

ANNEXURE 2 – REFERENCES

The Watchtower 2005, August 1 pages 13-14

Major Offenses Against Individuals

Under the Law that God gave to ancient Israel, there were serious consequences for major offenses against individuals. For instance, if a thief came into a house at night and the householder killed him, there was no bloodguilt on the part of the householder. He was an innocent victim of a major crime. Hence, we read: "If a thief should be found in the act of breaking in and he does get struck and die, there is no bloodguilt for [the householder]."—Exodus 22:2.

A woman who has been raped has a right to be highly offended, as this is a major crime in God's eyes. Under the Mosaic Law, a man who raped a woman was to die "just as when a man rises up against his fellowman and indeed murders him." (Deuteronomy 22:25, 26) While we are no longer under that Law, it gives us insight into how Jehovah feels about rape—a horrible wrong.

In our time, rape is also a major crime with severe penalties. The victim has every right to report the matter to the police. In this way the proper authorities can punish the offender. And if the victim is a minor, the parents may want to initiate these actions.

SEPARATENESS FROM THE WORLD

The Watchtower 2012, May 1 pages 3-11

A Question for Jesus

Many God-fearing people feel that religion should be involved in politics. They believe that religion can play a vital part in solving humankind's problems. However, other sincere believers think that religion and politics should be separate. What do you personally think of religion's role in politics? Should those powerful forces work hand-in-hand?

JESUS CHRIST has been described as "the most influential figure in the religious history of mankind." So, imagine that we could ask him the question, Should religion be involved in politics? What would he say? While on earth, he answered that question by his words and deeds. For instance, in his renowned Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave guidelines that help his followers to discern what role they should play in their communities. Let us consider some points from that famous sermon.

Touch the Life of Others

Jesus described the attitude his followers should have toward the world. He stated: "**You are the salt of the earth**; but if the salt loses its strength, how will its saltiness be restored? It is no longer usable for anything but to be thrown outside to be trampled on by men. **You are the light of the world**. . . . Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens." (Matthew 5:13-16) Why did Jesus compare his followers to salt and light?

Jesus' words imply that his followers are like salt, not for just a small group, but for all of mankind. They are like light, not for a limited number of people, but for all who want to see clearly. By using those word pictures, Jesus made it clear that he did not want his followers to isolate themselves from society. Why not?

Note the following: Salt cannot preserve food if it is not mixed with a food item. A lamp cannot dispel darkness from a room if the lamp is kept away from that room. It is, therefore, no wonder that Jesus never commanded his disciples to move to an isolated corner of the earth to establish communities of believers. Nor did he encourage his followers to live insulated lives behind the walls of

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religious institutions. Instead, as salt needs to touch food and light needs to dispel darkness, so Christians need to have an impact on the lives of others.

"No Part of the World"

However, Jesus' instructions that his followers should interact with their fellow men raise an important question about a Christian's attitude toward politics. Why so? Shortly before his death, Jesus prayed to God in behalf of his followers: "I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. **They are no part of the world**, just as I am no part of the world." (John 17:15, 16) So, then, how is it possible for Christians to be no part of the world but, at the same time, be involved in their local community? To find out, let us consider three additional questions:

How Did Jesus View Politics?

THE Gospel writers describe several events in Jesus' ministry that brought him face-to-face with politics. For instance, shortly after Jesus' baptism at about the age of 30, the Devil offered him the position of *world ruler*. Later in his ministry, a crowd wanted to make him their *king*. Still later, people tried to turn him into a *political activist*. How did Jesus react? Let us consider these events.

World ruler. The Gospels state that the Devil offered Jesus rulership over "all the kingdoms of the world." Think of how much good Jesus could have done for suffering mankind if he had wielded the power of a world ruler! What politically oriented individual sincerely concerned with mankind's advancement could resist such an offer? But Jesus refused it.—Matthew 4:8-11.

King. Many of Jesus' contemporaries were desperate for a ruler who could solve their economic and political problems. Impressed by Jesus' abilities, the people wanted Jesus to join the political process. What was his reaction? Gospel writer John states: "Jesus, knowing they were about to come and seize him to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain all alone." (John 6:10-15) Clearly, Jesus refused to become involved in politics.

Political activist. Note what happened days before Jesus was put to death. Disciples of the Pharisees, who favored independence from the Roman Empire, joined by Herodians, members of a political party favoring Rome, approached Jesus. They wanted to force him to take a political position. They asked if the Jews should pay taxes to Rome.

Mark recorded Jesus' response: "Why do you put me to the test? Bring me a denarius to look at." They brought one. And he said to them: "Whose image and inscription is this?" They said to him: "Caesar's." Jesus then said: "Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God." (Mark 12:13-17) Commenting on the reason for Jesus' response, the book *Church and State—The Story of Two Kingdoms* concludes: "He refused to act the part of a political messiah and carefully established both the boundary of Caesar and that of God."

Problems such as poverty, corruption, and injustice did not leave Christ unmoved. In fact, the Bible shows that he was deeply touched by the pitiful state of the people around him. (Mark 6:33, 34) Still, Jesus did not start a campaign to rid the world of injustices, although some tried hard to get him embroiled in the controversial issues of the day.

Clearly, as these examples show, Jesus refused to get involved in political affairs. But what about Christians today? What should they do?

What Should Christians Do Today?

TRUE Christians today do not participate in politics. Why not? Because they follow Jesus' example. He said about himself: "I am no part of the world." Regarding his followers, he stated: "You are no part of the world." (John 15:19; 17:14) Consider some reasons why Christians should not become involved in politics.

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1. Human ability is limited. The Bible states that humans have neither the ability nor the right to govern themselves. "It does not belong to man who is walking," wrote the prophet Jeremiah, "even to direct his step."—Jeremiah 10:23.

Just as humans were not created to fly successfully on their own strength, so they were not created to rule successfully by themselves. Speaking about the limits of government, historian David Fromkin noted: "Governments are composed of human beings; therefore they are fallible and their prospects are uncertain. They exercise a certain power, but only a limited one." (*The Question of Government*) No wonder the Bible warns us not to put our trust in man!—Psalm 146:3.

2. Wicked spirit forces currently have an influence. When Satan offered Jesus world rulership, Jesus did not deny that the Devil had the power to offer him all the kingdoms of the world. In fact, on a later occasion, Jesus called Satan "the ruler of the world." Some years later the apostle Paul described Satan as "the god of this system of things." (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4) Paul wrote to fellow Christians: "We have a wrestling . . . against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) Behind the scenes, wicked spirit forces are the real rulers of this world. How should that fact influence our view of politics?

Think of this comparison: Just as small boats are swept along by powerful sea currents, human political systems are pulled along by powerful, wicked spirit forces. And just as the sailors in those boats can do little to change those powerful currents, politicians can do little to change the influence of those powerful spirit forces. Those forces are bent on corrupting humans beyond reform and on causing "woe for the earth." (Revelation 12:12) Therefore, real change can be brought about only by a person who is more powerful than Satan and his demons. That Person is Jehovah God himself.—Psalm 83:18; Jeremiah 10:7, 10.

3. True Christians give allegiance only to God's Kingdom. Jesus and his disciples knew that at a set time, God himself would establish a government in heaven to rule over the entire earth. The Bible calls this government God's Kingdom and reveals that Jesus Christ has been appointed as its King. (Revelation 11:15) Since that Kingdom affects all humans, Jesus made "the good news of the kingdom of God" the main subject of his teachings. (Luke 4:43) He also taught his disciples to pray: "Let your kingdom come." Why? Because under that Kingdom, God's will is sure to be done in heaven and on earth.—Matthew 6:9, 10.

What, then, will happen to man-made governments? The Bible answers that the governments "of the entire inhabited earth" will be destroyed. (Revelation 16:14; 19:19-21) If an individual truly believes that God's Kingdom is about to remove all man-made political systems, he logically would refrain from supporting those political systems. After all, if he tried to prop up doomed, man-made governments, he would, in effect, be taking a stand against God.

While true Christians do not participate in politics, does that mean that they have no interest in trying to improve the communities in which they live? Consider the answer given in the next article.

How Do Christian Teachings Affect Communities?

THE preceding articles considered why genuine Christians do not participate in politics. How, though, can Christians show that they are interested in improving the communities in which they live? One way is by following Jesus' command: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

There is a link between following Jesus' command to "make disciples" and carrying out his instruction to be like salt and light to the world. (Matthew 5:13, 14) What is the connection? And what effect can that work have on people?

Christ's Message—Preserving and Enlightening

Salt is a preservative; it can prevent decay. Similarly, the message that Jesus instructed his followers to carry to people in all nations has a preserving influence. Those who accept and apply Jesus' teachings protect themselves from the moral decay so prevalent today. In what way? They

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learn how to avoid practices that are harmful to health, such as smoking, and they develop such qualities as love, peace, long-suffering, kindness, and goodness. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Those qualities make them an asset to society. Christians who share this preserving message with their neighbors make a valuable contribution to their community.

What about the metaphor of light? Just as the moon reflects the light from the sun, so Christ's followers reflect the "light" from Jehovah God. They serve as reflectors by means of the enlightening message they preach and the good works they do.—1 Peter 2:12.

Jesus further highlighted the similarity between being a light and being a disciple by saying: "People light a lamp and set it, not under the measuring basket, but upon the lampstand, and it shines upon all those in the house. Likewise let your light shine before men." A shining lamp placed upon a lampstand is clearly visible to all those around it. Similarly, the preaching activities and other fine works that true Christians perform should be clearly visible to those living around them. Why? Jesus said that those who see the fine works will give glory, not to the Christians, but to God.—Matthew 5:14-16.

A Collective Responsibility

When Jesus said, "*You* are the light of the world" and "let *your* light shine," he was addressing all his disciples. Jesus' commission cannot be accomplished by a few individuals scattered in different religions. Instead, all believers are "the light." Seven million Jehovah's Witnesses, who live in more than 235 lands, believe that it is their collective responsibility to visit their neighbors to share the message that Christ wants his followers to proclaim.

What is the theme of the message of Jehovah's Witnesses? When Jesus gave his preaching commission, he did not instruct his followers to preach social or political reforms, union of Church and State, or any other secular ideology. Instead, he foretold: "*This good news of the kingdom* will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) Thus, in obedience to Jesus' instructions, true Christians today continue to speak to their neighbors about God's Kingdom—the only government capable of bringing an end to Satan's wicked system and ushering in a righteous new world.

Sincere Believer and Responsible Citizen—How to Be Both

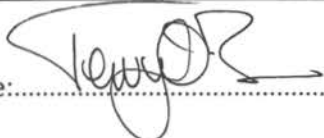
WHAT were two of the characteristics of Jesus' ministry? First, Jesus sought to change individual hearts, not political institutions. For instance, note what Jesus stressed in his Sermon on the Mount. Just before he spoke about the need to be like salt and light, he told his audience that true happiness belongs to those who are "conscious of their spiritual need." He added: "Happy are the mild-tempered ones, . . . the pure in heart, . . . the peaceable." (Matthew 5:1-11) Jesus helped his followers to see the importance of adjusting their thinking and feelings to God's standard of what is good and bad and the importance of serving God wholeheartedly.

Second, when Jesus saw human suffering, his compassion for his fellow men moved him to alleviate their misery. However, he did not make it his goal to eliminate all suffering. (Matthew 20:30-34) He cured sick people, but sickness remained a fact of life. (Luke 6:17-19) He brought relief to the oppressed, but injustice continued to cause suffering. He provided food for the hungry, but famines continued to plague mankind.—Mark 6:41-44.

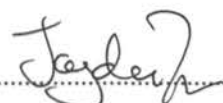
Changing Hearts and Alleviating Suffering

Why did Jesus focus on changing hearts and alleviating suffering but not on changing institutions or *eliminating* distress? Jesus knew that God had purposed to use His Kingdom at a future time to put an end to all human governments and erase the causes of all suffering. (Luke 4:43; 8:1) Therefore, when the disciples once urged Jesus to spend more time on curing the sick, Jesus said to them: "Let us go somewhere else, into the village towns nearby, that I may preach there also, for it is for this purpose I have gone out." (Mark 1:32-38) Jesus alleviated the physical suffering of many, but he gave priority to preaching and teaching God's word.

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In their preaching work today, Jehovah's Witnesses strive to imitate Jesus. They are moved to *alleviate* suffering by giving practical help to individuals in need. But the Witnesses do not strive to *eliminate* the world's injustices. They believe that God's Kingdom will erase the causes of all suffering. (Matthew 6:10) Like Jesus, they endeavor to change *hearts* but not political *institutions*. That approach is realistic because man's main problems are, not political, but moral.

Responsible Citizens

At the same time, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that it is their Christian responsibility to be good citizens. Hence, they honor and respect governmental authority. Through their publications and their witnessing work, they encourage their neighbors to be law-abiding. However, when a government demands what is in direct conflict with what God commands, the Witnesses do not comply. They "obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:29; Romans 13:1-7.

Jehovah's Witnesses visit all those in their community to offer Bible education free of charge. As a result of this education, millions of hearts have been changed. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people are helped to overcome such damaging practices as smoking, drunkenness, misuse of drugs, gambling, and sexual promiscuity. They have become morally responsible citizens because they have learned to apply Bible principles in their lives.—See the article "The Bible Changes Lives," on page 18 of this magazine.

In addition, Bible education helps family members to deepen their respect for one another and to improve communication—between spouses as well as parents and children and among the children themselves. These are factors that strengthen family bonds. Stronger families, in turn, result in stronger communities.

After reviewing the points that have been considered in these articles, what do you think: Does the Bible approve of those who mix religion and politics? The answer is clear; it does not. But should true Christians be responsible citizens? Yes, they should. How can they do so? By following Jesus' command to be like salt and like light to the world.

Those who strive to apply these practical directions of Christ will bring benefits to themselves and their families—as well as to the community in which they live. Jehovah's Witnesses in your area will be glad to share more information with you about the Bible education program that is currently being carried on in your community.

THE ROLE OF EVANGELIZING

The Watchtower 2004 January 1 pp. 8-12

Let All Declare the Glory of Jehovah

"Ascribe to Jehovah glory and strength. Ascribe to Jehovah the glory belonging to his name."—PSALM 96:7, 8.

DAVID, the son of Jesse, grew up as a shepherd lad in the vicinity of Bethlehem. How often he must have gazed up into the vastness of the starry heavens in the stillness of the night while watching over his father's flocks in those lonely sheep pastures! No doubt, such vivid impressions sprang to his mind when, inspired by God's holy spirit, he composed and sang the beautiful words of the 19th Psalm: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling. Into all the earth their measuring line has gone out, and to the extremity of the productive land their utterances."—Psalm 19:1, 4.

² Without speech, without words, without voice, Jehovah's awesome created heavens declare his glory, day after day, night after night. Creation never ceases to declare God's glory, and it is humbling to contemplate this silent testimony going into "all the earth" for all its inhabitants to see. However, the

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silent witness of creation is not enough. Faithful humans are urged to join in with audible voice. An unnamed psalmist addressed faithful worshipers with these inspired words: "Ascribe to Jehovah glory and strength. Ascribe to Jehovah the glory belonging to his name." (Psalm 96:7, 8) Those who have a close relationship with Jehovah are thrilled to respond to that exhortation. What, though, is involved in ascribing glory to God?

³ More is required than mere words. The Israelites of Isaiah's day glorified God with their lips, but most lacked sincerity. Through Isaiah, Jehovah said: "This people have come near with their mouth, and they have glorified me merely with their lips, and they have removed their heart itself far away from me." (Isaiah 29:13) Any praise uttered by such individuals was meaningless. To be meaningful, praise must spring from a heart filled with love for Jehovah and a sincere recognition of his unique glory. Jehovah alone is the Creator. He is the Almighty, the Just One, the epitome of love. He is the author of our salvation and the rightful Sovereign to whom everyone living in heaven and on earth owes subjection. (Revelation 4:11; 19:1) If we truly believe these things, let us glorify him with all our heart.

⁴ Jesus Christ told us how to glorify God. He said: "My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit and prove yourselves my disciples." (John 15:8) How do we bear much fruit? First, by sharing whole-souled in preaching the "good news of the kingdom" and thus joining with all created things in "telling" about God's "invisible qualities." (Matthew 24:14; Romans 1:20) Moreover, in this way we all have a share—directly or indirectly—in the making of new disciples who swell the chorus of praise to Jehovah God. Second, we cultivate the fruitage produced in us by holy spirit and strive to imitate Jehovah God's superlative qualities. (Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 5:1; Colossians 3:10) As a result, our daily conduct glorifies God.

"Into All the Earth"

⁵ Paul in his letter to the Romans stressed the responsibility of Christians to glorify God by sharing their faith with others. A major theme of Romans is that only those who exercise faith in Jesus Christ can be saved. In chapter 10 of his letter, Paul showed that natural Israel of his day was still trying to achieve a righteous standing by following the Mosaic Law, whereas "Christ [was] the end of the Law." Hence, Paul says: "If you publicly declare that 'word in your own mouth,' that Jesus is Lord, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved." From that time on, "there [has been] no distinction between Jew and Greek, for there is the same Lord over all, who is rich to all those calling upon him. For 'everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.'"—Romans 10:4, 9-13.

⁶ Then Paul logically asks: "How will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? How, in turn, will they put faith in him of whom they have not heard? How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach?" (Romans 10:14) Of Israel, Paul says: "They did not all obey the good news." Why did Israel not obey? Their lack of response was due to lack of faith, not lack of opportunity. Paul shows this by quoting Psalm 19:4 and applying it to the Christian preaching work rather than to the silent witness of creation. He says: "Why, in fact, 'into all the earth their sound went out, and to the extremities of the inhabited earth their utterances.'" (Romans 10:16, 18) Yes, even as the inanimate creation glorifies Jehovah, first-century Christians preached the good news of salvation everywhere and thus praised God in "all the earth." In his letter to the Colossians, Paul also described how widely the good news had spread. He said that the good news had been preached "in all creation that is under heaven."—Colossians 1:23.

Zealous Witnesses

⁷ Likely, Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians about 27 years after the death of Jesus Christ. How could the preaching work have spread as far as Colossae in such a relatively short time? It happened because first-century Christians were zealous, and Jehovah blessed their zeal. Jesus had foretold that his followers would be active preachers when he said: "In all the nations the good news has to be preached first." (Mark 13:10) To that prophecy, Jesus added the command recorded in the final verses of Matthew's Gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to

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observe all the things I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20) Shortly after Jesus' ascension to heaven, his followers began to fulfill those words.

⁸ After the outpouring of holy spirit at Pentecost 33 C.E., the first thing the loyal followers of Jesus did was to go out and preach, telling the crowds in Jerusalem "about the magnificent things of God." Their preaching was most effective, and "about three thousand souls" were baptized. The disciples continued to praise God publicly and zealously, with good results.—Acts 2:4, 11, 41, 46, 47.

⁹ The activities of those Christians soon came to the attention of the religious leaders. Disturbed by the outspokenness of Peter and John, they commanded the two apostles to stop preaching. The apostles responded: "We cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard." After being threatened and released, Peter and John returned to their brothers, and all joined in prayer to Jehovah. They courageously asked Jehovah: "Grant your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness."—Acts 4:13, 20, 29.

¹⁰ That prayer was in harmony with Jehovah's will, as became evident a little later. The apostles were arrested and then miraculously released by an angel. The angel told them: "Be on your way, and, having taken a stand in the temple, keep on speaking to the people all the sayings about this life." (Acts 5:18-20) Because the apostles obeyed, Jehovah continued to bless them. Hence, "every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus." (Acts 5:42) Clearly, determined opposition was completely unable to stop Jesus' followers from publicly ascribing glory to God.

¹¹ Soon Stephen was arrested and stoned to death. His murder sparked bitter persecution in Jerusalem, and all the disciples except the apostles were forced to scatter abroad. Were they discouraged by the persecution? By no means. We read: "Those who had been scattered went through the land declaring the good news of the word." (Acts 8:1, 4) That zeal for declaring God's glory was seen again and again. In Acts chapter 9, we read that the Pharisee Saul of Tarsus, while traveling to Damascus to initiate persecution of Jesus' disciples there, saw a vision of Jesus and was struck blind. In Damascus, Ananias miraculously healed Saul's blindness. What was the first thing that Saul—later known as the apostle Paul—did? The record says: "Immediately in the synagogues he began to preach Jesus, that this One is the Son of God."—Acts 9:20.

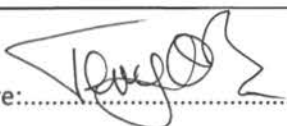
Everyone Shared in Preaching

¹² It is widely acknowledged that everyone in the early Christian congregation shared in the preaching work. Of Christians in those days, Philip Schaff writes: "Every congregation was a missionary society, and every Christian believer a missionary." (*History of the Christian Church*) W. S. Williams states: "The general testimony is that all Christians in the primitive Church, especially those who had the charismatic gift [gifts of the spirit], preached the gospel." (*The Glorious Ministry of the Laity*) He also maintains: "Preaching was never meant by Jesus Christ to be the exclusive privilege of certain ranks of the ministry." Even Celsus, an ancient enemy of Christianity, wrote: "Wool-workers, cobblers, leather-dressers, the most illiterate and vulgar of mankind, were zealous preachers of the gospel."

¹³ The accuracy of those statements is seen in the historical record of Acts. At Pentecost 33 C.E., after the outpouring of the holy spirit, *all* the disciples, men and women, publicly declared the magnificent things of God. After the persecution following the murder of Stephen, all Christians who were scattered abroad spread the good news far and wide. Some 28 years later, Paul was writing to all Hebrew Christians, not merely to a small clergy class, when he said: "Through him let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." (Hebrews 13:15) Describing his own view of the preaching work, Paul said: "If, now, I am declaring the good news, it is no reason for me to boast, for necessity is laid upon me. Really, woe is me if I did not declare the good news!" (1 Corinthians 9:16) Clearly, all faithful Christians in the first century felt the same way.

¹⁴ Indeed, a genuine Christian has to share in the preaching work because it is inseparably linked to faith. Paul said: "With the heart one exercises faith for righteousness, but with the mouth one makes public declaration for salvation." (Romans 10:10) Is it only a small group within the

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congregation—like a clergy class—that exercises faith and thus has the responsibility to preach? Of course not! All true Christians cultivate a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and are moved to make a public declaration of that faith to others. Otherwise, their faith is dead. (James 2:26) Because all loyal Christians in the first century of our Common Era demonstrated their faith in this way, a great shout of praise to Jehovah's name was heard.

¹⁵ In the first century, Jehovah blessed his people with growth despite problems inside and outside the congregation. For example, Acts chapter 6 records a disagreement between Hebrew-speaking and Greek-speaking converts. The problem was handled by the apostles. As a result, we read: "The word of God went on growing, and the number of the disciples kept multiplying in Jerusalem very much; and a great crowd of priests began to be obedient to the faith."—Acts 6:7.

¹⁶ Later, political tensions developed between King Herod Agrippa of Judea and the people of Tyre and Sidon. The inhabitants of those cities made flattering peace overtures, and in response Herod gave a public address. The assembled crowd began to cry: "A god's voice, and not a man's!" Instantly, Jehovah's angel struck Herod Agrippa, and he died "because he did not give the glory to God." (Acts 12:20-23) What a shock to those whose hope was in human rulers! (Psalm 146:3, 4) The Christians, however, went on glorifying Jehovah. Consequently, "the word of Jehovah went on growing and spreading" despite such political instability.—Acts 12:24.

Then and Now

¹⁷ Yes, the worldwide Christian congregation in the first century was made up of zealous, active praisers of Jehovah God. All loyal Christians shared in spreading the good news. Some met responsive ones and, as Jesus said, taught them to obey all the things he commanded. (Matthew 28:19, 20) The result was that the congregation grew, and more and more individuals joined King David of old in ascribing praise to Jehovah. All echoed the inspired words: "I laud you, O Jehovah my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify your name to time indefinite, for your loving-kindness is great toward me."—Psalm 86:12, 13.

¹⁸ In view of this, the words of theology professor Allison A. Trites are thought provoking. Comparing modern-day Christendom with first-century Christianity, he said: "Churches today grow usually by *biological* growth (when the children within a local church family make a personal profession of faith) or by *transfer* growth (when a newcomer transfers his or her membership from another local church). In Acts, however, the growth was *conversion* growth, for the church was just beginning its work." Does that mean that true Christianity is no longer growing in the way that Jesus said it should? Of course not. True Christians today are every bit as zealous in publicly ascribing praise to God as were Christians in the first century.

LAST DAYS

The Watchtower 2013 1January 1 "Should You Fear the End of the World?"

The End of the World—Fear, Fascination, and Frustration

How do you feel about December 21, 2012, the date on the Maya calendar that many have been saying would bring worldwide change? Depending on what you expected, you might be relieved, disappointed, or indifferent. Was it just another incorrect prediction for the end of the world?

What about "the end of the world" described in the Bible? (Matthew 24:3, *King James Version*) Some fear that the earth will be burned up. Others are fascinated by end-time scenarios. Many have simply grown tired of being told that the end is near. But could those be reactions to fiction rather than to fact?

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You might be surprised to learn what the Bible really says about the end of the world. Not only does the Bible give reasons to look forward to the end but it also acknowledges the frustration that can set in if the end seems to be overdue. We invite you to consider the Bible's answers to some common questions about the end of the world.

Will the earth be burned up?

THE BIBLE'S ANSWER: "[God] has founded the earth upon its established places; it will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever."—PSALM 104:5.

The earth will not be destroyed, either by fire or by any other means. Instead, the Bible teaches that this planet is mankind's eternal home. Psalm 37:29 says: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 115:16; Isaiah 45:18.

After God created the earth, he said that it "was very good," and he still feels that way. (Genesis 1:31) Far from planning to destroy it, he promises to "bring to ruin those ruining the earth"—and to protect it from permanent damage.—Revelation 11:18.

You may wonder, though, about 2 Peter 3:7. That Bible verse says: "The heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire." Does this not show that the earth will be burned up? Actually, the Bible sometimes uses the terms "heavens," "earth," and "fire" figuratively, as symbols. For example, when Genesis 11:1 says: "All the earth continued to be of one language," it uses "earth" to mean human society.

The context of 2 Peter 3:7 shows that the heavens, earth, and fire mentioned there are also symbols. Verses 5 and 6 draw a parallel with the Flood of Noah's day. On that occasion, an ancient world was destroyed, yet our planet did not disappear. Instead, the Flood wiped out a violent society, or "earth." It also destroyed a kind of "heavens"—the people who ruled over that earthly society. (Genesis 6:11) In the same way, 2 Peter 3:7 foretells the permanent destruction of wicked society and its corrupt governments as if by fire.

What happens at the end of the world?

THE BIBLE'S ANSWER: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever."—1 JOHN 2:17.

"The world" that is to pass away is, not the earth, but the world of mankind whose lives are not in harmony with God's will. Just as a surgeon might remove a cancerous tumor to save a patient's life, God will "cut off" the wicked so that good people can truly enjoy life on earth. (Psalm 37:9) In that sense, "the end of the world" is a good thing.

Such a positive view of "the end of the world" is implied by the Bible translations that render this expression "the conclusion of the system of things" or "the end of the age." (Matthew 24:3; *New International Version*) Since both humankind and the earth survive the end, does it not seem reasonable that a new age, a new system of things, would follow? The Bible answers yes, for it speaks of "the coming system of things."—Luke 18:30.

Jesus called that future period "the renewal of all things." At that time, he will restore humanity to the conditions that God originally intended. (Matthew 19:28, *NIV*) We will then enjoy

- A paradise earth with security and prosperity for all.—Isaiah 35:1; Micah 4:4.
- Work that is meaningful and satisfying.—Isaiah 65:21-23.
- The curing of all disease.—Isaiah 33:24.
- The reversal of aging.—Job 33:25.
- The resurrection of the dead.—John 5:28, 29.

If we do "the will of God," what he asks of us, we need not fear the end of the world. Instead, we can look forward to it.

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Is the end of the world really near?

THE BIBLE'S ANSWER: *"When you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near."*—LUKE 21:31.

In the book *The Last Days Are Here Again*, Professor Richard Kyle writes that "sudden change and social chaos create an atmosphere conducive to predictions of the end of the world." That is especially the case when the change and chaos seem hard to explain.

However, the Bible prophets who spoke about the end were not trying to explain baffling events of their day. Instead, they were *inspired by God* to describe conditions that would indicate an imminent end of the world. Consider some of those prophecies and decide for yourself whether they are being fulfilled in our time.

- Wars, famines, earthquakes, and epidemics of deadly disease.—Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11.
- Significant increase in crime.—Matthew 24:12.
- The ruining of the earth by mankind.—Revelation 11:18.
- People who love themselves, money, and pleasures but do not love God.—2 Timothy 3:2, 4.
- The breakdown of the family.—2 Timothy 3:2, 3.
- General apathy toward the evidence of the approaching end.—Matthew 24:37-39.
- The preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom worldwide.—Matthew 24:14.

As Jesus said, seeing "all these things" lets us know that the end of the world is near. (Matthew 24:33) Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the evidence is convincing, and they share their faith with others by preaching in 236 lands.

Do mistaken expectations about the end mean that it will never come?

THE BIBLE'S ANSWER: *"Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape."*—1 THESSALONIANS 5:3.

The Bible likens the world's destruction to the onset of labor—the mother's pain is inevitable and comes suddenly. The time leading up to the end is also like a pregnancy, for an expectant mother is aware of ever-increasing signs of the coming birth. Her doctor might estimate the birth date; yet, even if the event should delay, she would still be sure that her baby will soon be born. Similarly, any mistaken expectations about the end do not alter the unmistakable features identifying these as "the last days."—2 Timothy 3:1.

'If the sign that we are near the end is so obvious,' you might ask, 'why do so many people fail to recognize it?' The Bible shows that when the end is near, many will belittle the evidence. Rather than acknowledge the fundamental changes during the last days, they would scoff: "From the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning." (2 Peter 3:3, 4) In other words, the sign of the last days is clear, but many will ignore it.—Matthew 24:38, 39.

This article has considered just some of the Scriptural evidence that the end is near. Would you like to learn more? If so, why not contact Jehovah's Witnesses to accept their offer of a free Bible study? Study sessions can be held in your home, at another place convenient to you, or even over the phone. The only cost is your time, and the potential benefits are priceless.

HAVE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES GIVEN INCORRECT DATES FOR THE END?

Jehovah's Witnesses have had wrong expectations about when the end would come. Like Jesus' first-century disciples, we have sometimes looked forward to the fulfillment of prophecy ahead of God's timetable. (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2) We agree with the sentiment of longtime Witness A. H. Macmillan, who said: "I learned that we should admit our mistakes and continue searching God's Word for more enlightenment."

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Why, then, do we continue to highlight the nearness of the end? Because we take seriously Jesus' words: "Keep looking, keep awake." The alternative, to be found "sleeping" by Jesus, would prevent us from gaining his favor. (Mark 13:33, 36) Why?

Consider this example: A lookout in a fire tower might see what he thinks is a wisp of smoke on the horizon and sound what proves to be a false alarm. Later, though, his alertness could save lives.

Likewise, we have had some wrong expectations about the end. But we are more concerned with obeying Jesus and saving lives than with avoiding criticism. Jesus' command to "give a thorough witness" compels us to warn others about the end.—Acts 10:42.

We believe that even more important than focusing on *when* the end will come, we must be confident that it *will* come, and we must act accordingly. We take seriously the words of Habakkuk 2:3, which says: "Even if [the end] should delay [compared to what you thought], keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late."

MALE HEADSHIP

The Watchtower 2010 May 15 pages 8-12 Headship?

Men, Do You Submit to Christ's Headship?

"The head of every man is the Christ."—1 COR. 11:3.

"YOU are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power," states Revelation 4:11, "because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created." By reason of his Creatorship, Jehovah God is the Supreme Sovereign of the universe and is above all of his creation. That Jehovah "is a God, not of disorder, but of peace" can be seen by the way in which his angelic family is organized.—1 Cor. 14:33; Isa. 6:1-3; Heb. 12:22, 23.

² Before anything was created, God existed by himself for countless ages of time. His very first creation was the spirit creature known as "the Word" because he was the Spokesman for Jehovah. The Word is the one through whom all other things came into existence. Later, he came to earth as a perfect human and became known as Jesus Christ.—*Read John 1:1-3, 14.*

³ What do the Scriptures say about the relative positions of God and his firstborn Son? Writing under inspiration, the apostle Paul tells us: "I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ; in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God." (1 Cor. 11:3) The Christ is under the headship of his Father. Headship and subjection are essential for peace and order to prevail among intelligent creatures. Even the one 'by means of whom all other things were created' is required to submit to God's headship.—Col. 1:16.

⁴ How did Jesus feel about submitting to Jehovah's headship and coming to earth? The Scriptures state: "Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake."—Phil. 2:5-8.

⁵ At all times, Jesus humbly submitted to his Father's will. He said: "I cannot do a single thing of my own initiative; . . . the judgment that I render is righteous, because I seek, not my own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 5:30) "I always do the things pleasing to [my Father]," he declared. (John 8:29) Toward the end of his life on earth, Jesus said in prayer to his Father: "I have glorified you on the earth, having finished the work you have given me to do." (John 17:4) Evidently, Jesus had no problem with recognizing and accepting God's headship over him.

Submission to the Father Brings Benefits to the Son

⁶ When on earth, Jesus demonstrated many wonderful qualities. Among them was the great love he displayed for his Father. "I love the Father," he said. (John 14:31) He also demonstrated great love for people. (*Read Matthew 22:35-40.*) Jesus was kind and considerate, not harsh or overbearing.

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"Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down," he said, "and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light." (Matt. 11:28-30) Sheeplike people of all ages, especially those who were downtrodden and oppressed, found great comfort in Jesus' delightful personality and uplifting message.

⁷ Consider how Jesus dealt with women. Throughout history, many men have treated women very badly. That was true of the religious leaders in ancient Israel. But Jesus treated women with respect. This is made evident in his dealings with a woman who had been sick for 12 years with a flow of blood. "She had been put to many pains" by physicians and had spent all her resources trying to get well. Despite all that effort, she "had got worse." Under the Law, she was considered unclean. Anyone touching her would also become unclean.—Lev. 15:19, 25.

⁸ When the woman heard that Jesus was healing the sick, she joined the crowd surrounding him, saying: "If I touch just his outer garments I shall get well." She touched Jesus and immediately got well. Jesus knew that she should not have touched his garment. Nevertheless, he did not scold her. On the contrary, he was kind to her. He understood how she must have felt after all those years of illness and discerned that she was desperate for help. Compassionately, Jesus told her: "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be in good health."—Mark 5:25-34.

⁹ Even children could feel at ease in the presence of Jesus. When people brought children to him on one occasion, his disciples reprimanded them, evidently feeling that he would not want to be bothered with children. But that is not the way Jesus felt. The Scriptural account tells us: "At seeing this Jesus was indignant and said to [the disciples]: 'Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to suchlike ones.'" Further, "he took the children into his arms and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them." Jesus did not just tolerate children; he warmly welcomed them.—Mark 10:13-16.

¹⁰ How did Jesus come to possess the qualities he displayed during his life on earth? In his prehuman existence, he observed his heavenly Father for aeons of time and absorbed his ways. (Read *Proverbs* 8:22, 23, 30.) In heaven, he had seen Jehovah's loving way of exercising headship over all His creation and had made that way his own. Would Jesus have been able to do that had he not been submissive? It was a delight for him to be in subjection to his Father, and it was a pleasure for Jehovah to have such a Son. When on earth, Jesus reflected perfectly the marvelous qualities of his heavenly Father. What a privilege it is for us to be in subjection to Christ, God's appointed Ruler of the heavenly Kingdom!

Imitate Christ's Qualities

¹¹ All in the Christian congregation, especially the men, should continually work hard to imitate Christ's qualities. As already noted, the Bible declares: "The head of every man is the Christ." As Christ imitated his Head, the true God, Christian men should strive to imitate their head—the Christ. Upon becoming a Christian, the apostle Paul did just that. "Become imitators of me," he exhorted fellow Christians, "even as I am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1) And the apostle Peter said: "To this course you were called, because even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely." (1 Pet. 2:21) The admonition to imitate the Christ is of particular interest to men for still another reason. They are the ones who become elders and ministerial servants. As Jesus found joy in imitating Jehovah, Christian men should find joy in imitating Christ and his qualities.

¹² The elders in the Christian congregation are under obligation to learn to be like Christ. Peter gave the older men, or elders, this exhortation: "Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; neither as lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock." (1 Pet. 5:1-3) Christian elders are not to be dictatorial, domineering, arbitrary, or harsh. Imitating Christ's example, they endeavor to be loving, considerate, humble, and kind in their dealings with the sheep entrusted to their care.

¹³ Those taking the lead in the congregation are imperfect men, and they should constantly be aware of that limitation. (Rom. 3:23) So they must be eager to learn about Jesus and imitate his love. They need to ponder over the way that God and Christ deal with people and then strive to imitate

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them. Peter exhorts us: "All of you gird yourselves with lowliness of mind toward one another, because God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones."—1 Pet. 5:5.

¹⁴ In their dealings with God's flock, the appointed men in the congregation are to exhibit fine qualities. Romans 12:10 states: "In brotherly love have tender affection for one another. In showing honor to one another take the lead." Elders and ministerial servants show honor to others. Like Christians in general, these men are 'to do nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism but with lowliness of mind are to consider that the others are superior to them.' (Phil. 2:3) Those taking the lead should certainly view others as being superior to them. By doing so, the appointed men will be following Paul's counsel: "We, though, who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those not strong, and not to be pleasing ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor in what is good for his upbuilding. For even the Christ did not please himself."—Rom. 15:1-3.

'Assigning Wives Honor'

¹⁵ Consider now Peter's counsel to married men. He wrote: "You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with [your wives] according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one." (1 Pet. 3:7) To honor someone means to hold that individual in high esteem. Thus, you would consider the opinions, needs, and wants of such a person and may defer to that one where there is no vital issue at stake. That is how a husband should deal with his wife.

¹⁶ When telling husbands to honor their wives, Peter adds a warning: "In order for your prayers not to be hindered." (1 Pet. 3:7) That clearly shows how seriously Jehovah views the way a man treats his wife. Failure to show honor to her could hinder his prayers. Moreover, do not wives generally respond positively to being treated honorably by their husbands?

¹⁷ On the matter of loving one's wife, God's Word counsels: "Husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies. . . . For no man ever hated his own flesh; but he feeds and cherishes it, as the Christ also does the congregation . . . Let each one of you individually so love his wife as he does himself." (Eph. 5:28, 29, 33) To what extent should husbands love their wives? "Husbands," wrote Paul, "continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it." (Eph. 5:25) Yes, a husband should be willing even to lay down his life for his wife, just as Christ did for others. When the Christian husband deals with his wife tenderly, considerately, attentively, unselfishly, it is easier for his wife to submit to his headship.

¹⁸ Is assigning honor to wives in this way too much to expect from husbands? No, Jehovah would never ask them to do something that is beyond their capabilities. Besides, Jehovah's worshippers have access to the greatest force in the universe—God's holy spirit. Jesus said: "If you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!" (Luke 11:13) In their prayers, husbands can ask that by means of his spirit, Jehovah will help them in their dealings with others, including their wives.—Read Acts 5:32.

¹⁹ Indeed, men bear a heavy responsibility to learn how to be submissive to Christ and imitate his headship. But what about women, wives in particular?

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