection, we will not have to face a death-dealing curse. Rather, Jehovah will gladly bless us. All our struggles to remain clean in a world full of wickedness will be worthwhile. We can be sure that we can succeed with Jehovah’s help! But how can we be sure that true worship will prevail in this world filled with ungodliness? What guarantee do we have that Jehovah will protect his organization as the great tribulation approaches? These questions will be discussed in the next article.

19. What do the dramatic visions of Zechariah mean for us today?

We Must Be Taught

(Isaiah 50:4; 54:13)

1. Come with rejoicing, and learn about Jehovah.
“Come drink life’s water,” the spirit has said.
Healthful instruction, God has provided.
All those who hunger for truth will be fed.
2. Never forsaking our gathering together,
We must be taught; we must learn what is right.
Here with God’s spirit, here with our brothers,
Here we are strengthened to walk in the light.
3. Lips that sing praise, how encouraging to hear them!
Tongues of the taught ones, how sweet is their sound!
Oh, may we always meet with God’s people!
Oh, may we always among them be found!



"MANY people know that Jesus had 12 apostles. But they may not be aware that his disciples also included women who were closely associated with him."