

Monday, July 5

*Should they inquire of the dead in behalf of the living?—
Isaiah 8:19.*

God's Word is like a sharp sword that can cut through the lies that Satan promotes. (Ephesians 6:17) For example, God's Word exposes the lie that the dead can communicate with the living. (Psalm 146:4) It also reminds us that only Jehovah can reliably predict the future. (Isaiah 45:21; 46:10) If we read God's Word and meditate on it regularly, we will be equipped to reject and hate the lies that wicked spirits want us to believe. So refuse to do anything connected with spiritism. As true Christians, we never practice spiritism of any kind. For example, we do not visit spirit mediums or try to communicate with the dead in any other way. We avoid funeral customs that are based on the belief that the dead are still alive somewhere. And we do not use astrology or fortune-telling to try to learn about the future. We know that all such practices are very dangerous and that they could put us in direct contact with Satan and the demons. *w19.04 21-22 paragraphs 8-9*

Tuesday, July 6

God, in keeping with the desires of their hearts, gave them up to uncleanness.—Romans 1:24.

People who adopt the wisdom of this world ridicule the Bible's moral standards, claiming that they are unrealistic. Such people might ask, 'Why would God create us with sexual desires and then tell us not to act on them?' That question is founded on the flawed belief that humans must act on every urge they feel. But the Bible states otherwise. It dignifies us by teaching that we can choose to control improper impulses. (Colossians 3:5) In addition, Jehovah has provided the gift of marriage, an arrangement in which proper sexual desires can be honorably satisfied. (1 Corinthians 7:8, 9) In contrast with the wisdom of this world, the Bible promotes a healthy view of sexuality. It acknowledges that sex can be a source of pleasure. (Proverbs 5:18, 19) However, the Bible says: "Each one of you should know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not with greedy, uncontrolled sexual passion."—1 Thessalonians 4:4, 5. *w19.05* 22-23 paragraphs 7-9

Wednesday, July 7

You will come against them like a storm, . . . you and all your troops and many peoples with you.—Ezekiel 38:9.

God will not allow the nations to destroy his people. They proudly bear his name, and they have obeyed his command to flee from Babylon the Great. (Acts 15:16, 17; Revelation 18:4) They have also worked hard to help others flee from her. So Jehovah's servants will not "receive part of her plagues." Still, their faith will be tested. (Ezekiel 38:2, 8) After the destruction of all false religious organizations, God's people will stand out like a lone tree that survived a fierce storm. Satan, of course, will be enraged. He will vent that rage by using demonic propaganda—"unclean inspired expressions"—to cause a coalition of nations to turn on Jehovah's servants. (Revelation 16:13, 14) That coalition is called "Gog of the land of Magog." When the nations launch their attack, they will have arrived at the symbolic place called Armageddon.—Revelation 16:16. *w19.09* 11 paragraphs 12-13

Thursday, July 8

The reasonings of the wise men are futile.—1 Corinthians 3:20.

In the days of ancient Israel, Satan used false religion to promote immorality. Today, he does the same. False religion tolerates and even promotes immoral conduct.

Consequently, many who claim to serve God have abandoned his clear standards of morality. The apostle Paul describes in his letter to the Romans what has been the result. (Romans 1:28-31) Among “the things not fitting” are all forms of sexual immorality, including homosexuality.

(Romans 1:24-27, 32; Revelation 2:20) How important it is for us to stick to the Bible’s clear teachings! Human philosophy ignores or contradicts Jehovah’s righteous standards. It does not nurture the fruitage of God’s spirit but, rather, “the works of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:19-23) It generates pride and arrogance, and the result is that people become “lovers of themselves.” (2 Timothy 3:2-4) These qualities are the opposite of the meek, humble spirit that God’s servants are encouraged to have.—2 Samuel 22:28.

w19.06 5-6 paragraphs 12-14

Friday, July 9

A true friend shows love at all times and is a brother who is born for times of distress.—Proverbs 17:17.

Elijah served Jehovah during difficult times and faced serious challenges. When Jehovah told Elijah to delegate responsibility to Elisha, He provided Elijah with a much-needed companion, who no doubt helped him bear his emotional burdens. Likewise, when we confide in a trusted friend, he or she can help us carry our emotional burdens. (2 Kings 2:2) If you feel that you do not have anyone to confide in, pray to Jehovah to help you find a mature Christian who can provide you with emotional support. Jehovah helped Elijah to cope with stress and to serve faithfully for many years. Elijah's experience gives us hope. We may go through periods of severe stress that drain us physically and emotionally. Yet, if we rely on Jehovah, he will give us the power we need to keep serving him.—Isaiah 40:28, 29.

w19.06 15 paragraph 4; 16 paragraphs 9-10

Saturday, July 10

Trembling at men is a snare, but the one trusting in Jehovah will be protected.—Proverbs 29:25.

We can build up our courage now by publicly preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. Why so? Because preaching teaches us to trust in Jehovah and overcome any fear of man. Just as our muscles are strengthened when we exercise, our courage is strengthened when we preach from house to house, in public places, informally, and in business territory. If we develop the courage to preach now, we will be well-prepared to keep preaching even if our work is banned. (1 Thessalonians 2:1, 2) We can learn much from the example of a faithful sister who displayed remarkable courage. Nancy Yuen stood no more than five feet (1.5 meters) tall, but she was not easily intimidated. She refused to stop preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. As a result, she was imprisoned for some 20 years in Communist China. The officials who interrogated her said that she was "the most stubborn person" in their country! w19.07 5 paragraphs 13-14

Sunday, July 11

Go, therefore, and make disciples of people of all the nations.—Matthew 28:19.

Some people are eager to learn Bible truths, but many we meet may seem to be indifferent at first. We may have to stimulate their interest. To be successful in the ministry, we need to have a well-thought-out strategy. Select specific subjects that will likely interest those you will meet. Then plan how you will introduce the topic. For example, you might ask a householder: “Would you mind if I ask your opinion on something? Many problems facing us today affect people around the world. Do you think that it would take a world government to solve the world’s problems?” Then you could discuss Daniel 2:44. Or you might say to a neighbor: “What do you think is the key to raising well-behaved children? I would like to hear your opinion.” Then discuss Deuteronomy 6:6, 7. Without a doubt, we feel intense joy when we help people become disciples of Christ. w19.07 15 paragraph 4, 6-7

Song 40 and Prayer | Opening Comments (1 min.)

 TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD

“How Jehovah Wants to Be Worshipped”: (10 min.)

Spiritual Gems: (10 min.)

De 11:29—How, apparently, was this verse fulfilled? (*it-1 925-926*)

What spiritual gems from this week’s Bible reading would you like to share regarding Jehovah, the field ministry, or something else?

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 LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

Song 103

Local Needs: (15 min.)

Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.)
rr chap. 10 ¶18-12, box 10A



How Jehovah Wants to Be Worshipped

The Israelites were to obey, love, and serve Jehovah with all their heart and soul (De 11:13; *it-2 1007 ¶4*)

Remnants of false worship were to be completely destroyed (De 12:2, 3)

Everyone was to worship in one place (De 12:11-14; *it-1 84 ¶3*)

Jehovah wants his people to worship him whole-souled, to reject all false worship, and to be united.



40 *To Whom Do We Belong?*

(Romans 14:8)

1. To whom do you belong?

Which god do you now obey?
Your master's the one to whom you bow.
He is your god; you serve him now.
You cannot serve two gods;
Devotion cannot be shared.
And so in the end your choice will depend
On how your heart is prepared.

2. To whom do you belong?

Which god will you now obey?
For one god is false and one is true,
So make your choice; it's up to you.
Will Caesar of this world
Possess your allegiance still?
Or will you obey the true God today
By always doing his will?

3. To whom do I belong?

Jehovah I will obey.
My Father in heaven I will serve;
I'll pay my vows without reserve.
He bought me at great cost;
Devoted to him I'll stay.
To him I will give each moment I live.
His name I'll honor each day.

DEUTERONOMY 11-12

11 “You must love Jehovah your God and always keep your obligation to him and his statutes, his judicial decisions, and his commandments. ² You know that today I am addressing you, not your sons who have not known or seen the discipline of Jehovah your God, his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm. ³ They did not see his signs and his deeds that he did in Egypt to Phar'aoh king of Egypt and to all his land; ⁴ or what he did to the armies of Egypt, to Phar'aoh's horses and war chariots, which were overwhelmed by the waters of the Red Sea when they were chasing after you, and Jehovah destroyed them once and for all. ⁵ They did not see what he has done for you in the wilderness until your coming to this place, ⁶ or what he did to Da'than and A-bi'ram, the sons of E-li'ab the son of Reu'ben, when the earth opened and swallowed them up, along with their households and their tents and every living thing that followed them, before the eyes of all Israel. ⁷ Your own eyes have seen all the great deeds that Jehovah did.

⁸ “You must keep the whole commandment that I am giving you today, so that you may grow strong and cross over into the land to take possession of it, ⁹ and so that you may live long in the land that Jehovah swore to give to your forefathers and their offspring, a land flowing with milk and honey.

¹⁰ “The land you are going to take possession of is not like the land of Egypt, out of which you came, where you used to

sow your seed and irrigate it with your foot, like a garden of vegetables. ¹¹ But the land you are about to cross into and possess is a land of mountains and valley plains. It drinks the water that rains from the heavens; ¹² it is a land that Jehovah your God is caring for. The eyes of Jehovah your God are constantly upon it, from the beginning of the year to the close of the year.

¹³ “And if you will diligently obey my commandments that I am commanding you today and love Jehovah your God and serve him with all your heart and all your soul, ¹⁴ I will also give rain for your land at its appointed time, autumn rain and spring rain, and you will gather your grain and your new wine and your oil. ¹⁵ And I will provide vegetation in your fields for your livestock, and you will eat and be satisfied. ¹⁶ Be careful not to let your heart be enticed to go astray and worship other gods and bow down to them. ¹⁷ Otherwise, Jehovah’s anger will blaze against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will not give its produce and you will quickly perish from the good land that Jehovah is giving you.

¹⁸ “You must impress these words of mine on your heart and your soul and bind them as a reminder on your hand, and they should be like a headband on your forehead. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children, speaking about them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ so that you and your sons may live long in the land that Jehovah

swore to give to your forefathers, for as long as the heavens are over the earth.

²² “If you strictly observe this commandment that I am giving you and you carry it out, to love Jehovah your God, to walk in all his ways and to cling to him, ²³ Jehovah will drive away all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and more numerous than you are. ²⁴ Every place you set your foot will become yours. From the wilderness up to Leb'a-non, from the River, the river Eu-phra'tes, to the western sea, your boundary will become. ²⁵ Nobody will stand up to you. Jehovah your God will spread the dread and the fear of you over the whole land on which you walk, just as he promised you.

²⁶ “See, I am putting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing if you obey the commandments of Jehovah your God that I am commanding you today, ²⁸ and the curse if you do not obey the commandments of Jehovah your God and you turn aside from the way I am commanding you to follow today and you follow gods that you have not known.

²⁹ “When Jehovah your God brings you into the land you are to possess, you must pronounce the blessing on Mount Ger'i-zim and the curse on Mount E'bal. ³⁰ Are they not on the other side of the Jordan toward the west, in the land of the Ca'naan-ites who live in the Ar'a-bah, opposite Gil'gal, beside the big trees of Mo'reh? ³¹ For you are crossing the Jordan to enter and take possession of the land that

Jehovah your God is giving you. When you take possession of it and live in it, ³² you must be careful to carry out all the regulations and the judicial decisions that I am putting before you today.

12 “These are the regulations and the judicial decisions that you should be careful to carry out all the days that you are alive in the land that Jehovah the God of your forefathers will give you to possess. ² You should completely destroy all the places where the nations you will dispossess have served their gods, whether on the high mountains or on the hills or under any luxuriant tree. ³ You should pull down their altars, shatter their sacred pillars, burn their sacred poles in the fire, and cut down the graven images of their gods, obliterating their very names from that place.

⁴ “You must not worship Jehovah your God in that way. ⁵ Rather, seek Jehovah your God wherever he chooses to establish his name and his place of residence among all your tribes, and go there. ⁶ That is where you are to bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution from your hand, your vow offerings, your voluntary offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and flock. ⁷ You and your households must eat there before Jehovah your God and rejoice in all your undertakings, because Jehovah your God has blessed you.

⁸ “You must not do as we are doing here today, with everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes, ⁹ because you have not yet come into the resting-place and the

inheritance that Jehovah your God is giving you. ¹⁰ When you do cross the Jordan and dwell in the land that Jehovah your God is giving you to possess, he will certainly give you rest from all your enemies around you, and you will dwell in security. ¹¹ You will bring all that I am commanding you to the place that Jehovah your God chooses to have his name reside—your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution from your hand, and every vow offering that you vow to Jehovah. ¹² You will rejoice before Jehovah your God, you and your sons, your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levite inside your cities, for he has no share or inheritance with you. ¹³ Be careful not to offer up your burnt offerings in any other place you may see. ¹⁴ You should offer your burnt offerings only in the place that Jehovah chooses in one of your tribal territories, and there you should do everything I am commanding you.

¹⁵ “But whenever you desire it, you may slaughter and eat meat, according to the blessing that Jehovah your God has given you in all your cities. The unclean person and the clean person may eat it, as you would eat a gazelle or a deer. ¹⁶ But you must not eat the blood; you should pour it out on the ground like water. ¹⁷ You will not be allowed to eat within your cities the tenth part of your grain, your new wine, your oil, the firstborn of your herd and flock, any of your vow offerings that you vow, your voluntary offerings, or the contribution from your hand. ¹⁸ These you are to eat before Jehovah your God in the place Jehovah your God will choose—you and your son, your daughter, your male and

female servant, and the Levite inside your cities; and you will rejoice before Jehovah your God in all your undertakings.

¹⁹ Be careful not to neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land.

²⁰ “When Jehovah your God enlarges your territory, just as he has promised you, and you say, ‘I want to eat meat,’ because you desire to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever you desire it. ²¹ If the place that Jehovah your God chooses to put his name is far away from you, you should then slaughter some of your herd or some of your flock that Jehovah has given you, just as I have commanded you, and you should eat inside your cities whenever you desire it.

²² You may eat it as you would eat the gazelle and the deer; both the unclean person and the clean person may eat it.

²³ Just be firmly resolved not to eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the flesh.

²⁴ You must not eat it. You should pour it out on the ground like water. ²⁵ You must not eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you are doing what is right in Jehovah’s eyes. ²⁶ You should take only the holy things that are yours and your vow offerings when you come to the place that Jehovah will choose. ²⁷ There you will offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of Jehovah your God, and the blood of your sacrifices should be poured out against the altar of Jehovah your God, but the flesh you may eat.

²⁸ “Be careful to obey all these words that I am commanding you, so that it may always go well with you and

your sons after you, because you are doing what is good and right in the eyes of Jehovah your God.

²⁹ “When Jehovah your God annihilates the nations that you are to dispossess, and you are living in their land, ³⁰ be careful not to be entrapped after they have been annihilated from before you. Do not ask about their gods, saying, ‘How were these nations accustomed to serve their gods? I too will do the same.’ ³¹ You must not do this to Jehovah your God, because they do for their gods every detestable thing that Jehovah hates, even burning their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. ³² Every word that I am commanding you is what you should be careful to do. You must not add to it nor take away from it.

Song 40 and Prayer | Opening Comments (1 min.)

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July 5-11 / Deuteronomy 11-12

Song 40 and Prayer

Opening Comments (1 minute)

Treasures From God's Word

"How Jehovah Wants to Be Worshipped": (10 minutes)

The Israelites were to obey, love, and serve Jehovah with all their heart and soul

Deuteronomy 11:13: "And if you will diligently obey my commandments that I am commanding you today and love Jehovah your God and serve him with all your heart and all your soul,

***it-2* 1007 paragraph 4**

Serving With One's Whole Soul. The "soul" basically means the entire person, as has been shown. Yet certain texts exhort us to seek for, love, and serve God with 'all our heart *and* all our soul' (Deuteronomy 4:29; 11:13, 18), while Deuteronomy 6:5 says: "You must love Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your vital force." Jesus said it

was necessary to serve with one's whole soul and strength and, additionally, "with your whole mind." (Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27) The question arises as to why these other things are mentioned with the soul, since it embraces them all. To illustrate the probable meaning: A person might sell himself (his soul) into slavery to another, thereby becoming the possession of his owner and master. Yet he might not serve his master wholeheartedly, with full motivation and desire to please him, and thus he might not use his full strength or his full mental capacity to advance his master's interests.

(Compare Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22.) Hence these other facets are evidently mentioned to focus attention on them so that we do not fail to remember and consider them in our service to God, to whom we belong, and to his Son, whose life was the ransom price that bought us. "Whole-souled" service to God involves the entire person, no bodily part, function, capacity, or desire being left out.—Compare Matthew 5:28-30; Luke 21:34-36; Ephesians 6:6-9; Philippians 3:19; Colossians 3:23, 24.

Remnants of false worship were to be completely destroyed

Deuteronomy 12:2, 3: You should completely destroy all the places where the nations you will dispossess have served their gods, whether on the high mountains or on the hills or under any luxuriant tree. You should pull down their altars, shatter their sacred pillars, burn their sacred poles in the fire, and cut down the graven images of their gods, obliterating their very names from that place.

Everyone was to worship in one place

Deuteronomy 12:11-14: You will bring all that I am commanding you to the place that Jehovah your God chooses to have his name reside—your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution from your hand, and every vow offering that you vow to Jehovah. You will rejoice before Jehovah your God, you and your sons, your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levite inside your cities, for he has no share or inheritance with you. Be

careful not to offer up your burnt offerings in any other place you may see. You should offer your burnt offerings only in the place that Jehovah chooses in one of your tribal territories, and there you should do everything I am commanding you.

***it-1* 84 paragraph 3**

The Israelites were instructed to tear down all pagan altars and destroy the sacred pillars and poles customarily built alongside them. (Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5, 6; 12:1-3) They were never to imitate these nor offer up their children by fire as did the Canaanites. (Deuteronomy 12:30, 31; 16:21) Instead of a multiplicity of altars, Israel was to have just one altar for the worship of the one true God, and this would be located at the place Jehovah would choose. (Deuteronomy 12:2-6, 13, 14, 27; contrast this with Babylon, where there were 180 altars to the goddess Ishtar alone.) They were at first instructed to make an altar of unhewn stones following the crossing of the Jordan River (Deuteronomy 27:4-8), and this was built by Joshua on Mount Ebal. (Joshua 8:30-32) Following the division of the conquered land, the tribes of

Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built a conspicuous altar by the Jordan, which provoked a temporary crisis among the other tribes until it was determined that the altar was no sign of apostasy but only a memorial of faithfulness to Jehovah as the true God.—
Joshua 22:10-34.

Jehovah wants his people to worship him whole-souled, to reject all false worship, and to be united.

[Image:] Collage: People pleasing Jehovah by the way they worship him. 1. An elderly sister witnesses to a caregiver. 2. A man destroys spiritistic paraphernalia by fire. 3. Three sisters of different races attend an international convention.

Spiritual Gems

Deuteronomy 11:29—How, apparently, was this verse fulfilled?

Deuteronomy 11:29: “When Jehovah your God brings you into the land you are to possess, you must pronounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.

it-1 925-926

In harmony with instructions given by Moses, the tribes of Israel assembled at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal under Joshua’s direction shortly after their conquest of Ai. There the people heard the reading of the blessings they would receive if they obeyed Jehovah and the maledictions that awaited them if they disobeyed him. The tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin stood in front of Mount Gerizim. The Levites and the ark of the covenant were situated in the valley, and the other six tribes stood in front of Mount Ebal. (Deuteronomy 11:29, 30; 27:11-13; Joshua 8:28-35) Apparently, the tribes stationed in front of Mount Gerizim responded to the blessings read in their direction,

whereas the other tribes responded to the curses read in the direction of Mount Ebal. While it has been suggested that the blessings were read toward Mount Gerizim because of its greater beauty and fertility in contrast with rocky, largely barren Mount Ebal, the Bible does not furnish any information on this matter. The Law was read aloud "in front of all the congregation of Israel, together with the women and the little ones and the alien residents who walked in their midst." (Joshua 8:35) This vast throng could hear the words from positions in front of either mountain. This was probably due, at least in part, to the excellent acoustics of the area.—See EBAL, MOUNT.

What spiritual gems from this week's Bible reading would you like to share regarding Jehovah, the field ministry, or something else?

Bible Reading: (4 minutes) Deuteronomy 11:1-12 (*th* study 2)

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INCREASE YOUR JOY IN THE MINISTRY
Show Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand the thinking, feelings, values, and needs of others. It is easily sensed by others and springs from a heartfelt desire to help. When we show empathy in the ministry, we reflect Jehovah’s love and care, and this draws people to him.—Php 2:4.

Showing empathy is not a mere technique; it is reflected in the way we listen and speak as well

as in our attitude, gestures, and facial expressions. We demonstrate empathy by showing genuine interest in someone. We take note of his interests, beliefs, and circumstances. We offer practical information and assistance but do not pressure him to change. When others respond by allowing us to help them, we increase our joy in the ministry.

WATCH THE VIDEO DRAMATIZATION *EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF DISCIPLE-MAKING—IMPROVE YOUR SKILLS—SHOWING EMPATHY*, AND THEN ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:



- How did Neeta show empathy when Jade was late?



- How did Neeta show empathy when Jade said that she was too stressed to have her study?



- How did Neeta show empathy when Jade said that she is not really organized?

People are drawn to Jehovah when we show empathy

103 *Shepherds—Gifts in Men*

(Ephesians 4:8)

1. Help in our lives, Jehovah provides,
 Shepherds to tend his flock.
 By their example they serve as guides,
 Showing us how to walk.

(CHORUS)

*God gives us men who have earned our trust,
Men who are loyal and true.
They show concern for his precious sheep;
Love them for all that they do.*

2. Shepherds who love us care how we feel;
 Gently they guide the way.
 When we are hurt, they help us to heal,
 Kind in the words they say.

(Chorus)

3. Godly advice and counsel they give,
 That we may never stray.
 Thus they assist us, God's way to live,
 Serving him ev'ry day.

(Chorus)

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Bible Reading: (4 min.) De 11:1-12 (2)

 APPLY YOURSELF TO THE FIELD MINISTRY

“Increase Your Joy in the Ministry—Show Empathy”: (8 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Experience the Joy of Disciple-Making—Improve Your Skills—Showing Empathy*.

Initial Call Video: (4 min.) Discussion. Play the video *Initial Call: Suffering—Jas 1:13* (video category OUR MEETINGS AND MINISTRY). Stop the video at each pause, and ask the audience the questions that appear in the video.

Initial Call: (2 min.) Use the sample conversation. (1)

 LIVING AS CHRISTIANS

Song 103

Local Needs: (15 min.)

Congregation Bible Study: (30 min.)
rr chap. 10 ¶18-12, box 10A



How Jehovah Wants to Be Worshipped

The Israelites were to obey, love, and serve Jehovah with all their heart and soul (De 11:13; *it-2* 1007 ¶4)

Remnants of false worship were to be completely destroyed (De 12:2, 3)

Everyone was to worship in one place (De 12:11-14; *it-1* 84 ¶3)

Jehovah wants his people to worship him whole-souled, to reject all false worship, and to be united.



gloomy vision of bones actually contained a bright message of hope for Israel.

⁷ **Read Ezekiel 37:12-14.** Through this vision, Jehovah assured the exiles that he would bring them to life, lead them back to their land, and let them settle there. Moreover, Jehovah addressed them again as “my people.” How uplifting those words must have been for the despondent exiles! Why could they be certain that this promise of restoration would come true? Because Jehovah himself stood behind it. He declared: “*I myself, Jehovah, have spoken and I have done it.*”

⁸ How had the ancient nation of Israel experienced the fulfillment of the gloomy part of this prophetic vision? The symbolic demise of Israel had already begun in 740 B.C.E. with the fall and exile of the ten-tribe kingdom. Some 130 years later, when the people of Judah were also deported, “the whole house of Israel” was in captivity. (Ezek. 37:11) Symbolically

7. What did Jehovah reveal to Ezekiel, as recorded at Ezekiel 37:12-14, and what assurance did this give His exiled people?

8. (a) How was “the whole house of Israel” in a deathlike condition? (b) How does Ezekiel 37:9 indicate the cause of Israel’s symbolic death? (See footnote.)

speaking, the whole group of exiles were then as dead as the bones seen in Ezekiel's vision.*^[1] Also recall that Ezekiel saw not just bones but "*very dry*" bones, which indicated that their deathlike condition continued for a long time. And, indeed, for Israel and Judah combined, it lasted over 200 years, from 740 to 537 B.C.E.—Jer. 50:33.

9 Restoration prophecies concerning Israel, such as the ones spoken by Ezekiel, have a larger fulfillment. (Acts 3:21) Just as the ancient nation of natural Israel was "killed" and remained symbolically dead for a considerable time, so "the Israel of God," the anointed Christian congregation, was killed symbolically and experienced deathlike captivity for a long time. (Gal. 6:16) In fact, the captivity of the anointed congregation as a whole continued for so long that their spiritual condition could well be compared to that of

*[1] The bones that Ezekiel saw in vision belonged, not to people who had died from natural causes, but to "people who were *killed*." (Ezek. 37:9) "The *whole* house of Israel" was, indeed, killed symbolically when the inhabitants of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel and those of the two-tribe kingdom of Judah were successively conquered, taken captive, and deported by the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

9. What similarities are there between the experiences of ancient natural Israel and those of "the Israel of God"?

bones that “were very dry.” (Ezek. 37:2) As explained in the preceding chapter, the captivity of the anointed Christian congregation began in the second century C.E. and lasted for many centuries, just as Jesus had indicated in his Kingdom illustration of the wheat and the weeds.—Matt. 13:24-30.

“Bones Began to Come Together”

¹⁰ In ancient times, Jehovah foretold that his people would experience a progressive restoration to life. (Ezek. 37:7, 8) So, what were some of the factors that gradually restored to God-fearing exiles the faith that their hope of returning to Israel would be fulfilled? One source of hope must have been the prophetic statements made by earlier prophets. For example, Isaiah had foretold that a remnant, “a holy seed,” would return to the land. (Isa. 6:13; Job 14:7-9) Also, the many prophecies of restoration that Ezekiel had written down no doubt kept that hope alive. Further, the presence in Babylon of such faithful men as the prophet Daniel—as well as the amazing fall of the

10. (a) What development regarding God’s people was foretold at Ezekiel 37:7, 8? (b) What factors must have gradually restored the faith of God-fearing exiles?

city of Babylon in 539 B.C.E.—must have bolstered the exiles' hope of return.

¹¹ How did a similar gradual restoration occur among “the Israel of God,” the anointed Christian congregation? Many centuries into the long period of deathlike captivity, “a noise, a rattling sound,” was heard as God-fearing individuals rose up in behalf of true worship. For instance, in the 16th century, William Tyndale prepared a Bible translation in English. The Roman Catholic clergy were angered that the Bible could now be read by the common man. Tyndale was killed. Even so, other courageous individuals continued to produce Bible translations in additional languages, and spiritual light gradually spread throughout the dark world.

¹² Later, when Charles T. Russell and his associates began to work zealously to restore Bible truths, it was as if “sinews and flesh” came on the bones. *Zion's Watch Tower* and other publications helped honesthearted ones to discover spiritual truths, which moved them to join themselves to God's anointed

11, 12. (a) How did a gradual restoration occur among “the Israel of God”? (See also the box “Pure Worship—Gradually Restored.”) (b) What question is raised by the statement found at Ezekiel 37:10?

Pure Worship
GRADUALLY RESTORED

SEE PARAGRAPHS 11-14

“A rattling sound”

William Tyndale and others prepared Bible translations in English and other languages

“Sinews and flesh”

Charles T. Russell and his associates restored Bible truths

“They began to live and to stand on their feet”

After Jehovah’s people “came to life” in 1919, they intensified their preaching work

servants. In the early 1900’s, God’s anointed people were further energized by such tools as the “Photo-Drama of Creation” and the book *The Finished Mystery*. Shortly thereafter, God’s time came to make his people “stand on their feet.” (Ezek. 37:10) When and how did that occur? Events that took place in ancient Babylon help us to answer that question.

“They Began to Live and to Stand on Their Feet”

¹³ Beginning in 537 B.C.E., the Jews in Babylon saw

13. (a) Beginning in 537 B.C.E., how did the words found at Ezekiel 37:10, 14 see fulfillment? (b) What scriptures indicate that some members of the ten-tribe kingdom returned to Israel?

72 *Making Known the Kingdom Truth* (Acts 20:20, 21)

1. There was a time we did not know
 The way a Christian ought to go.
 Then Jehovah sent the light,
 His Kingdom truth so clear and bright.
Our Father's will we then could see
 To serve the grand Theocracy,
 To declare Jehovah's fame,
 And help to glorify his holy name.
We witness now to all we meet,
 From door to door and on the street.
We take the time to help them see;
 We teach the truth that sets us free.
And as we strive in ev'ry land
 Jehovah's worship to expand,
May we serve our God as one
 Until Jehovah says the work is done.

MAY 2021

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

LARGE PRINT EDITION



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COVER PICTURE:

After Jesus ascends to heaven, his disciples zealously preach in Jerusalem and beyond (See study article 20, paragraph 1)

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“This Is the Way”

(Isaiah 30:20, 21)

1. There is a way of peace,
The way you’ve come to know.
It is the way you learned,
The way of long ago,
The way that Jesus taught you
When his voice you heard.
This is the way of peace,
Found in Jehovah’s Word.

(CHORUS)

*This is the way to life; This is the way.
Don’t look aside; Not for a moment stray!
God’s voice is calling: ‘This is the way;
Do not look back, for yes, this is the way.’*

2. There is a way of love,
No need to look around.
God’s voice has shown the way
He lets himself be found.
His love is full and good;
His love is warm and true.
This is the way of love;
It touches all we do.

(Chorus)

3. There is a way of life,
No need to look behind.
Our God has promised us:
No better way we'll find,
No higher way to peace,
No finer way to love.
This is the way to life,
Thanks to our God above.

(CHORUS)

*This is the way to life; This is the way.
Don't look aside; Not for a moment stray!
God's voice is calling: 'This is the way;
Do not look back, for yes, this is the way.'*

Will You Stumble Because of Jesus?

“Happy is the one who finds no cause for stumbling in me.”

—MATT. 11:6.

SONG 54

“This Is the Way”

PREVIEW

Even though Jesus was the greatest Teacher who ever walked the earth, the majority of people in his day were stumbled by him. Why? In this article, we will consider four reasons. We will also see why many today stumble at what Jesus’ true followers say and do. More important, we will learn why we can have strong faith in Jesus so that we are not stumbled.

DO YOU remember the moment when you first realized that you had found the truth? The Bible teachings that you were learning seemed so clear—crystal clear! You felt that everyone would want to accept the things you had come to believe. You were convinced that the Bible’s message would give them a meaningful life now and a wonderful hope for the future. (Ps. 119:105) So you enthusiastically shared the truths you had found with all your friends and relatives. But what happened? To your surprise, many rejected what you told them.

² None of us should be surprised when others reject the message we preach. In Jesus’ day, the majority rejected him, even though he performed miracles, proving that he had God’s backing. For example, Jesus resurrected Lazarus—a miracle that those who opposed him could not deny. Nevertheless, the Jewish leaders did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. They even wanted to kill both Jesus and Lazarus!—John 11:47, 48, 53; 12:9-11.

³ Jesus knew that most people would refuse to

1. What may have surprised you when you first tried to share the Bible’s message with others?

2-3. How did the majority of people in Jesus’ day react to him?

acknowledge him as the Messiah. (John 5:39-44) He told a group of disciples of John the Baptist: “Happy is the one who finds no cause for stumbling in me.” (Matt. 11:2, 3, 6) Why did so many reject Jesus?

⁴ In this article, as well as in the following one, we will examine a number of reasons why many in the first century did not put faith in Jesus. We will also see why many today allow themselves to be stumbled. Most important, we will learn why we can have strong faith in Jesus so that we are not stumbled.

(1) JESUS’ BACKGROUND

⁵ Many stumbled because of Jesus’ background. They admitted that Jesus was an amazing teacher and that he performed miracles. But to them, he was just the son of a humble carpenter. And he was from Nazareth, a city that may have been considered of little importance. Even Nathanael, who became a disciple of Jesus, at first said: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) Nathanael may have been unimpressed by the city

4. What will we consider in this article?

5. Why might some have concluded that Jesus could not be the foretold Messiah?

in which Jesus then lived. Or he may have had in mind the prophecy found at Micah 5:2, which foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, not in Nazareth.

⁶ *What do the Scriptures say?* The prophet Isaiah foretold that Jesus' enemies would fail to concern themselves "with the details of [the Messiah's] generation." (Isa. 53:8) Many such details were prophesied. If those people had taken the time to examine all the facts, they would have learned that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that he was a descendant of King David. (Luke 2:4-7) So Jesus' place of birth was in line with the prophecy found at Micah 5:2. What, then, was the problem? People were too quick to make a judgment. They did not have all the facts. Because of this, they were stumbled.

⁷ *Do we see the same problem today?* Yes. As a whole, Jehovah's people are of a humble background; they are viewed by many as being "uneducated and ordinary." (Acts 4:13) Some feel that God's people cannot teach about the Bible

6. What should have helped people in Jesus' day to identify Jesus as the Messiah?

7. Why do many today reject Jehovah's people?

because they have not graduated from recognized theological schools. Others claim that Jehovah's Witnesses are an "American religion," even though, in fact, only approximately 1 in 7 of Jehovah's Witnesses lives in the United States. Still others have been told that the Witnesses do not accept Jesus. Over the years, Jehovah's people have been labeled "Communists," "American spies," and "extremists." Because those who are told these stories do not have or do not accept the facts, they are stumbled.

8 *How can one avoid being stumbled?* People need to examine the facts. That is what the Gospel writer Luke was determined to do. He made it a point to trace "all things from the start with accuracy." He wanted his readers to "know fully the certainty of the things" they had heard about Jesus. (Luke 1:1-4) The Jewish people in ancient Berea were like Luke. When they first heard the good news about Jesus, they consulted the Hebrew Scriptures to confirm what they were being told. (Read Acts 17:11.) In a similar way, people today need to examine the facts. They must compare

8. According to Acts 17:11, what should people do if they want to identify God's servants today?

what they are taught by God’s people with what the Scriptures say. They also need to study the record of Jehovah’s people in modern times. If they do a proper “background check,” they will not allow prejudice or hearsay to blind them.

(2) JESUS REFUSED TO PERFORM SHOWY SIGNS

⁹ Some in Jesus’ day were not satisfied with his amazing teachings. They wanted more. They demanded that he prove that he was the Messiah by displaying “a sign from heaven.” (Matt. 16:1) Perhaps they based this demand on a misunderstanding of Daniel 7:13, 14. However, it was not Jehovah’s time for that prophecy to be fulfilled. What Jesus was teaching should have been enough to convince them that he was the Messiah. But when he refused to give them the sign they were seeking, they were stumbled.—Matt. 16:4.

¹⁰ *What do the Scriptures say?* Of the Messiah, the prophet Isaiah wrote: “He will not cry out or raise his voice, and he will not make his voice heard in the street.” (Isa. 42:1, 2) Jesus went about his

9. What happened when Jesus refused to display a sign from heaven?

10. How did Jesus fulfill what Isaiah wrote about the Messiah?



(See paragraph 5)

1



(See paragraphs 9-10)

2

Many were stumbled because of (1) Jesus' background, (2) his refusal to perform showy signs, (3) his rejection of some of their traditions, and (4) his lack of interest in political issues.

How could the same things stumble some today?

ministry in a quiet and modest way. He did not build impressive temples, and he did not wear distinctive religious garments or demand to be addressed by pretentious religious titles. When he was on trial for his life, Jesus refused to try to impress King Herod by performing a sign for him. (Luke 23:8-11) Jesus did perform some miracles, but his main focus was on preaching the good news. "This is why I have come," he told his disciples.—Mark 1:38.



(See paragraph 13) **3**



(See paragraph 17) **4**

¹¹ Do we see the same problem today? Yes. Today many are impressed by great cathedrals containing priceless artwork, by clergymen with high-sounding titles, and by ceremonies the origin and meaning of which have been forgotten by most. But what are people who attend religious services learning about God and his purposes? Those who attend our Christian meetings learn what Jehovah requires of us and how to act in harmony with his will. Our Kingdom Halls are clean and functional, but they are not extravagant. Those taking the lead do not wear distinctive garb; nor do they take on pretentious titles. God's Word forms the basis for

11. What wrong expectations do some have today?

our teachings and beliefs. Even so, many today are stumbled because they think that our way of worship is too simple and that what we teach does not match what they want to hear.

¹² *How can we avoid being stumbled?* The apostle Paul told Christians living in Rome: “Faith follows the thing heard. In turn, what is heard is through the word about Christ.” (Rom. 10:17) So we build up our faith by studying the Scriptures, not by participating in unscriptural religious ceremonies, no matter how pleasing to the eye these ceremonies might be. We must acquire strong faith based on accurate knowledge because “without faith it is impossible to please God well.” (Read Hebrews 11: 1, 6.) Thus, we do not need to see a spectacular sign from heaven to prove that we have found the truth. A careful examination of the Bible’s faith-strengthening teachings is enough to convince us and to dispel any doubt.

(3) JESUS DISREGARDED MANY JEWISH TRADITIONS

¹³ In Jesus’ day, the disciples of John the Baptist

12. As explained at Hebrews 11:1, 6, on what should our faith be built?

13. What caused many to condemn Jesus?

were puzzled because Jesus' disciples did not fast. Jesus explained that they had no reason to fast while he was still alive. (Matt. 9:14-17) Even so, the Pharisees and other opposers of Jesus condemned him because he did not follow their customs and traditions. They got angry when he chose to heal sick ones on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:1-6; John 9:16) On the one hand, they piously claimed to honor the Sabbath; but on the other hand, they had no problem doing business in the temple. They were furious when Jesus condemned them for it. (Matt. 21:12, 13, 15) And those to whom Jesus preached in the synagogue in Nazareth were incensed when Jesus made unfavorable historical comparisons that exposed their selfishness and lack of faith. (Luke 4:16, 25-30) Jesus' unexpected behavior caused many to stumble.—Matt. 11:16-19.

¹⁴ *What do the Scriptures say?* Jehovah said through his prophet Isaiah: “This people approach me with their mouth and they honor me with their lips, but their heart is far removed from me; and their fear of me is based on commands of men that they have been taught.” (Isa. 29:13) Jesus was right in condemning human traditions

14. Why did Jesus condemn human traditions that did not harmonize with the Scriptures?

that did not harmonize with the Scriptures. Those who put man-made rules and traditions above the Scriptures rejected Jehovah and the one whom he sent as the Messiah.

¹⁵ *Do we see the same problem today?* Yes. Many become upset when Jehovah's Witnesses do not join them in celebrating unscriptural traditions, such as birthdays and Christmas. Others become angry when Jehovah's Witnesses do not join nationalistic celebrations or do not follow funeral customs that are out of harmony with God's Word. Those who are stumbled in this way may sincerely believe that they are worshipping God acceptably. But they cannot please him if they prefer the world's traditions to the clear teachings found in the Bible.—Mark 7:7-9.

¹⁶ *How can we avoid being stumbled?* We need to develop a strong love for Jehovah's laws and principles. (Read Psalm 119:97, 113, 163-165.) When we love Jehovah, we will reject any traditions that displease him. We will not allow anything to interfere with our love for Jehovah.

15. What disturbs many today about Jehovah's Witnesses?

16. According to Psalm 119:97, 113, 163-165, what must we do and what must we avoid?

(4) JESUS DID NOT PROVIDE AN IMMEDIATE POLITICAL SOLUTION

¹⁷ Some in Jesus' day wanted an immediate political change. They expected the Messiah to free them from the rule of the Roman oppressors. But when they tried to make Jesus their king, he refused. (John 6:14, 15) Others—including the priests—were worried that Jesus would bring about a political change that would antagonize the Romans, who had granted those religious leaders a measure of power and authority. Such political concerns caused many Jews to stumble.

¹⁸ *What do the Scriptures say?* Although many prophecies foretold that the Messiah would eventually be a victorious Warrior, other prophecies showed that he would first have to die for our sins. (Isa. 53:9, 12) So why did they have wrong expectations? Many in Jesus' day disregarded any of the prophecies that did not promise immediate solutions to their problems.—John 6:26, 27.

¹⁹ *Do we see the same problem today?* Yes. Many

17. What expectations led many to stumble in Jesus' day?

18. What Bible prophecies about the Messiah did many disregard?

19. What expectations have stumbled many today?

today are stumbled because of our neutral stand with regard to politics. They expect us to vote in elections. However, we realize that from Jehovah's standpoint, if we choose a human leader to rule over us, we are rejecting Him. (1 Sam. 8:4-7) People may also feel that we should build schools and hospitals as well as perform other charitable works. They are stumbled because we focus our efforts on the preaching work, not on solving the world's immediate problems.

²⁰ *How can we avoid being stumbled?* (Read Matthew 7:21-23.) Our main focus should be on doing the work that Jesus commanded us to do. (Matt. 28:19, 20) Never should we become distracted by the political and social issues of this world. We love people and care about their problems, but we know that the best way to assist our neighbors is by teaching them about God's Kingdom and by helping them to develop a friendship with Jehovah.

²¹ In this article, we have considered four stum-

20. As highlighted by Jesus' words found at Matthew 7:21-23, what should be our main focus?

21. What should be our determination?

bling blocks that caused many to reject Jesus in the first century and could cause some today to reject Jesus' followers. But are these the only things that we need to avoid? No. In the next article, we will examine four additional stumbling blocks. May we be determined to avoid being stumbled and to keep our faith strong!

PICTURE DESCRIPTIONS Pages 8-9: (1) Philip encourages Nathanael to meet Jesus. (2) Jesus preaches the good news. (3) Jesus cures a man with a withered hand as opposers look on. (4) Jesus withdraws to a mountain all alone.

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- Why were some in the first century stumbled by Jesus?
- Why are many today stumbled by what Jesus' true followers say and do?
- Why are we not stumbled?

SONG 56

Make the Truth Your Own

56

Make the Truth Your Own

(Proverbs 3:1, 2)

1. The way of the truth is the best way of living,
But no one can live your life for you.
So take the advice that Jehovah is giving;
Believe what he tells you is true.

(CHORUS)

Make the truth your own.

Make it live, yes, make it real.

And then feel the joy

Jehovah gives you

When you make the truth your own.

2. The effort you make and the time you are spending
In service to God and his Kingdom
Will yield rich results and a life that's unending,
A life full of good things to come.

(Chorus)

3. Compared with our God, we are all little children
And need his direction and counsel.
So walk ev'ry day with our Father in heaven;
Receive his rich blessing in full.

(Chorus)