

- Song 73 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

**TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD**

- **“Paul Appeals to Caesar and Then Witnesses to King Herod Agrippa”:** (10 min.)  
 Ac 25:11—Paul availed himself of a legal provision and appealed to Caesar (*bt* 198 ¶6)  
 Ac 26:1-3—Paul gave a skillful defense before King Herod Agrippa (*bt* 198-201 ¶10-16)  
 Ac 26:28—Paul’s words had a profound effect on the king (*bt* 202 ¶18)
- **Digging for Spiritual Gems:** (8 min.)  
 Ac 26:14—What is a goad? (*nwtsty* study note; *nwt* glossary, “Goad”)  
  
 Ac 26:27—What dilemma did King Agrippa face when Paul asked him if he believed the prophets? (*w03* 11/15 16-17 ¶14)

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) Ac 25:1-12 (5)

**APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY**

- **First Return Visit Video:** (5 min.) Play and discuss the video.
- **First Return Visit:** (3 min. or less) Use the sample conversation. (2)
- **First Return Visit:** (4 min. or less) Begin with the sample conversation. Then introduce the *Teach Us* book. (3)

**LIVING AS CHRISTIANS**

- Song 38
- **“The Legalization of the Work in Quebec”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the video (video category OUR ORGANIZATION).
- **Congregation Bible Study:** (30 min.) *jy* chap. 51
- Review Followed by Preview of Next Week (3 min.)
- Song 122 and Prayer

ACTS 25-26 | Paul Appeals to Caesar and Then Witnesses to King Herod Agrippa

**25:11; 26:1-3, 28** ✍

Although we need not be anxious about what to say when “brought before governors and kings,” we should be “ready to make a defense” before everyone who demands a reason for our hope. (Mt 10:18-20; 1Pe 3:15) If opposers try to frame “trouble in the name of the law,” how can we imitate Paul’s example?—Ps 94:20.

- We make use of legal provisions to defend the good news.—Ac 25:11
- We are respectful when speaking to the authorities.—Ac 26:2, 3
- If appropriate, we explain how the good news has benefited us and others.—Ac 26:11-20



Have you given thought to how you might respond to those who question your beliefs?

*Grant Us Boldness*

(Acts 4:29)

1. As we tell about the Kingdom,  
 As we witness for your name,  
 There are many who oppose us  
 And who try to bring us shame.  
 But instead of fearing men,  
 It's really you we must obey.  
 So we beg you now for your spirit;  
 O Jehovah, hear what we pray.

*(CHORUS)*

*Grant us boldness as we witness;  
 Help us overcome our fear.  
 Give us confidence and courage  
 So that all the world may hear.  
 Armageddon draws ever near,  
 But until that great day is here,  
 Grant us boldness as we witness.  
 This is our prayer.*

2. Even though we may be fearful,  
 You remember we are dust.  
 Your assurance to support us  
 Is a promise we can trust.  
 Give attention to the threats  
 Of those who persecute and blame.  
 May you help us all to continue  
 As we boldly speak in your name.

*(Chorus)*

## Acts 25-26

**25** Therefore Festus, after arriving in the province and taking charge, went up three days later to Jerusalem from Caes-a-re'a. <sup>2</sup> And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews gave him information against Paul. So they began to beg Festus <sup>3</sup> as a favor to send for Paul to come to Jerusalem. But they were planning to ambush Paul and kill him along the road. <sup>4</sup> However, Festus answered that Paul was to be kept in Caes-a-re'a and that he himself was about to go back there shortly. <sup>5</sup> "So let those who are in power among you," he said, "come down with me and accuse him if, indeed, the man has done something wrong."

<sup>6</sup> So when he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caes-a-re'a, and the next day he sat down on the judgment seat and commanded Paul to be brought in.

<sup>7</sup> When he came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing against him many serious charges that they were unable to prove.

<sup>8</sup> But Paul said in defense: "Neither against the Law of the Jews nor against the temple nor against Caesar have I committed any sin." <sup>9</sup> Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, said in reply to Paul: "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and be judged before me there concerning these things?" <sup>10</sup> But Paul said: "I am standing before the judgment seat of Caesar, where I ought to be judged. I have done no wrong to the Jews, of which you are also becoming well-aware. <sup>11</sup> If I am really a wrongdoer and have committed anything deserving of death, I do not beg off from dying; but if there is no substance to the accusations these men have made against me, no man has the right to hand me over to them as a favor. I appeal to Caesar!" <sup>12</sup> Then Festus, after speaking with the assembly of counselors, replied: "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you will go."

<sup>13</sup> After some days had passed, A-grip'pa the king and Bernice arrived in Caes-a-re'a for a courtesy visit to Festus. <sup>14</sup> Since they were spending a number of days there, Festus presented Paul's case to the king, saying:

“There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix, <sup>15</sup> and when I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought information about him, asking for a judgment of condemnation against him. <sup>16</sup> But I replied to them that it is not Roman procedure to hand any man over as a favor before the accused man meets his accusers face-to-face and gets a chance to speak in his defense concerning the complaint. <sup>17</sup> So when they arrived here, I did not delay, but the next day I sat down on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in. <sup>18</sup> Taking the stand, the accusers did not charge him with any of the wicked things I had expected concerning him. <sup>19</sup> They simply had certain disputes with him concerning their own worship of the deity and concerning a man named Jesus, who was dead but who Paul kept asserting was alive. <sup>20</sup> Being at a loss as to how to handle this dispute, I asked if he would like to go to Jerusalem and be judged there concerning these matters. <sup>21</sup> But when Paul appealed to be kept in custody for the decision by the August One, I commanded him to be held until I should send him on to Caesar.”

<sup>22</sup> A-grip'pa then said to Festus: “I would like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” he said, “you will hear him.” <sup>23</sup> So the next day A-grip'pa and Bernice came with much pompous show and entered the audience chamber together with military commanders as well as the prominent men in the city; and when Festus gave the command, Paul was brought in. <sup>24</sup> And Festus said: “King A-grip'pa and all you who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish populace have petitioned me both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. <sup>25</sup> But I perceived that he had done nothing deserving of death. So when

this man himself appealed to the August One, I decided to send him. <sup>26</sup> But I have nothing certain to write about him to my Lord. So I brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King A-grip'pa, so that after the judicial examination has taken place, I might have something to write. <sup>27</sup> For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner and not also to indicate the charges against him.”

**26** A-grip'pa said to Paul: “You are permitted to speak in your own behalf.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to say in his defense:

<sup>2</sup> “Concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, King A-grip'pa, I consider myself happy that it is before you I am to make my defense this day, <sup>3</sup> especially because you are an expert on all the customs as well as the controversies among the Jews. Therefore, I beg you to hear me patiently.

<sup>4</sup> “Indeed, the manner of life I led from youth up among my people and in Jerusalem is well-known by all the Jews <sup>5</sup> who were previously acquainted with me, if they would be willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our form of worship, I lived as a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup> But now for the hope of the promise that was made by God to our forefathers, I stand on trial; <sup>7</sup> this is the same promise our 12 tribes are hoping to see fulfilled by intensely rendering him sacred service night and day. Concerning this hope I am accused by Jews, O King.

<sup>8</sup> “Why is it considered unbelievable among you that God raises up the dead? <sup>9</sup> I, for one, was convinced that I should commit many acts of opposition against the name of Jesus the Naz-a-rene'.

<sup>10</sup> This is exactly what I did in Jerusalem, and I locked up many of the holy ones in prisons, for I had received authority from the chief priests; and when they were to be executed, I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup> By punishing them often in all the synagogues, I tried to

force them to recant; and since I was extremely furious with them, I went so far as to persecute them even in outlying cities.

<sup>12</sup> “While doing this as I was traveling to Damascus with authority and a commission from the chief priests, <sup>13</sup> I saw at midday on the road, O King, a light beyond the brilliance of the sun flash from heaven around me and around those traveling with me. <sup>14</sup> And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice say to me in the Hebrew language: ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? To keep kicking against the goads makes it hard for you.’ <sup>15</sup> But I said: ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said: ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup> But rise and stand on your feet. This is why I have appeared to you, to choose you as a servant and a witness both of things you have seen and things I will make you see respecting me. <sup>17</sup> And I will rescue you from this people and from the nations, to whom I am sending you <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those sanctified by their faith in me.’

<sup>19</sup> “Therefore, King A-grip'pa, I did not become disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup> but to those in Damascus first and then to those in Jerusalem, and over all the country of Ju-de'a, and also to the nations, I was bringing the message that they should repent and turn to God by doing works that befit repentance. <sup>21</sup> This is why the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup> However, because I have experienced the help that is from God, I continue to this day bearing witness to both small and great, saying nothing except what the Prophets as well as Moses stated was going to take place— <sup>23</sup> that the Christ was to suffer and that as the first to be resurrected from the dead, he was going to proclaim light both to this people and to the nations.”

<sup>24</sup> Now as Paul was saying these things in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice: “You are going out of your mind, Paul! Great

learning is driving you out of your mind!”<sup>25</sup> But Paul said: “I am not going out of my mind, Your Excellency Festus, but I am speaking words of truth and of a sound mind.”<sup>26</sup> For a fact, the king to whom I am speaking so freely well knows about these things; I am convinced that not one of these things escapes his notice, for none of this has been done in a corner.<sup>27</sup> Do you, King A-grip'pa, believe the Prophets? I know that you believe.”<sup>28</sup> But A-grip'pa said to Paul: “In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian.”<sup>29</sup> At this Paul said: “I wish to God that whether in a short time or in a long time, not only you but also all those who hear me today would become men such as I am, with the exception of these prison bonds.”

<sup>30</sup> Then the king rose and so did the governor and Bernice and the men seated with them.<sup>31</sup> But as they were leaving, they began saying to one another: “This man is doing nothing deserving of death or prison bonds.”<sup>32</sup> A-grip'pa then said to Festus: “This man could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar.”



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ACTS 25-26 | Paul Appeals to Caesar and Then Witnesses to King Herod Agrippa

**25:11; 26:1-3, 28** ✍

Although we need not be anxious about what to say when “brought before governors and kings,” we should be “ready to make a defense” before everyone who demands a reason for our hope. (Mt 10:18-20; 1Pe 3:15) If opposers try to frame “trouble in the name of the law,” how can we imitate Paul’s example?—Ps 94:20.

- We make use of legal provisions to defend the good news.—Ac 25:11
- We are respectful when speaking to the authorities.—Ac 26:2, 3
- If appropriate, we explain how the good news has benefited us and others.—Ac 26:11-20



Have you given thought to how you might respond to those who question your beliefs?



January 21-27

## Treasures From God's Word

Acts 25:11—Paul availed himself of a legal provision and appealed to Caesar

**Acts 25:11:** If I am really a wrongdoer and have committed anything deserving of death, I do not beg off from dying; but if there is no substance to the accusations these men have made against me, no man has the right to hand me over to them as a favor. I appeal to Caesar!”

### **bt 198 paragraph 6**

Festus' desire to indulge the Jews could have put Paul in mortal danger. Therefore, Paul used a right he possessed as a Roman citizen. He told Festus: “I am standing before the judgment seat of Caesar, where I ought to be judged. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also are finding out quite well. . . . I appeal to Caesar!” Once made, such an appeal was usually irrevocable. Festus emphasized this, saying: “To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go.” (Acts 25:10-12) By appealing to a higher legal authority, Paul set a precedent for true Christians today. When opposers try to frame “trouble by decree,” Jehovah's Witnesses avail themselves of legal provisions to defend the good news.—Psalms 94:20.

Acts 26:1-3—Paul gave a skillful defense before King Herod Agrippa

**Acts 26:1-3:** Agrippa said to Paul: “You are permitted to speak in your own behalf.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to say in his defense: “Concerning all the things of which I am

accused by the Jews, King Agrippa, I consider myself happy that it is before you I am to make my defense this day, especially because you are an expert on all the customs as well as the controversies among the Jews. Therefore, I beg you to hear me patiently.

### **bt 198-201 paragraphs 10-16**

10 Paul respectfully thanked King Agrippa for the opportunity to present a defense to him, acknowledging that the king was an expert on all the customs as well as the controversies among Jews. Paul then described his past life: “According to the strictest sect of our form of worship I lived a Pharisee.” (Acts 26:5) As a Pharisee, Paul had hoped in the coming of the Messiah. Now, as a Christian, he boldly identified Jesus Christ as that long-awaited one. A belief that he and his accusers had in common—that is, the hope of the fulfillment of God’s promise to their forefathers—was the reason that Paul was on trial that day. This situation left Agrippa even more interested in what Paul had to say.

11 Recalling his past outrageous treatment of Christians, Paul said: “I, for one, really thought within myself I ought to commit many acts of opposition against the name of Jesus the Nazarene . . . Since I was extremely mad against them [the followers of Christ], I went so far as to persecuting them even in outside cities.” (Acts 26:9-11) Paul was not exaggerating. Many people knew of the violence he had done to the Christians. (Galatians 1:13, 23) ‘What could have changed such a man?’ Agrippa may have wondered.

12 Paul’s next words provided the answer: “As I was journeying to Damascus with authority and a commission from the chief priests, I saw at midday on the road, O king, a light beyond the brilliance of the sun flash from heaven about me and about those journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground I heard a voice say to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you

persecuting me? To keep kicking against the goads makes it hard for you.’ But I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.’”—Acts 26:12-15.

13 Before this supernatural event, Paul had figuratively been “kicking against the goads.” Just as a beast of burden would injure itself unnecessarily by kicking against the sharp end of an oxgoad, Paul had hurt himself spiritually by resisting the will of God.[5] By appearing to Paul on the road to Damascus, the resurrected Jesus caused this sincere but clearly misguided man to change his thinking.—John 16:1, 2.

14 Paul did indeed make drastic changes in his life. Addressing Agrippa, he said: “I did not become disobedient to the heavenly sight, but both to those in Damascus first and to those in Jerusalem, and over all the country of Judea, and to the nations I went bringing the message that they should repent and turn to God by doing works that befit repentance.” (Acts 26:19, 20) For years, Paul had been fulfilling the commission that Jesus Christ had given him in that midday vision. With what results? Those who responded to the good news that Paul preached repented of their immoral, dishonest conduct and turned to God. Such ones became good citizens, contributing to and showing respect for law and order.

15 Those benefits, however, meant nothing to Paul’s Jewish opposers. Paul said: “On account of these things Jews seized me in the temple and attempted to slay me. However, because I have obtained the help that is from God I continue to this day bearing witness to both small and great.”—Acts 26:21, 22.

16 As true Christians, we must be “always ready to make a defense” of our faith. (1 Peter 3:15) When speaking to judges and rulers about our beliefs, we may find it helpful to imitate the method Paul used in speaking to Agrippa and Festus. By respectfully telling

them how Bible truths have changed lives for the better—our own life as well as the lives of those who respond to our message—we may touch the hearts of these high officials.

Acts 26:28—Paul’s words had a profound effect on the king

**Acts 26:28:** But Agrippa said to Paul: “In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian.”

### ***bt* 202 paragraph 18**

But Paul had a reply for the governor: “I am not going mad, Your Excellency Festus, but I am uttering sayings of truth and of soundness of mind. In reality, the king to whom I am speaking with freeness of speech well knows about these things . . . Do you, King Agrippa, believe the Prophets? I know you believe.” Agrippa responded: “In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian.” (Acts 26:25-28) These words, sincere or not, show that Paul’s witness had a profound effect on the king.

## Digging for Spiritual Gems

Acts 26:14—What is a goad?

**Acts 26:14:** And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice say to me in the Hebrew language: ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? To keep kicking against the goads makes it hard for you.’

### Study note

**kicking against the goads:** A goad is a pointed rod used to urge on an animal. (Judges 3:31) The expression “to kick against the goads” is a proverb found in Greek literature. It is based on the image of a stubborn bull that resists the prodding of the goad by kicking against it, resulting in injury to the animal. Saul behaved in a similar manner before becoming a Christian. By fighting against Jesus’ followers, who had the backing of Jehovah God, Paul risked causing serious injury to himself. (Compare Acts 5:38, 39; 1 Timothy 1:13, 14.) At Ecclesiastes 12:11, “oxgoads” are mentioned in a figurative sense, referring to a wise person’s words that move a listener to follow counsel.

### Glossary

#### Goad

A long rod with a sharp metal point, used by farmers to prod an animal. The goad is compared to the words of a wise person that move the listener to heed wise counsel. “Kicking against the goads” is drawn from the action of a stubborn bull that resists the prodding of the goad by kicking against it, resulting in injury to itself.—Acts 26:14; Judges 3:31.

Acts 26:27—What dilemma did King Agrippa face when Paul asked him if he believed the prophets?

**Acts 26:27:** Do you, King Agrippa, believe the Prophets? I know that you believe.”

### **w03 11/15 16-17 paragraph 14**

Paul knew that Agrippa was nominally a Jew. Appealing to Agrippa’s knowledge of Judaism, Paul reasoned that his preaching really involved “saying nothing except things the Prophets as well as Moses stated were going to take place” regarding the Messiah’s death and resurrection. (Acts 26:22, 23) Addressing Agrippa directly, Paul asked: “Do you, King Agrippa, believe the Prophets?” Agrippa faced a dilemma. If he said that he rejected the prophets, his reputation as a Jewish believer would be ruined. But if he concurred with Paul’s reasoning, he would be taking a position of public agreement with the apostle and would risk being called a Christian. Paul wisely answered his own question, saying: “I know you believe.” How did Agrippa’s heart move him to answer? He responded: “In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian.” (Acts 26:27, 28) Although Agrippa did not become a Christian, Paul evidently affected his heart to some extent with his message.—Hebrews 4:12.

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 minutes or less) Acts 25:1-12 (*th* study 5)

# ACTS

## Study Notes—Chapter 25

### 25:1

**the province:** That is, the Roman province of Judea, with Caesarea serving as the governor's residence. The Greek expression rendered **arriving in . . . and taking charge** is understood to refer to Festus' taking up his office as governor in the province.

### 25:8

**Caesar:** Or "the Emperor." The Roman emperor at this time was Nero. His rule began in 54 C.E. and ended in 68 C.E. when he committed suicide at about the age of 31. All references to Caesar in Acts chapters 25 through 28 apply to Nero.—See study notes on Mt 22:17; Ac 17:7 and Glossary.

### 25:11

**I appeal to Caesar!:** In the Bible record, this is the third time that Paul made use of his rights as a Roman citizen. (For the other two occasions, see study notes on Ac 16:37; 22:25.) Such an appeal to Caesar could be made either after the pronouncement of judgment or at any earlier point in the trial. Festus gave evidence of not wanting to decide the matter himself, and a trial in Jerusalem held virtually no hope of justice. So Paul made this formal petition to be judged by the highest court of the empire. It appears that in some cases the appeal could be denied, for example, in the case of a thief, a pirate, or a seditionist caught in the act. Likely for this reason, Festus conferred with "the assembly of counselors" before admitting the appeal. (Ac 25:12) The subsequent hearing with the visiting Herod Agrippa II was held in order that Festus might have clearer information to submit when transmitting Paul's case to "the August One," Nero. (Ac 25:12-27; 26:32; 28:19) Paul's



appeal also served the purpose of taking him to Rome, fulfilling an intention expressed earlier. (Ac 19:21) Jesus' prophetic promise to Paul as well as the angelic message that he later received shows divine direction in the matter.—Ac 23:11; 27:23, 24.

## 25:13

**Agrippa:** That is, Herod Agrippa II. He was the great-grandson of Herod the Great and the son of Herod Agrippa I and his wife Cypros.—Ac 12:1; see Glossary, “Herod.”

**Bernice:** The sister of Herod Agrippa II but living incestuously with him. She later became the mistress of Titus before he became Roman emperor.

## 25:15

**elders:** Here referring to leaders of the Jewish nation who are often mentioned together with chief priests and scribes.—See study note on Mt 16:21.

## 25:21

**the August One:** A title for the Roman emperor. The Greek word *Se·ba·stos'* means “worthy of reverence; revered; august” and is a translation of the Latin title *Augustus*. Some translations use such expressions as “His Majesty the Emperor” or “His Imperial Majesty.” In this case, it is the title of Caesar Nero (54-68 C.E.), the fourth in succession from Octavian (Octavius), who first held this title.—See study note on Lu 2:1.

## ACTS

### Study Notes—Chapter 26

#### 26:5

**sect of our form of worship:** Or “sect of our religion.”—See study note on Ac 24:5. **sect:** The Greek word here (Acts 24:5) rendered “sect,” *hai're·sis* (from which the English word “heresy” is derived), apparently had the original meaning “a choice.” That is how the word is used at Le 22:18 in the *Septuagint*, which speaks about Israelites offering gifts “according to all their choice.” As used in the Christian Greek Scriptures, this term refers to a group of people holding to distinctive views or doctrines. It is used to describe the two prominent branches of Judaism—the Pharisees and the Sadducees. (Ac 5:17; 15:5; 26:5) Non-Christians called Christianity “a sect” or “the sect of the Nazarenes,” possibly viewing it as a breakaway group from Judaism. (Ac 24:5, 14; 28:22) The Greek word *hai're·sis* was also applied to groups that developed within the Christian congregation. Jesus emphasized and prayed that unity would prevail among his followers (Joh 17:21), and the apostles sought to preserve the oneness of the Christian congregation (1Co 1:10; Jude 17-19). If the members of the congregation separated into groups or factions, this would disrupt the unity. Therefore, in describing such groups, the Greek word *hai're·sis* came to be used in the negative sense of a faction or a divisive group, a sect. Disunity in belief could give rise to fierce disputing, dissension, and even enmity. (Compare Ac 23:7-10.) So sects were to be avoided and were considered a manifestation of “the works of the flesh.”—Ga 5:19-21; 1Co 11:19; 2Pe 2:1.

#### 26:7

**rendering him sacred service:** The Greek verb *la·treu'o* basically denotes serving. As used in the Scriptures, it usually

refers to rendering service to God or in connection with the worship of him (Mt 4:10; Lu 2:37; 4:8; Ac 7:7; Ro 1:9; Php 3:3; 2Ti 1:3; Heb 9:14; 12:28; Re 7:15; 22:3), including service at the sanctuary or temple (Heb 8:5; 9:9; 10:2; 13:10). Thus, in some contexts the expression can also be rendered “to worship.” In a few cases, it is used in connection with false worship—rendering service to, or worshipping, created things. (Ac 7:42; Ro 1:25) Some translations of the Christian Greek Scriptures into Hebrew (referred to as J<sup>13-17</sup> in App. C4) read “serving (worshipping) Jehovah.”

## 26:9

**the Nazarene:** A descriptive epithet applied to Jesus and later to his followers. (Ac 24:5) Since many Jews had the name Jesus, it was common to add a further identification; the practice of associating people with the places from which they came was customary in Bible times. (2Sa 3:2, 3; 17:27; 23:25-39; Na 1:1; Ac 13:1; 21:29) Jesus lived most of his early life in the town of Nazareth in Galilee, so it was natural to use this term regarding him. Jesus was often referred to as “the Nazarene,” in different situations and by various individuals. (Mr 1:23, 24; 10:46, 47; 14:66-69; 16:5, 6; Lu 24:13-19; Joh 18:1-7) Jesus himself accepted the name and used it. (Joh 18:5-8; Ac 22:6-8) On the sign that Pilate placed on the torture stake, he wrote in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek: “Jesus the Nazarene the King of the Jews.” (Joh 19:19, 20) From Pentecost 33 C.E. onward, the apostles as well as others often spoke of Jesus as the Nazarene or as being from Nazareth.—Ac 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38; 26:9; see also study note on Mt 2:23.

## 26:10

**cast my vote:** Lit., “cast down my pebble,” that is, a pebble used in voting. The Greek word *pse'phos* refers to a small stone and is rendered “pebble” at Re 2:17. Pebbles were used in courts of

justice in rendering judgment or voicing an opinion of either innocence or guilt. White pebbles were used for pronouncing innocence, acquittal; black ones for pronouncing guilt, condemnation.

## 26:14

**in the Hebrew language:** In the Christian Greek Scriptures, inspired Bible writers used the term “Hebrew” in designating the language spoken by the Jews (Joh 19:13, 17, 20; Ac 21:40; 22:2; Re 9:11; 16:16), as well as the language in which the resurrected and glorified Jesus addressed Saul of Tarsus (Ac 26:14, 15). At Ac 6:1, “Hebrew-speaking Jews” are distinguished from “Greek-speaking Jews.” While some scholars hold that the term “Hebrew” in these references should instead be rendered “Aramaic,” there is good reason to believe that the term actually applies to the Hebrew language. When the physician Luke says that Paul spoke to the people of Jerusalem “in the Hebrew language,” Paul was addressing those whose life revolved around studying the Law of Moses in Hebrew. Also, of the great number of fragments and manuscripts comprising the Dead Sea Scrolls, the majority of Biblical and non-Biblical texts are written in Hebrew, showing that the language was in daily use. The smaller number of Aramaic fragments found shows that both languages were used. So it seems highly unlikely that when Bible writers used the word “Hebrew,” they actually meant the Aramaic or Syrian language. (Ac 21:40; 22:2; compare Ac 26:14.) The Hebrew Scriptures earlier distinguished between “Aramaic” and “the language of the Jews” (2Ki 18:26), and first-century Jewish historian Josephus, considering this passage of the Bible, speaks of “Aramaic” and “Hebrew” as distinct tongues. (*Jewish Antiquities*, X, 8 [i, 2]) It is true that there are some terms that are quite similar in both Aramaic and Hebrew and possibly other terms that were adopted into Hebrew from Aramaic.

However, there seems to be no reason for the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures to have said Hebrew if they meant Aramaic.

**kicking against the goads:** A goad is a pointed rod used to urge on an animal. (Jg 3:31) The expression “to kick against the goads” is a proverb found in Greek literature. It is based on the image of a stubborn bull that resists the prodding of the goad by kicking against it, resulting in injury to the animal. Saul behaved in a similar manner before becoming a Christian. By fighting against Jesus’ followers, who had the backing of Jehovah God, Paul risked causing serious injury to himself. (Compare Ac 5:38, 39; 1Ti 1:13, 14.) At Ec 12:11, “oxgoads” are mentioned in a figurative sense, referring to a wise person’s words that move a listener to follow counsel.

## 26:20

**repent:** The Greek word used here could literally be rendered “to change one’s mind,” signifying a change in thinking, attitude, or purpose. In this context, the admonition to “repent” is connected with the expression **and turn to God** and is therefore referring to a person’s relationship with God. For a person to be genuinely repentant, he must do **works that befit repentance**. In other words, his actions would give evidence that a real change of mind or attitude had taken place.—See study notes on Mt 3:2, 8 and Glossary, “Repentance.”

## 26:28

**a Christian:** The Greek term *Khri-sti-a-nos'*, meaning “follower of Christ,” is found only three times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. (Ac 11:26; 26:28; 1Pe 4:16) It is derived from *Khri-stos'*, meaning Christ, or Anointed One. Christians follow both the example and the teachings of Jesus, “the Christ,” or the one anointed by Jehovah. (Lu 2:26; 4:18) The designation

“Christians” was given “by divine providence” possibly as early as the year 44 C.E. when the events mentioned in this text occurred. The name apparently gained widespread acceptance, so that when Paul appeared before King Herod Agrippa II, about 58 C.E., Agrippa knew who the Christians were. (Ac 26:28) The historian Tacitus indicates that by about the year 64 C.E., the term “Christian” was in use among the general population in Rome. In addition, sometime between 62 and 64 C.E., Peter wrote his first letter to Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire. By then, the name Christian seems to have been widespread, distinctive, and specific. (1Pe 1:1, 2; 4:16) With this divinely provided name, Jesus’ disciples could no longer be mistaken for a sect of Judaism.

## **26:32**

**Caesar:** Or “the Emperor.” The Roman emperor at this time was Nero, who ruled from 54 to 68 C.E. when he committed suicide at about the age of 31. All references to Caesar in Acts chapters 25 through 28 apply to Nero.—See study notes on Mt 22:17; Ac 17:7 and Glossary.



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## Caesar Nero

This gold coin, minted about 56-57 C.E., shows a bust of Nero, who ruled the Roman Empire from 54 to 68 C.E. Nero was the Caesar to whom Paul appealed after his unjust arrest in Jerusalem and subsequent incarceration in Caesarea from about 56 to about 58 C.E. It appears that after Paul was first imprisoned in Rome, about 59 C.E., he was pronounced innocent and released about 61 C.E. However, in 64 C.E. a fire destroyed a quarter of the city of Rome, and some blamed Nero for the disaster. To deflect suspicion, Nero accused the Christians, prompting a wave of violent persecution by the government. It is likely that about this time (65 C.E.), Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the second time and was executed thereafter.

**Related Scripture(s)** Ac 25:11; Ac 28:19



- Song 73 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

**TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD**

- **“Paul Appeals to Caesar and Then Witnesses to King Herod Agrippa”:** (10 min.)  
 Ac 25:11—Paul availed himself of a legal provision and appealed to Caesar (*bt* 198 ¶6)  
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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) Ac 25:1-12 (5)

**APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY**

- **First Return Visit Video:** (5 min.) Play and discuss the video.
- **First Return Visit:** (3 min. or less) Use the sample conversation. (2)
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**LIVING AS CHRISTIANS**

- Song 38
- **“The Legalization of the Work in Quebec”:** (15 min.) Discussion. Play the video (video category OUR ORGANIZATION).
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ACTS 25-26 | Paul Appeals to Caesar and Then Witnesses to King Herod Agrippa

**25:11; 26:1-3, 28** ✍

Although we need not be anxious about what to say when “brought before governors and kings,” we should be “ready to make a defense” before everyone who demands a reason for our hope. (Mt 10:18-20; 1Pe 3:15) If opposers try to frame “trouble in the name of the law,” how can we imitate Paul’s example?—Ps 94:20.

- We make use of legal provisions to defend the good news.—Ac 25:11
- We are respectful when speaking to the authorities.—Ac 26:2, 3
- If appropriate, we explain how the good news has benefited us and others.—Ac 26:11-20



Have you given thought to how you might respond to those who question your beliefs?

## Sample Conversations – January 2019

### First Return Visit

**Question:** How do we know that Jehovah God wants us to become his friends?

**Scripture:** Jas 4:8

**Link:** How can we become God's friends?

Becky (Publisher 1): Hi Katie it's great to see you again. By the way, just to refresh your memory, I'm Becky, and this is Susan.

Katie (Householder): Yeah, I remember. Good to see you again.

Susan (Publisher 2): We've been looking forward to returning.

Becky (Publisher 1): We have. You may recall, that the last time we were here, we left a question with you: How can we know that God, whose name is Jehovah, wants us to draw close to him as a friend? How would you answer that?

Katie (Householder): Well, I have to be honest, I'm not really sure.

Becky (Publisher 1): That's OK. It's probably not a topic that you hear discussed every day. But the Bible is clear, that Jehovah really does want us to have a close friendship with him. For example, consider what we read here at James 4:8. Susan would you please read that for us?

Susan (Publisher 2): Hm, hm. It says: "Draw close to God, and He will draw close to you."

Becky (Publisher 1): So, if we take steps to become closer to God, what will happen in return?

Katie (Householder): He'll draw close to us.

Becky (Publisher 1): Exactly. Just think, the creator of the vast universe invites us, tiny little humans, to draw close to him, to be his friends, and he promises that if we try to do that, he will, in turn, draw close to us.

Katie (Householder): That's very touching.

*[Becky soliloquises: Katie seems to have a genuine interest in Bible truths. She has shown a willingness to discuss the scriptures, and she responds well to the questions we've asked. I think this would be a good time to introduce a publication from our Teaching Toolbox]*

## Sample Conversations – January 2019

Becky (Publisher 1): You know, I think you would really enjoy a publication that discusses this very topic. It's entitled: What Can the Bible Teach Us? The points that we've discussed so far, are here in Chapter 1. The scripture we just read, James 4:8, is here. And the next paragraph begins of the question: How can you become God's friend? The Bible's answer is discussed in this paragraph. Why don't you read it over, and we could talk about it the next time we're here.

Katie (Householder): That sounds good.



# Our Christian Life and Ministry

## MEETING WORKBOOK


### Sample Conversations

●○○  
**INITIAL CALL** →

**Question:** What is God's name?

**Scripture:** Ps 83:18

**Link:** How do we know that Jehovah God wants us to become his friends?




○○○  
**FIRST RETURN VISIT** →

**Question:** How do we know that Jehovah God wants us to become his friends?

**Scripture:** Jas 4:8

**Link:** How can we become God's friends?




○○●  
**SECOND RETURN VISIT**

**Question:** How can we become God's friends?

**Scripture:** Joh 17:3

**Link:** How can we feel close to God since we cannot see him?



# What Can the Bible Teach Us?

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## *He Will Make You Strong*

(1 Peter 5:10)

1. There was a reason why God brought the truth to you  
And called you from the darkness to the light.  
Within your heart, he saw the longing that you had  
To search for him and practice what is right.  
You promised him in prayer to do his will;  
He helped you then, and he will help you still.

### *(CHORUS)*

*With Jesus' blood He bought you,  
to God you now belong.*

*So he will make you firm,  
and he will make you strong.*

*He'll guide you and protect you,  
as he has all along.*

*Yes, he will make you firm,  
and he will make you strong.*

2. God gave his own beloved Son in your behalf;  
On this account, He wants you to succeed.  
If He did not withhold the gift of His dear Son,  
Then never doubt He'll give the strength you need.  
He won't forget the faith and love you've shown;  
He will not fail to care for all His own.

### *(Chorus)*



- Song 73 and Prayer
- Opening Comments (3 min. or less)

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- If appropriate, we explain how the good news has benefited us and others.—Ac 26:11-20



Have you given thought to how you might respond to those who question your beliefs?

# 51

## MURDER DURING A BIRTHDAY PARTY

MATTHEW 14:1-12    MARK 6:14-29    LUKE 9:7-9

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- HEROD HAS JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

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While Jesus' apostles are carrying out their ministry in Galilee, the one who introduced Jesus has no such liberty. John the Baptist is still in prison after almost two years.

John had openly declared that it was wrong for King Herod Antipas to take Herodias, the wife of his half brother Philip, as his own. Herod had divorced his first wife to marry Herodias. According to the Mosaic Law, which Herod claims to follow, this marriage is adulterous and illegal. In response to John's reproof, Herod had John thrown into prison, perhaps at the urging of Herodias.

Herod is at a loss as to what to do with John, because the people 'take him for a prophet.' (Matthew 14:5) Herodias, though, feels no such indecision. She is "nursing a grudge against him," and in fact,



she keeps seeking to have him put to death. (Mark 6:19) Finally, the opportunity arises.

Shortly before the Passover of 32 C.E., Herod arranges a large celebration for his birthday. All of Herod's top-ranking officials and army officers, as well as the leading citizens of Galilee, assemble for the party. During the festivities, Salome, the young daughter of Herodias by her former husband Philip, is sent in to dance for the guests. The men are enthralled by her performance.

Highly pleased with his stepdaughter, Herod says to her: "Ask me for whatever you want, and I will give it to you." He even swears: "Whatever you ask me for, I will give it to you, up to half my kingdom." Before answering, Salome goes out and says to her mother: "What should I ask for?"—Mark 6:22-24.

This is the opportunity that Herodias has been seeking! "The head of John the Baptizer," she promptly answers. Immediately, Salome comes back to Herod with her request: "I want you to give me right away on a platter the head of John the Baptist."—Mark 6:24, 25.

This greatly distresses Herod, but his guests have heard his oath to Salome. He is embarrassed not to grant it, even if this means murdering an innocent man. Hence, Herod sends a bodyguard to the prison with the grisly instructions. Soon the bodyguard returns with John's head on a platter. He gives it to Salome, who takes it to her mother.

When John's disciples hear what has happened, they come and remove his body and bury it. Then they report the matter to Jesus.

Later, when Herod hears of Jesus' healing people and casting out demons, he is disturbed. He wonders if the man doing these things—Jesus—is actually John the Baptist now “raised up from the dead.” (Luke 9:7) So Herod Antipas greatly desires to see Jesus. This is certainly not to hear Jesus' preaching. Rather, Herod wants to see Jesus to confirm whether his concerns are well-founded or not.

- ◇ Why is John the Baptist in prison?
- ◇ How does Herodias finally manage to have John killed?
- ◇ After John's death, why does Herod Antipas want to see Jesus?

1. Nations are troubled as never before.  
People are fearful of what lies in store.  
Firm and immovable we need to be,  
Serving our God faithfully.

***(CHORUS)***

*Steadfast we all need to be;  
Far from this world we keep free,  
Standing firm to the end,  
Unending life we'll see.*

2. Snares of the world and temptations abound.  
We can resist if our thinking is sound.  
Hating what's bad while we love what is true  
Makes us immovable too.

***(Chorus)***

3. Give to God worship that comes from the heart.  
In the Lord's service may we have a part.  
Preach the good news, always holding it fast.  
Soon the last days will have passed.

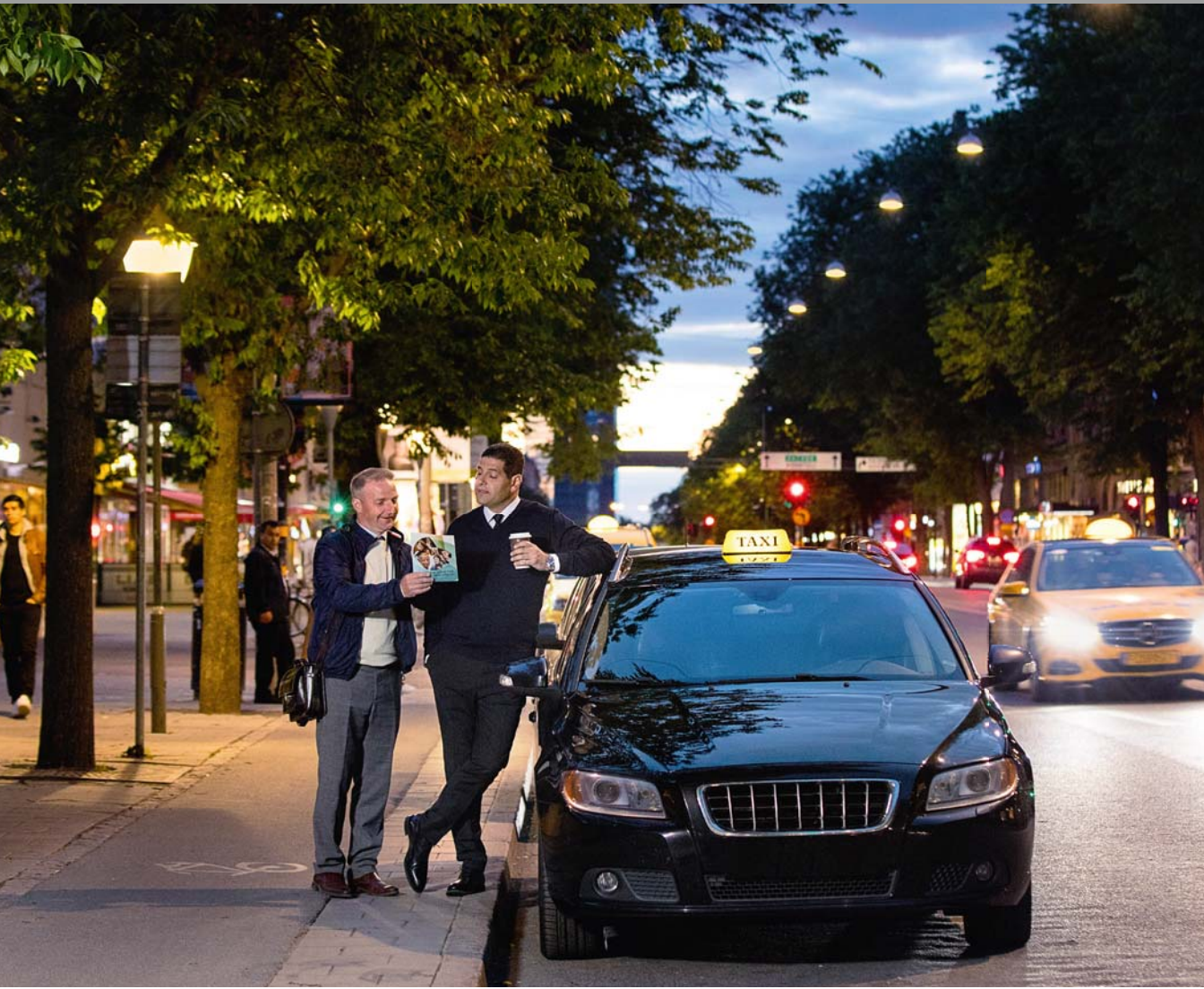
***(Chorus)***



NOVEMBER 2018

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:  
DECEMBER 31, 2018–  
FEBRUARY 3, 2019

LARGE  
PRINT  
EDITION



COVER IMAGE:  
**SWEDEN**

Publishers in Stockholm take advantage of the Nordic summer light to do evening witnessing. They share a message of hope with taxi drivers, store clerks, service station attendants, and other night workers

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### **4 WEEK OF DECEMBER 31–JANUARY 6** “Buy Truth and Never Sell It”

### **16 WEEK OF JANUARY 7-13** “I Will Walk in Your Truth”

These two articles encourage us to appreciate the priceless value of Jehovah’s precious truth. The value of that truth goes far beyond any sacrifice we make to obtain it. The articles also consider what we can do to ensure that we keep viewing the truth as a treasure and that we never give up or never compromise on even one aspect of the precious truth Jehovah has taught us.



PUBLISHERS

22,418

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

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## 28 WEEK OF JANUARY 14-20

### Trust in Jehovah and Live!

The book of Habakkuk shows us how to maintain a trusting relationship with Jehovah when we experience distress. This article helps us to see that even if worries, trials, and pain increase, ultimately our trust in God will be rewarded with deliverance.

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## 40 WEEK OF JANUARY 21-27

### Who Molds Your Thinking?

## 52 WEEK OF JANUARY 28–FEBRUARY 3

### Are You Making Jehovah's Thoughts Your Own?

As we grow spiritually, we come to appreciate the superiority of Jehovah's way of thinking. These two articles explain how we can avoid being molded by the world's thoughts and instead align our thinking with Jehovah's.

# *Make Me Know Your Ways*

(Psalm 25:4)

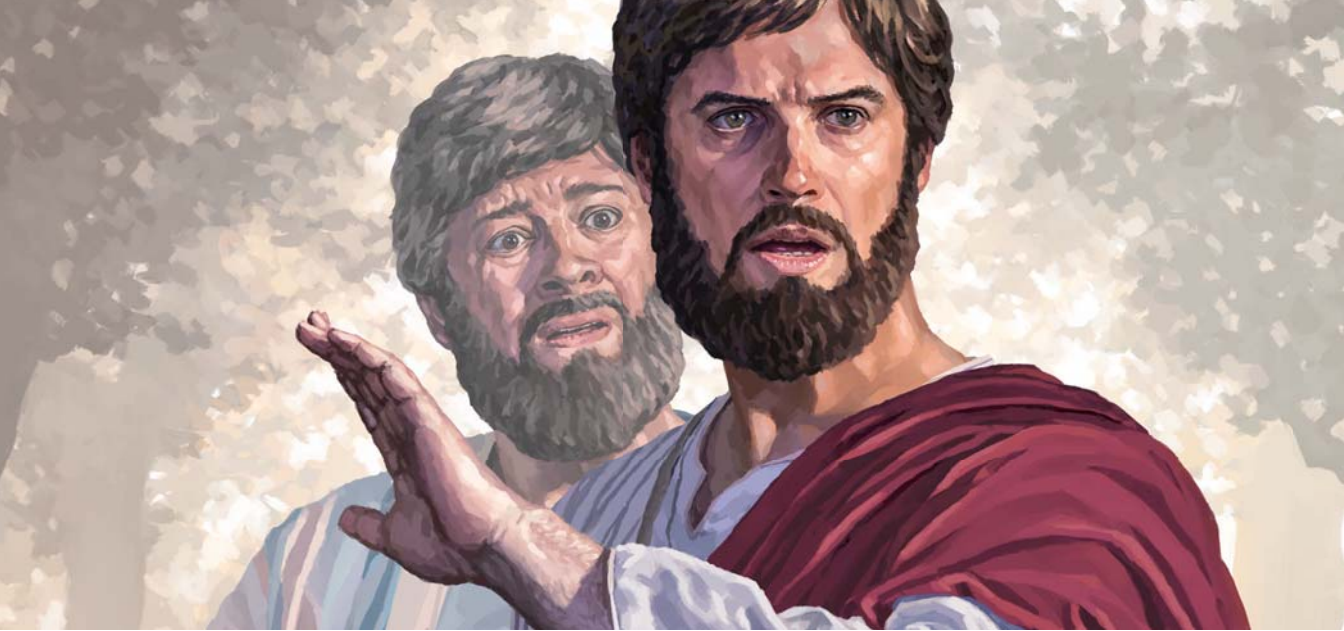
1. We're gathered together, Jehovah our God,  
Accepting your warm invitation.  
Your Word is a lamp that lights up our pathway,  
The source of divine education.

*(CHORUS)*

*Teach me your ways, and make me understand;  
Incline my ear to hear your wise command.  
Cause me to walk in ways of truth and right,  
And make your law my principal delight.*

2. Unreachably high is your wisdom, O God;  
Your judgments we find reassuring.  
Your Word is a source of unending wonder;  
Your sayings of truth are enduring.

*(Chorus)*



**SONGS:**  
88, 45

**CAN YOU ANSWER?**

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Why is Jehovah's thinking beneficial for us?

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Why is Jehovah's thinking superior to the ideas and values of this world?

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To avoid being molded by this system, what must we do?

## Who Molds Your Thinking?

*“Stop being molded by this system of things.”—ROM. 12:2.*

**JESUS’** disciples could not believe what they were hearing. Jesus, the one they expected to restore Israel’s kingdom, said that he would soon suffer and die. It

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**1, 2.** (a) What was Jesus’ response to Peter’s advice to be kind to himself? (See opening picture.) (b) Why did Jesus respond in that way?

was the apostle Peter who spoke up. “Be kind to yourself, Lord,” he said. “You will not have this happen to you at all.” Jesus countered: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not God’s thoughts, but those of men.”—Matt. 16:21-23; Acts 1:6.

<sup>2</sup> With those words, Jesus made a distinction between thoughts that originate with God and thoughts that originate with this world under Satan’s control. (1 John 5:19) Peter echoed the self-sparing attitude of the world. But Jesus knew that his Father’s thinking was different. He knew that God wanted him to brace himself for the suffering and death that awaited him. In his reply to Peter, Jesus clearly rejected the world’s thinking in favor of Jehovah’s.

<sup>3</sup> What about us? Do we think God’s thoughts or those of this world? Granted, we have likely conformed our conduct to God’s requirements. But what about our thinking? Are we bringing our thoughts and viewpoints into alignment with Jehovah’s? Doing so requires a deliberate effort. On the other hand, little or no effort is needed to absorb the world’s thinking. That is because the spirit of

---

3. Why is it challenging to reject the world’s thinking in favor of Jehovah’s?

the world is all around us. (Eph. 2:2) Furthermore, because it often appeals to self-interest, the world's way of thinking can be enticing. Yes, it is challenging to think like Jehovah but all too easy to think like the world.

<sup>4</sup> However, if we allow the world to mold our thinking, we will be inclined toward selfishness and a desire for moral independence. (Mark 7:21, 22) It is therefore vital that we cultivate "God's thoughts," not "those of men." This article will help us. It considers reasons why aligning our thoughts with Jehovah's is not overly restrictive but beneficial. It also shows us how we can resist being molded by the thinking of the world. The next article examines how we can get Jehovah's thinking on various matters and make his thoughts our own.

## **JEHOVAH'S THINKING IS BENEFICIAL AND DESIRABLE**

<sup>5</sup> Some people resist the idea of having *anyone* mold or influence their thoughts. "I think for myself," they say. They probably mean that they make their own decisions and that it is proper to do so.

- 
4. (a) What will happen if we let the world mold our thinking?  
(b) How will this article help us?
5. Why do some resist the idea of being molded by anyone?

They do not wish to be controlled, nor do they want to surrender their individuality.\*

<sup>6</sup> We can be assured, however, that bringing our thinking into harmony with Jehovah's does not mean giving up all individual thought or expression. As stated at 2 Corinthians 3:17, "where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom." We are free to develop our own distinct personalities. We can have our personal preferences and choose our fields of interest. Indeed, Jehovah designed us to do so. However, we cannot use our freedom without restraint. (Read 1 Peter 2:16.) When it comes to issues of right and wrong, Jehovah wants us to be guided by his thinking as revealed in his Word. Is this overly restrictive, or is it beneficial?

<sup>7</sup> Consider an illustration. Parents endeavor to instill in their children good values. They may teach them to be honest, industrious, and considerate of

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\* In reality, even the most independent of thinkers cannot avoid being influenced. Whether contemplating something so profound as the origin of life or simply deciding what to wear, people are to some degree affected by others. We can, however, choose whom we will allow to influence us.

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**6.** (a) What freedom does Jehovah allow us? (b) Is this freedom absolute?

**7, 8.** Why will cultivating Jehovah's view of matters not be overly restrictive? Illustrate.

others. This is not overly restrictive. Rather, the parents are preparing them for a successful life as independent adults. When the children grow up and leave home, they will be free to make their own choices. If they choose to live within the values that they learned from their parents, they will be more likely to make decisions that they will not later regret. As a result, they will be free from many self-induced troubles and anxieties.

<sup>8</sup> Like a good parent, Jehovah wants his children to have the most fulfilling life possible. (Isa. 48:17, 18) He therefore provides basic principles for moral conduct and for behavior toward others. In such matters he invites us to cultivate his very way of thinking and to share his values. Far from constraining us, this enhances, elevates, and expands our thinking ability. (Ps. 92:5; Prov. 2:1-5; Isa. 55:9) It helps us make choices that lead to happiness while still allowing us to blossom as individuals. (Ps. 1:2, 3) Yes, thinking like Jehovah is beneficial and desirable!

## **JEHOVAH'S THINKING IS SUPERIOR**

<sup>9</sup> Another reason why Jehovah's worshippers de-

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**9, 10.** How has Jehovah's thinking proved superior to that of the world?

sire to align their thinking with God's is that his thinking is far superior to that of this world. Segments of the world have offered advice on moral conduct, family relationships, job satisfaction, and other aspects of life. Much of it is out of harmony with Jehovah's thinking. For example, self-promotion is often encouraged. So is tolerance of sexual immorality. Separation and divorce for frivolous reasons are sometimes advised as a means of achieving greater happiness. Such advice is in conflict with the Scriptures. Still, might some of it be more suited to our times?

<sup>10</sup> "Wisdom is proved righteous by its works," said Jesus. (Matt. 11:19) The world has made considerable advancement in technology; however, it has been unable to solve the major problems that stand in the way of happiness, such as war, racism, and crime. And what of its lenient view of morality? Many people acknowledge that this is, not solving, but contributing to family breakdown, illness, and other troubles. On the other hand, Christians who adopt God's viewpoint are enjoying improved family relationships, the healthful benefits of moral cleanness, and peace among fellow believers on a worldwide scale. (Isa. 2:4; Acts 10:34, 35; 1 Cor.



6:9-11) Does this not show that Jehovah's thinking is superior to that of the world?

<sup>11</sup> True worshippers of Bible record recognized the superiority of Jehovah's thoughts. Even though Moses, for example, was educated "in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," he looked to God for "a heart of wisdom." (Acts 7:22; Ps. 90:12) He also petitioned Jehovah: "Make me know your ways." (Ex. 33:13) Being guided by Jehovah's thoughts, he had a meaningful share in the outworking of His purpose and is honorably mentioned in the Scriptures as a man of outstanding faith.—Heb. 11:24-27.

<sup>12</sup> The apostle Paul was an intelligent and learned man, knowing at least two languages. (Acts 5:34; 21:37, 39; 22:2, 3) Yet, when it came to matters of principle, he rejected worldly wisdom. Instead, he based his reasoning on the Scriptures. (Read Acts 17:2; 1 Corinthians 2:6, 7, 13.) As a result, Paul enjoyed a successful ministry and anticipated an eternal reward.—2 Tim. 4:8.

<sup>13</sup> Certainly, God's thinking is superior to that of today's world. Living by his thoughts will bring us

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11. Whose thinking guided Moses, and what was the outcome?

12. On what did the apostle Paul base his reasoning?

13. Who has the responsibility to bring our thinking into alignment with Jehovah's?

the greatest happiness and success. But Jehovah will not force his thinking on us. “The faithful and discreet slave” does not exercise control over the thoughts of individuals, and neither do the elders. (Matt. 24:45; 2 Cor. 1:24) Rather, each Christian has the personal responsibility to bring his or her thinking into harmony with God’s. How can we do that?

### **AVOID BEING MOLDED BY THIS SYSTEM**

<sup>14</sup> At Romans 12:2, we are counseled: “Stop being molded by this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, so that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Those inspired words show that whatever molded our thinking before we learned the truth, it is possible to bring our thoughts into closer harmony with God’s. True, our thinking has to some extent been influenced by hereditary factors and past experiences. But the mind is flexible and can keep changing. To a large extent, any such changes will be determined by what we allow into our mind and what we choose to dwell on.

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**14, 15.** (a) In order to think like Jehovah, on what must we meditate? (b) In the light of Romans 12:2, why must we avoid taking in the world’s ideas? Illustrate.

By dwelling or meditating on Jehovah's way of thinking, we can prove to ourselves that his viewpoints are right. It will then be our natural desire to bring our thoughts into alignment with his.

<sup>15</sup> Note, however, that in order to make our mind over to Jehovah's way of thinking, we need to "stop being molded by this system." We must stop taking into our minds ideas or viewpoints that are in opposition to God's. The importance of this preliminary step can be illustrated with food. A person might seek to improve his health by eating food that is nutritious. But of what value would that be if he is also ingesting regular doses of contaminated food? Similarly, feeding on Jehovah's thoughts will be of limited value if we are corrupting our mind with worldly ideas.

<sup>16</sup> Can we avoid all contact with the world's thinking? No, we cannot literally get out of the world. Some exposure to its ideas is inescapable. (1 Cor. 5:9, 10) The preaching work itself will bring us in contact with erroneous beliefs. However, where contact with ungodly views is unavoidable, we certainly need not entertain them or accept them. Like Jesus, we should be quick to reject thoughts that

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16. From what do we need to protect ourselves?

serve Satan's purpose. Furthermore, we can protect ourselves from unnecessary exposure to the world's thinking.—Read Proverbs 4:23.

<sup>17</sup> For example, we should exercise caution when choosing our close friends. The Bible warns that if we keep close company with people who do not worship Jehovah, their thinking will rub off on us. (Prov. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:12, 32, 33) We can also be selective when choosing entertainment. By rejecting entertainment that promotes the theory of evolution, violence, or immorality, we avoid poisoning our thinking with ideas that are “against the knowledge of God.”—2 Cor. 10:5.

<sup>18</sup> We also do well to recognize and reject worldly thinking when it is presented in less obvious ways. For example, a news report might be angled in such a way so as to favor certain political opinions. A human interest story might advance the world's view of human goals and achievements. Some movies and books promote the “me first” and “family first” philosophies, making them seem

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17. What are some ways we can avoid unnecessary exposure to the world's thinking?

18, 19. (a) Why must we be on guard against worldly viewpoints promoted in subtle ways? (b) What questions should we ask ourselves, and why?



Do we help our children to reject harmful entertainment?  
(See paragraphs 18, 19)

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reasonable, appealing, even right. Such viewpoints overlook the Scriptural view that our families and self-worth thrive when we love Jehovah above all. (Matt. 22:36-39) Also, some children's stories, though otherwise unobjectionable, may subtly lay the groundwork for accepting immoral behavior.

<sup>19</sup> This does not mean that it is wrong to enjoy wholesome entertainment. Still, we do well to ask ourselves these questions: 'Do we recognize the world's teachings even when they are promoted indirectly? Do we limit our children's exposure—and

even our own—to certain programs or reading material? Do we counteract worldly ideas heard or seen by our children with Jehovah’s view of matters?’ By recognizing the difference between God’s thinking and that of the world, we can avoid “being molded by this system of things.”

## **WHO IS MOLDING YOU NOW?**

<sup>20</sup> Remember, there are basically two sources of information—Jehovah and the world under Satan’s control. By which source are we being molded? The answer is, the source from which we obtain information. If we take in the world’s ideas, these will mold our thinking, inclining us toward fleshly points of view and behavior. That is why it is vital that we guard what we allow our minds to dwell on.

<sup>21</sup> As mentioned earlier, to think like Jehovah, we must do more than keep our minds free from corrupting influences. We must also feed on God’s thoughts with a view to making them our own. The following article will further consider how we can do that.

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**20.** What will determine whether we are influenced by God’s thinking or that of the world?

**21.** What vital aspect will be discussed in the next article?

# 45      *The Meditation of My Heart*

(Psalm 19:14)

1. The meditation of my heart,  
    The thoughts I ponder through the day—  
    May they be pleasing to you, Lord,  
    And keep me steadfast in your way.  
When worries weigh upon my mind  
    And make me restless in the night,  
Then may I meditate on you  
    And things I know to be upright.
2. Whatever things are chaste and true,  
    Whatever virtue there may be,  
Whatever things well-spoken-of—  
    May thoughts of these bring peace to me.  
How precious are your thoughts, O God!  
    Beyond all counting is their sum.  
So may I ponder your own words,  
    Absorbed in them may I become.



