

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

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AUSTRIA

COVER: This busy public square (Michaelerplatz) in Vienna is an ideal place to share the Bible's message with others. Here our sister is witnessing in Chinese and offering the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

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In Vienna,
the good news
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STUDY ARTICLES

- **Hail Christ, the Glorious King!**
- **Rejoice Over the Marriage of the Lamb!**

The Messianic King, Jesus Christ, straps on his sword and rides forth to conquer his enemies. After his complete victory, he marries a beautiful bride, who is accompanied by virgin companions. These exciting events are described in the 45th Psalm. Discover how they concern you.

- **Jehovah—Our Provider and Protector**
- **Jehovah—Our Best Friend**

What can enhance our appreciation for Jehovah as our heavenly Father? These articles will help us to strengthen our relationship with Jehovah as our Provider, Protector, and best Friend. They will also stimulate us to help others to honor him.

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THE **WATCHTOWER**[®]
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Hail Christ, the Glorious King!

“In your splendor go on to victory.”—PS. 45:4.

A GLORIOUS king rides in the cause of truth and righteousness and goes forth to conquer his enemies. After winning a final victory over them, he weds a lovely bride. The king is remembered and lauded throughout all generations to come. That is the basic theme of Psalm 45.

² The 45th Psalm, though, is much more than an exciting story with a happy ending. The events mentioned there have meaning for us. They concern our very lives now, as well as our future. With keen attention, then, let us carefully examine this psalm.

“MY HEART IS STIRRED BY SOMETHING GOOD”

³ **Read Psalm 45:1.** “Something good” that touches the heart of the psalmist and causes it to be “stirred” concerns a king. The Hebrew verb translated “is stirred” originally meant “to bubble up,” or “boil.” This matter made the psalmist’s heart boil over with enthusiasm and made his tongue become like “the stylus of a skilled copyist.”

1, 2. Why is Psalm 45 of interest to us?

3, 4. (a) What is “something good” that concerns us, and how can it affect our heart? (b) In what way ‘is our song about a king,’ and how does our tongue become like a stylus?

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

In what ways did Jehovah anoint Jesus more than his “companions”?

When did Christ strap on his sword, how did he first use it, and when will he use it again?

What is the greatest truth that the Warrior-King Jesus Christ defends?

⁴ What about us? The good news of the Messianic Kingdom is something good that touches our heart. The Kingdom message became especially “good” in 1914. Since then, the message no longer concerns a future Kingdom but has to do with a real government now functioning in the heavens. This is the “good news of the Kingdom” that we

We joyfully proclaim good news about our King Jesus Christ

preach “in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations.” (Matt. 24:14) Is our heart “stirred” by the Kingdom message? Do we preach the good news of the Kingdom with zeal? Like the psalmist, our “song is about a king”—our King Jesus Christ. We proclaim him as the enthroned heavenly King of the Messianic Kingdom. Moreover, we invite all—the rulers and the ruled—to submit to his kingship. (Ps. 2:1, 2, 4-12) And our tongue becomes like “the stylus of a skilled copyist” in that we make extensive use of the written Word in our preaching work.

‘GRACIOUS SPEECH FLOWS FROM THE KING’S LIPS’

⁵ **Read Psalm 45:2.** The Scriptures say very little about Jesus’ physical appearance. As a perfect man, doubtless he was “handsome.” However, his outstanding handsomeness came from his faithfulness to Jehovah and his unbend-

5. (a) In what ways was Jesus “handsome”?
(b) How did ‘gracious speech flow from the King’s lips,’ and how can we endeavor to follow his example?

ing integrity. In addition, Jesus used “gracious speech” when he preached the message of the Kingdom. (Luke 4:22; John 7:46) Do we personally endeavor to follow his example in our preaching work and try to use words that will touch people’s heart?—Col. 4:6.

⁶ Because of Jesus’ wholehearted devotion, Jehovah blessed him during his ministry on earth and rewarded him after his sacrificial death. The apostle Paul wrote: “When he [Jesus] came as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, yes, death on a torture stake. For this very reason, God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend—of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground—and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:8-11) Jehovah blessed Jesus “forever” by resurrecting him to immortal life.—Rom. 6:9.

THE KING IS MADE GREATER THAN HIS “COMPANIONS”

⁷ **Read Psalm 45:6, 7.** Because of Jesus’ profound love of righteousness and hatred of anything that might dishonor his Father, Jehovah anointed him as King of the Messianic Kingdom. Jesus was anointed with “the oil of exultation” more than his “companions,” that is, the kings of Judah of the line of David. How so? For one thing, Jesus was anointed by Jehovah himself. Furthermore, Jehovah anointed him as both King and High Priest. (Ps. 2:2; Heb. 5:5, 6) In ad-

6. How did God bless Jesus “forever”?

7. In what ways did God anoint Jesus more than his “companions”?

dition, Jesus was anointed not with oil but with holy spirit, and his kingship is not earthly but heavenly.

⁸ Jehovah installed his Son as his Messianic King in the heavens in 1914. 'The scepter of his kingdom is a scepter of uprightness,' so the righteousness and equity of his reign are guaranteed. His authority is legitimate, since 'God is his throne.' That is, Jehovah is the foundation of his kingdom. Moreover, Jesus' throne will last "forever and ever." Are you not proud to be serving Jehovah under such a mighty, God-appointed King?

THE KING 'STRAPS ON HIS SWORD'

⁹ **Read Psalm 45:3.** Jehovah instructs his King to 'strap his sword on his side,' thus authorizing Jesus to wage war against all who oppose God's sovereignty and to execute His judgments on them. (Ps. 110:2) Because Christ is an invincible Warrior-King, he is addressed as "O mighty one." He strapped on his sword in 1914 and was victorious over Satan and his demons, whom he hurled out of heaven to the vicinity of the earth.—Rev. 12:7-9.

¹⁰ That was only the beginning of the King's victorious ride. He must yet "complete his conquest." (Rev. 6:2) Jehovah's judgments are still to be executed on all elements of Satan's system on earth, and Satan and his demons must be neutralized. First to go will be Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. It is Jehovah's purpose to use the political rulers to destroy this wick-

ed "prostitute." (Rev. 17:16, 17) Next, the Warrior-King will proceed against Satan's political system, bringing it to nothing. Christ, who is also called "the angel of the abyss," will then complete his conquest by abyssing Satan and his demons. (Rev. 9:1, 11; 20:1-3) Let us see how Psalm 45 prophesied these exciting events.

THE KING RIDES "IN THE CAUSE OF TRUTH"

¹¹ **Read Psalm 45:4.** The Warrior-King does not wage a war of conquest in order to occupy territories and subjugate peoples. He wages a righteous war with noble objectives. He rides "in the cause of truth and humility and righteousness." The greatest truth that must be defended is that of Jehovah's universal sovereignty. Satan challenged the legitimacy of Jehovah's rulership when he rebelled against Him. Since then, that fundamental truth has been disputed by both demons and humans. Now the time has come for Jehovah's anointed King to ride forth to establish the truth of Jehovah's sovereignty once and for all.

¹² The King also rides 'in the cause of humility.' As God's only-begotten Son, he himself has provided a sterling example of humility and loyal subjection to his Father's sovereignty. (Isa. 50:4, 5; John 5:19) All loyal subjects of the King must follow his example and humbly submit to Jehovah's sovereignty in all things. Only those who do so will be allowed to live in God's promised new world.—Zech. 14:16, 17.

8. How can it be said that 'God is Jesus' throne,' and why can we be sure that his kingdom is righteous?

9, 10. (a) When did Christ strap on his sword, and how did he immediately put it to use? (b) How will Christ yet use his sword?

11. How does Christ ride "in the cause of truth"?

12. In what way does the King ride 'in the cause of humility'?

¹³ Christ also sallies forth ‘in the cause of righteousness.’ The righteousness that the King defends is “God’s righteousness”—Jehovah’s standards of what is right and what is wrong. (Rom. 3:21; Deut. 32:4) About the King Jesus Christ, Isaiah prophesied: “A king will reign for righteousness.” (Isa. 32:1) Jesus’ reign will usher in the promised “new heavens” and “new earth,” where in “righteousness is to dwell.” (2 Pet. 3:13) Every inhabitant of that new world will be required to conform to Jehovah’s standards.—Isa. 11:1-5.

THE KING ACCOMPLISHES “AWE-INSPIRING THINGS”

¹⁴ As he rides forth, the King has a sword strapped on his side. (Ps. 45:3) But the time comes for him to take the sword and wield it with his right hand. The psalmist prophesies: “Your right hand will accomplish awe-inspiring things.” (Ps. 45:4) When Jesus Christ rides forth to execute Jehovah’s judgments at Armageddon, he will accomplish “awe-inspiring things” against his enemies. Just what means he will use to destroy Satan’s system, we do not know. But that action will strike terror in the heart of the inhabitants of the earth who have not heeded the divine warning to submit to the King’s rule. **(Read Psalm 2:11, 12.)** In his prophecy regarding the time of the end, Jesus said that people would become “faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” He

13. How does Christ sally forth ‘in the cause of righteousness’?

14. How will the right hand of Christ accomplish “awe-inspiring things”? (See opening image.)

added: “And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”—Luke 21:26, 27.

¹⁵ Announcing the King’s coming “with power and great glory” to execute judgment, the book of Revelation states: “I saw heaven opened, and look! a white horse. And the one seated on it is called Faithful and True, and he judges and carries on war in righteousness. Also, the armies in heaven were following him on white horses, and they were clothed in white, clean, fine linen. And out of his mouth protrudes a sharp, long sword with which to strike the nations, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. Moreover, he treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.”—Rev. 19:11, 14, 15.

¹⁶ Who will be Christ’s fellow warriors making up the heavenly “armies” that follow him into battle? When he first girded on his sword to expel Satan and his demons from heaven, Jesus was accompanied by “his angels.” (Rev. 12:7-9) It seems logical to conclude that at the war of Armageddon, Christ’s armies will include the holy angels. Will his armies include others? Jesus made this promise to his anointed brothers: “To the one who conquers and observes my deeds down to the end, I will give authority over the nations, and he will shepherd the people with an iron rod so that they will be broken to pieces like clay vessels, just as I have received from my Father.” (Rev. 2:26, 27) So Christ’s heavenly armies will also include his anointed brothers, who by then will have received their heavenly reward. The anointed corulers will be

15, 16. Who will make up “the armies” that follow Christ into battle?

at his side when he accomplishes “awe-inspiring things” while shepherding the nations with an iron rod.

THE KING COMPLETES HIS CONQUEST

17 **Read Psalm 45:5.** The King is mounted on a white horse, representing warfare that is clean and righteous in Jehovah’s eyes. (Rev. 6:2; 19:11) In addition to a sword, he is equipped with a bow. We read: “I saw, and look! a white horse, and the one seated on it had a bow; and a crown was given him, and he went out conquering and to complete his conquest.” Both the sword and the bow represent the means that Christ will use to execute judgment on his enemies.

18 In poetic language, the psalmist prophesies that the King’s ‘arrows are sharp, piercing the hearts of his enemies’ and ‘making peoples fall before him.’ The carnage will be earth wide. Jeremiah’s prophecy foretells: “Those slain by Jehovah in that day will be from one end of the earth clear to the other end of the earth.” (Jer. 25:33) A parallel prophecy states: “I saw also an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice and said to all the birds that fly in midheaven: ‘Come here, be gathered together to the great evening meal of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of military commanders and the flesh of strong men and the flesh of horses and of those seated on them, and the flesh of all, of freemen as well as of slaves and of small ones and great.’”—Rev. 19:17, 18.

17. (a) What does the white horse that Christ rides represent? (b) What do the sword and the bow stand for?

18. How will Christ’s “arrows” prove to be “sharp”?



Birds will be called on to cleanse the earth
(See paragraph 18)

19 After destroying Satan’s wicked system of things on earth, Christ ‘in his splendor’ will “go on to victory.” (Ps. 45:4) He will complete his conquest by abyssing Satan and his demons for the full length of the Thousand Year Reign. (Rev. 20:2, 3) With the Devil and his angels then in a state of deathlike inactivity, earth’s inhabitants will be free of satanic influence and will be able to live in total subjection to their victorious and glorious King. Before they see the earth gradually transformed into a global paradise, however, they will have another reason to rejoice with their King and his heavenly associates. That joyful event will be examined in the following article.

19. How will Christ “go on to victory” and complete his conquest?



Rejoice Over the Marriage of the Lamb!

“Let us rejoice and be overjoyed . . . because the marriage of the Lamb has arrived.”—REV. 19:7.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

At the Lamb’s marriage, who is the bride, and how has Christ been preparing her for the wedding?

When is the marriage of the Lamb due to take place?

How do we know that the “other sheep” will share in the universal rejoicing over the marriage of the Lamb?

IT ALWAYS takes time to prepare for a wedding. But we will focus on a very special wedding—a royal one at that. Just imagine! It has been in preparation for about 2,000 years. Now the time is rapidly approaching when the bridegroom will be united with his bride. Soon, joyful music will fill the King’s palace, and heavenly throngs will sing out: “Praise Jah, because Jehovah our God, the Almighty, has begun to rule as king! Let us rejoice and be overjoyed and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has arrived and his wife has prepared herself.”—Rev. 19:6, 7.

² “The Lamb” whose marriage will be a cause for joy in heaven is none other than Jesus Christ. (John 1:29) How is he dressed for the wedding? Who is his bride? How has she been prepared for marriage? When does the wedding take place? This marriage will cause joy in heaven, but will those who hope to live forever on earth join in that rejoicing? With eager anticipation, we will consider such questions as we continue our examination of Psalm 45.

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- 1, 2. (a) Whose wedding will be a particular cause for joy in heaven?
(b) What questions arise?

'HIS GARMENTS ARE PERFUMED'

³ **Read Psalm 45:8, 9.** The Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, puts on his glorious royal wedding garments. Fittingly, his attire gives off a delightful fragrance like that of "the choicest perfumes," such as myrrh and cassia, which were among the ingredients of the holy anointing oil used in Israel.—Ex. 30:23-25.

⁴ The heavenly music that fills his palace adds to the joy that the Bridegroom feels as his marriage approaches. His joy is shared by "the royal consort," the heavenly part of God's organization, which includes "the daughters of kings," that is, the holy angels. What a thrill it is to hear celestial voices declare: "Let us rejoice and be overjoyed . . . because the marriage of the Lamb has arrived"!

THE BRIDE IS PREPARED FOR THE WEDDING

⁵ **Read Psalm 45:10, 11.** We have identified the Bridegroom, but who is his bride? She is a composite bride made up of the members of the congregation headed by Jesus Christ. (**Read Ephesians 5:23, 24.**) They will become a part of Christ's Messianic Kingdom. (Luke 12:32) These 144,000 spirit-anointed Christians "keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes." (Rev. 14:1-4) They become "the Lamb's wife" and reside with him in his heavenly abode.—Rev. 21:9; John 14:2, 3.

⁶ The future bride is addressed not

3, 4. (a) What is said of the Bridegroom's wedding garments, and what adds to his joy? (b) Who are "the daughters of kings" and "the royal consort" who share the Bridegroom's joy?

5. Who is "the Lamb's wife"?

6. Why are the anointed referred to as "the king's daughter," and why are they invited to 'forget their people'?

only as "O daughter" but also as "the king's daughter." (Ps. 45:13) Who is this "king"? Anointed Christians are adopted as "children" of Jehovah. (Rom. 8:15-17) Since they are to become a heavenly bride, the anointed are instructed: "Forget your people and your [fleshly] father's house." They are to keep their minds "fixed on the things above, not on the things on the earth."—Col. 3:1-4.

⁷ Over the centuries, Christ has been preparing his future bride for the heavenly wedding. The apostle Paul explained that Christ "loved the congregation and gave himself up for it, in order that he might sanctify it, cleansing it with the bath of water by means of the word, so that he might present the congregation to himself in its splendor, without a spot or a wrinkle or any of such things, but holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:25-27) Paul told the anointed Christians in ancient Corinth: "I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, for I personally promised you in marriage to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to the Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2) The Bridegroom-King Jesus Christ appreciates the spiritual "beauty" of his future bride. And the bride recognizes him as her "lord" and 'bows down to him' as her future husband.

THE BRIDE IS "BROUGHT TO THE KING"

⁸ **Read Psalm 45:13, 14a.** The bride is presented as "absolutely magnificent" for the royal wedding. At Revelation 21:2, the bride is compared to a city, New Jerusalem, and is "adorned for her husband." This heavenly city has

7. (a) How has Christ been preparing his future bride? (b) How does the bride view her future Bridegroom?

8. Why is it appropriate that the bride is described as being "absolutely magnificent"?

“the glory of God” and is radiant, “like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone shining crystal clear.” (Rev. 21:10, 11) The resplendence of New Jerusalem is beautifully described in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 21:18-21) No wonder the psalmist portrays the bride as “absolutely magnificent”! After all, the royal wedding is taking place in heaven.

⁹ The One to whom the bride is brought is the Bridegroom—the Messianic King. He has been preparing her, ‘cleansing her with the bath of water by means of the word.’ She is “holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:26, 27) His bride must also be fittingly attired for the occasion. And she is! Indeed, “her clothing is adorned with gold,” and “she will be brought to the king in richly woven garments.” For the marriage of the Lamb, “it has been granted to her to be clothed with bright, clean, fine linen—for the fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the holy ones.”—Rev. 19:8.

‘THE MARRIAGE HAS ARRIVED’

¹⁰ **Read Revelation 19:7.** When is the Lamb’s marriage due to take place? Although “his wife has prepared herself” for the marriage, what is stated subsequently does not describe the actual wedding. Rather, it provides a vivid description of the final phase of the great tribulation. (Rev. 19:11-21) Does this mean that the marriage takes place before the Bridegroom-King completes his conquest? No. The visions in the book of Revelation are not presented in chronological order. In the 45th Psalm, the royal wedding occurs *after* the

King Jesus Christ girds on his sword and ‘goes on to victory’ over his enemies. —Ps. 45:3, 4.

¹¹ We can therefore conclude that the order of events will be as follows: First, judgment will be executed upon “the great prostitute,” Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. (Rev. 17: 1, 5, 16, 17; 19:1, 2) Then, Christ will go forth to execute God’s judgments on the rest of Satan’s wicked system on earth by destroying it at Armageddon, “the war of the great day of God the Almighty.” (Rev. 16:14-16; 19:19-21) Finally, the Warrior-King will complete his conquest by abyssing Satan and his demons, reducing them to a state of death-like inactivity.—Rev. 20:1-3.

¹² As anointed Christians finish their earthly course during Christ’s presence, they are resurrected to heavenly life. Sometime after the destruction of Babylon the Great, Jesus will gather to himself all the remaining members of the bride class. (1 Thess. 4:16, 17) Before the outbreak of the war of Armageddon, therefore, all members of the “bride” will be in heaven. After that war, the marriage of the Lamb can take place. What a joyful occasion that marriage will be! “Happy are those invited to the evening meal of the Lamb’s marriage,” states Revelation 19:9. Happy indeed will be the 144,000 members of the bride class. And the Bridegroom-King will be overjoyed to have the total number of his royal associates symbolically ‘eating and drinking with him at his table in his Kingdom.’ (Luke 22:18, 28-30) However,

11. In what order will Christ complete his conquest?

12, 13. (a) When will the marriage of the Lamb take place? (b) In heaven, who will rejoice over the marriage of the Lamb?

9. Who is “the king” to whom the bride is brought, and how is she attired?

10. When is the Lamb’s marriage due to take place?



The marriage of the Lamb brings joy to “the virgin companions” of the bride
(See paragraph 16)

rejoicing over the marriage of the Lamb will not be limited to the Bridegroom and his bride.

¹³ As we noted earlier, heavenly throngs unitedly sing: “Let us rejoice and be overjoyed and give him [Jehovah] glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has arrived and his wife has prepared herself.” (Rev. 19:6, 7) What, though, about Jehovah’s servants on earth? Will they also share in such exultation?

“THEY WILL BE BROUGHT WITH REJOICING”

¹⁴ Read Psalm 45:12, 14b, 15. The prophet Zechariah foretold that in the time of the end, people of the nations would gratefully associate themselves with the remnant of spiritual Israel. He

14. As mentioned in Psalm 45, who are “the virgin companions” of the bride?

wrote: “In those days ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will take firm hold of the robe of a Jew, saying: ‘We want to go with you, for we have heard that God is with you people.’” (Zech. 8:23) At Psalm 45:12, these symbolic “ten men” are spoken of as “the daughter of Tyre” and “the wealthiest of men.” They come to the anointed remnant with gifts, ‘seeking their favor’ and spiritual help. Since 1935, millions of people have allowed the remnant to ‘bring them to righteousness.’ (Dan. 12:3) These loyal companions of the anointed Christians have purified their lives, becoming spiritual virgins. These “virgin companions” of the bride have dedicated themselves to Jehovah and have proved themselves to be faithful subjects of the Bridegroom-King.

¹⁵ The remnant of the bride class have been particularly grateful to these “virgin companions” for their zealous help in preaching “this good news of the Kingdom” throughout the inhabited earth. (Matt. 24:14) Not only do “the spirit and the bride keep on saying, ‘Come!’” but those hearing say, “Come!” (Rev. 22:17) Yes, the “other sheep” heard the members of the anointed bride class say “Come!” and have joined the bride in saying “Come!” to earth’s inhabitants.—John 10:16.

¹⁶ The anointed remnant love their companions and are happy to know that the Bridegroom’s Father, Jehovah, has granted these other sheep on earth the privilege of joining in the jubilation over the heavenly marriage of the Lamb. It was foretold that these “virgin companions” would be “brought with rejoicing and joy.” Yes, the other sheep, who hope to live forever on earth, will share in the universal rejoicing when the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven. Appropriately, the book of Revelation represents the members of the “great crowd” as “standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” They render Jehovah sacred service in the earthly courtyard of his spiritual temple.—Rev. 7:9, 15.

“YOUR SONS WILL TAKE THE PLACE OF YOUR FOREFATHERS”

¹⁷ **Read Psalm 45:16.** “The virgin companions” of Christ’s heavenly bride will have further cause for rejoicing when

15. How have “the virgin companions” worked together with those of the bride class still on earth?

16. Jehovah has granted the other sheep what privilege?

17, 18. How does the Lamb’s marriage become fruitful, and to whom will Christ become a father during his Millennial Reign?

they see the marriage become fruitful in the new world. The Bridegroom-King will turn his attention to the earth and will resurrect his earthly “forefathers,” who will become his earthly “sons.” (John 5:25-29; Heb. 11:35) From among these he will appoint “princes in all the earth.” Doubtless, Christ will appoint others from among faithful elders of today to take the lead in the new world.—Isa. 32:1.

¹⁸ During his Millennial Reign, Christ will become a father to others also. In fact, all earth’s inhabitants who receive everlasting life will gain it because they exercise faith in Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. (John 3:16) He thus becomes their “Eternal Father.”—Isa. 9:6, 7.

MOVED ‘TO MAKE HIS NAME KNOWN’

¹⁹ **Read Psalm 45:1, 17.** Indeed, the events recorded in Psalm 45 concern all Christians. The remaining anointed on earth are enthralled by the prospect of soon being united in heaven with their brothers and with their Bridegroom. The other sheep are moved to be ever more submissive to their glorious King and are grateful for the privilege of being associated with the remaining members of his bride on earth. After their marriage, Christ and his Kingdom associates will bestow untold blessings upon the inhabitants of the earth.—Rev. 7:17; 21:1-4.

²⁰ As we look ahead to the fulfillment of “something good” concerning the Messianic King, are we not moved to ‘make his name known’? May we be among those who ‘will praise the King forever and ever.’

19, 20. How do the exciting events mentioned in Psalm 45 affect all true Christians today?

The Widow of Zarephath Was Rewarded for Her Faith



A POOR widow hugs her boy, her only child. She cannot believe her eyes. Just a short time earlier, she had cradled his lifeless body in her arms in a tender embrace. Now the woman looks at her resurrected son and thrills to his smile. "See," says her houseguest, "your son is alive."

That dramatic resurrection took place almost 3,000 years ago. You can read about it in 1 Kings chapter 17. The houseguest is God's prophet Elijah. And the mother? She is an unnamed widow living in the town of Zarephath. The resurrection of her son was one of the most faith-strengthening events in her life. As we focus on her, we will learn some weighty lessons.

ELIJAH FINDS A WIDOW WHO HAS FAITH

Jehovah had determined that there would be a long drought in the realm of Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. After Elijah announced the drought, God hid him from Ahab and miraculously fed the prophet with bread and meat brought to him by ravens. Jehovah then told Elijah: "Rise up, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there. Look! I will command a widow there to supply you with food."—1 Ki. 17:1-9.

When Elijah arrived at Zarephath, he saw a poor widow collecting pieces of wood. Could she be the woman who would provide food for the prophet? How could she do so, since she herself was so poor? Despite any misgivings Elijah may have had, he began a conversation with the woman. "Please," he said, "bring me a little water in a cup so that I may drink." When she went to get him some water, Elijah added: "Please, bring me a piece of bread." (1 Ki. 17:10, 11)



The widow's faith in Elijah's God, Jehovah, preserved her and her son alive

Giving the stranger a drink did not trouble the widow, but giving him bread was a problem.

"As surely as Jehovah your God is living," she replied, "I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the large jar and a little oil in the small jar. Now I am gathering a few pieces of wood, and I will go in and make something for me and my son. After we have eaten, we will die." (1 Ki. 17:12) Let us reflect on what this exchange reveals.

The widow recognized Elijah as a God-fearing Israelite. This is evident from her words "as surely as Jehovah your God is living." It appears that while she had some knowledge of Israel's God, it was not to the point of using the words "my God" when referring to Jehovah. She lived in Zarephath, a town that 'belonged to,' or was apparently dependent upon, the Phoenician city of Sidon. Very likely, Zarephath was inhabited by Baal worshippers. Nevertheless, Jehovah had seen something exceptional in this widow.

Although the poor widow of Zarephath lived among idolaters, she exercised faith. Jehovah sent

Elijah to her for the sake of both the woman and the prophet. From this, we can draw a vital lesson.

Not all the inhabitants of Baal-worshipping Zarephath were completely corrupt. By sending Elijah to this widow, Jehovah showed that He takes note of well-intentioned individuals who are not yet serving Him. Indeed, "in every nation the man who fears [God] and does what is right is acceptable to him."—Acts 10:35.

How many people who live in your territory are like the widow of Zarephath? Although they may be surrounded by adherents of false religion, they may yearn for something better. They may have little or no knowledge of Jehovah and therefore need help if they are to embrace pure worship. Are you searching for and assisting such individuals?

'FIRST MAKE ME A SMALL LOAF OF BREAD'

Consider carefully what Elijah asked the widow to do. She had just told him that after she made one more meal for her and her son, they would eat it and die. Yet, what did Elijah say? "Do not be afraid. Go in and do as you said. But first make me a small round loaf of bread with what is there, and bring it out to me. Then you can make something afterward for you and your son. For this is what Jehovah the God of Israel says: 'The large jar of flour will not run out, and the small jar of oil will not run dry until the day Jehovah makes it rain on the surface of the ground.'"—1 Ki. 17:11-14.

'Give away our last meal? You must be joking,' some might have said. But that was not this widow's reaction. Despite her limited knowledge of Jehovah, she believed Elijah and did what he asked of her. What a momentous test of faith that was—and what a wise decision she made!

God did not abandon that poor widow. Just as Elijah promised, Jehovah multiplied her meager supplies so that they sustained Elijah, the widow, and her son until the drought ended. Indeed, "the large jar of flour did not run out, and the small jar of oil did not run dry, according to Jehovah's word

that he had spoken through Elijah.” (1 Ki. 17:16; 18:1) If that woman had acted differently, the loaf of bread that she made from her meager supply of flour and oil may well have been her last meal. Instead, she acted in faith, trusted in Jehovah, and fed Elijah first.

A lesson that we can learn from this is that God blesses those who exercise faith. When you face a test of integrity and exercise faith, Jehovah will help you. He will be a Provider, a Protector, and a Friend in order to help you cope with your trial.—Ex. 3:13-15.

In 1898, *Zion’s Watch Tower* drew this lesson from the widow’s story: “If the woman had the faith necessary to obey, then she would be esteemed worthy of the Lord’s assistance through the Prophet; if she did not exercise the faith, another widow might have been found who would. Thus it is with us,—at various steps in the journey of life the Lord brings us to the place where he tests our faith. If we exercise the faith we will get the blessing; if we do not, we will lose it.”

When we face specific trials, we need to seek divine guidance from the Scriptures and from our Bible-based publications. Then we should act in harmony with Jehovah’s direction regardless of how difficult it may be to accept it. We will indeed be blessed if we act in harmony with this wise proverb: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he will make your paths straight.”—Prov. 3:5, 6.

‘HAVE YOU COME TO PUT MY SON TO DEATH?’

The widow’s faith was about to undergo another test. “After these things,” says the Bible account, “the son of the woman who owned the house fell sick, and his sickness became so severe that he stopped breathing.” Searching for a reason for this tragedy, the grieving mother said to Elijah: “What do you have against me, O man of the true God? Have you come to remind me of my guilt and to put my son to death?” (1 Ki. 17:17, 18) What do those bitter words mean?

Had the woman recalled a sin that troubled her conscience? Did she think that her son’s death was divine retribution and that Elijah was God’s messenger of death? The Bible does not tell us, but one point is clear: The widow did not accuse God of any unrighteousness.

Elijah must have been shocked by the death of the widow’s son and by her idea that the prophet’s very presence was responsible for her heart-breaking bereavement. After carrying the boy’s limp body to the roof chamber, Elijah cried out: “O Jehovah my God, are you also bringing harm to the widow with whom I am staying by putting her son to death?” The prophet could not bear the thought that reproach would be cast on God’s name if He were to allow this kind and hospitable woman to suffer further. So Elijah begged: “O Jehovah my God, please, let this child’s life come back into him.”—1 Ki. 17:20, 21.

“SEE, YOUR SON IS ALIVE”

Jehovah was listening. The widow had provided for his prophet and had exercised faith. Apparently, God allowed the boy’s illness to take its course, knowing that a resurrection—the first one recorded in the Scriptures—would take place and would give hope to future generations. When Elijah entreated Him, Jehovah brought the child back to life. Just imagine the widow’s delight when Elijah said: “See, your son is alive”! The widow then told Elijah: “Now I know that you truly are a man of God and that Jehovah’s word in your mouth is truth.”—1 Ki. 17:22-24.

The account in 1 Kings chapter 17 says no more about this woman. In view of Jesus’ positive reference to her, however, she may have lived out her days as a faithful servant of Jehovah. (Luke 4:25, 26) Her story teaches us that God blesses those doing good to his servants. (Matt. 25:34-40) It proves that God provides for faithful ones, even in dire circumstances. (Matt. 6:25-34) This account also gives evidence of Jehovah’s desire and ability to resurrect the dead. (Acts 24:15) Surely these are excellent reasons for remembering the widow of Zarephath.



Jehovah Our Provider and Protector

*“Because he has affection for me, I will rescue him.
I will protect him because he knows my name.”—PS. 91:14.*

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

Why can we say that Jehovah is the Grand Provider?

What role has Jesus played in reconciling humans to God?

How does Jehovah protect those who love and obey him?

JEHOVAH is responsible for the existence of the family arrangement. (Eph. 3:14, 15) Even if we belong to the same family, however, we have different traits and circumstances. You may have lived with your parents from birth to adulthood. Others may have lost their parents in death, perhaps because of sickness, an accident, or some other tragedy. Still others do not even know who their parents are.

² Among members of Jehovah’s family of worshippers, spiritual backgrounds also vary. You may have been ‘brought up in the truth,’ as some say, and your parents inculcated godly principles in you. (Deut. 6:6, 7) Or you may be one of the thousands who have come to learn the truth through the preaching activity of other servants of Jehovah.—Rom. 10:13-15; 1 Tim. 2:3, 4.

³ Despite the factors just mentioned, all of us have certain things in common. We suffer the consequences of Adam’s disobedience and have inherited imperfection, sin, and death. (Rom. 5:12) Even so, as true worshippers, we can rightly address Jehovah as “our Father.” Referring to God’s

1, 2. What differences do we have in family circumstances and spiritual backgrounds?

3. What do all of us have in common?

chosen people of ancient times, Isaiah 64:8 states: “O Jehovah, you are our Father.” Moreover, Jesus opened his model prayer with the words: “Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified.”—Matt. 6:9.

⁴ Our heavenly Father provides the care and protection we need as a people calling on his name in faith. The psalmist quotes him as saying: “Because he [a true worshipper] has affection for me, I will rescue him. I will protect him because he knows my name.” (Ps. 91:14) Yes, Jehovah God lovingly provides escape from our enemies and protects us as his people, so that we are not wiped out.

⁵ To enhance our appreciation for our heavenly Father, let us consider three important factors: (1) Our Father is our Provider. (2) Jehovah is our Protector. (3) And God is our best Friend. As we consider these points, it will be helpful to meditate on our relationship with God and discern how we can honor him as our Father. It will also be beneficial to reflect on the blessings Jehovah holds out to those who draw close to him.—Jas. 4:8.

JEHOVAH, THE GRAND PROVIDER

⁶ “Every good gift and every perfect present is from above,” wrote the disciple James, “coming down from the Father of the celestial lights.” (Jas. 1:17) Life itself is a wonderful gift from Jehovah. (Ps. 36:9) By using our lives to do the divine will, we experience abundant blessings now and have the prospect of eternal life in the new world. (Prov. 10:

22; 2 Pet. 3:13) But how is this possible in view of the tragic consequences of Adam’s disobedience?

⁷ Jehovah is indeed the Grand Provider in ways without number. For instance, his undeserved kindness comes to our rescue. Yes, all of us are sinful and have inherited imperfection from our first earthly father. (Rom. 3:23) Nevertheless, because of Jehovah’s love, he took the initiative to open the way for us to have a close relationship with him. “By this the love of God was revealed in our case,” wrote the apostle John, “that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might gain life through him. The love is in this respect, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins.”—1 John 4:9, 10.

⁸ In the 19th century B.C.E., a prophetic event unfolded that reveals the extent of Jehovah’s loving provision for obedient humans to enjoy everlasting life. Hebrews 11:17-19 explains: “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, as good as offered up Isaac—the man who had gladly received the promises attempted to offer up his only-begotten son—although it had been said to him: ‘What will be called your offspring will be through Isaac.’ But he reasoned that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, and he did receive him from there in an illustrative way.” It is not difficult to see the parallel. Jehovah offered his Son, Jesus Christ, in behalf of the world of mankind.—**Read John 3: 16, 36.**

4, 5. As we examine the depth of our appreciation for our Father, Jehovah, what will it be helpful to consider?

6. What is one way in which Jehovah proves to be the Giver of “every good gift”?

7. How has God opened the way for us to have a close relationship with him?

8, 9. How did Jehovah prove to be the Grand Provider in the time of Abraham and Isaac? (See opening image.)

⁹ How Isaac must have welcomed his deliverance from a sacrificial death! He was undoubtedly grateful for God's provision of a replacement sacrifice—a ram caught in a nearby thicket. (Gen. 22:10-13) No wonder that place came to be called "Jehovah-jireh," which means "Jehovah Will Provide."—Gen. 22:14; ftn.

PROVISION FOR RECONCILIATION

¹⁰ As we meditate on how Jehovah proves to be the Grand Provider, we gratefully acknowledge the vital role played by Jesus Christ, even as Paul did when he wrote: "This is what we have concluded, that one man died for all; so, then, all had died. And he died for all so that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised up."—2 Cor. 5:14, 15.

¹¹ Because of their love for God and their gratitude for the inestimable privilege of serving him, the early Christians gladly accepted "the ministry of the reconciliation." Their work of preaching and making disciples opened the way for honesthearted individuals to come to be at peace with God, enjoy his friendship, and eventually become his spiritual children. Today, anointed servants of Jehovah perform the same ministry. What they accomplish as ambassadors for God and Christ makes it possible for rightly disposed people to be drawn by Jehovah and become believers.—**Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; John 6:44; Acts 13:48.**

¹² Out of appreciation for Jehovah as the Grand Provider, all Christians who

10, 11. Who have taken the lead in "the ministry of the reconciliation," and how have they done so?

12, 13. How can we show that we appreciate Jehovah's many provisions?

have an earthly hope share with the anointed in the Kingdom-preaching work. In this activity, we make use of the Bible, another of God's splendid provisions. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) By skillful use of God's inspired Word in our ministry, we give others the opportunity to gain everlasting life. To help us in this work, each of us relies on yet another provision from Jehovah—his holy spirit. (Zech. 4:6; Luke 11:13) The results are impressive, as shown in each edition of the *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*. What an honor it is to share in this work to the praise of our Father and Provider!

¹³ In view of all that God has provided, we do well to ask ourselves: 'Am I doing all I can in my ministry to show Jehovah the depth of my appreciation for his provisions? In what ways can I improve and become a more effective preacher of the good news?' We can demonstrate our gratitude for God's wonderful provisions by keeping Kingdom interests first in our lives. If we do so, Jehovah will see to it that our needs are cared for. (Matt. 6:25-33) Because of God's love, we surely want to do as much as we can to please him and make his heart rejoice.—Prov. 27:11.

¹⁴ The psalmist David sang: "I am helpless and poor; may Jehovah pay attention to me. You are my helper and my rescuer." (Ps. 40:17) Jehovah has repeatedly been the Rescuer of his people as a group, especially when they have been severely persecuted and relentlessly hounded by their enemies. How thankful we are for God's help at such times and for the many spiritual provisions he constantly makes for us!

14. How has Jehovah been the Rescuer of his people?



Jehovah can use our fellow believers to help us stay faithful in difficult times
(See paragraphs 18-20)

JEHOVAH PROTECTS

¹⁵ A loving father not only provides for his children but also seeks to protect them. He would naturally try to rescue them if they were in danger. One brother remembers a specific incident that occurred when he was just a young boy. He and his father were returning home from the field service when their path took them across a stream. A heavy downpour that morning had caused the brook to flood. The only way to cross the water was to jump from one large stone to another. Going ahead of his father, the boy lost his footing on one of the stones, tumbled into the flooding water, and went under twice. How grateful the boy was that his father quickly grabbed him firmly by the shoulder and saved him from drowning! Our heavenly Father de-

15. Illustrate how a loving father seeks to protect his child.

livers us from what might be viewed as raging torrents of this wicked world and from its ruler, Satan. Jehovah is certainly the best Protector anyone could ever hope to have.—Matt. 6:13; 1 John 5:19.

¹⁶ The loving protection made possible by Jehovah is well-illustrated by what occurred after he rescued the Israelites from Egyptian bondage and miraculously protected them as they crossed the Red Sea in 1513 B.C.E. After trekking through the wilderness toward Mount Sinai, the nation arrived at Rephidim.

¹⁷ In view of the divine prophecy of Genesis 3:15, Satan may have been desperate as he looked for an opportunity to attack the vulnerable Israelites. He did this through the Amalekites, who were enemies of God's people. (Num. 24:20)

16, 17. How did Jehovah help and protect the Israelites when they fought the Amalekites?

Consider what Jehovah accomplished by means of four faithful men—Joshua, Moses, Aaron, and Hur. As Joshua fought the Amalekites, stationed on a nearby hill were Moses, Aaron, and Hur. The Israelites proved superior in battle when Moses raised his hands. When his hands became heavy, Aaron and Hur supported them. So it was that with Jehovah’s help and protection, “Joshua defeated Amalek and his people.” (Ex. 17:8-13) Moses built an altar there, calling it “Jehovah-nissi,” which means “Jehovah Is My Signal Pole.”—**Read Exodus 17:14, 15; ftn.**

KEPT SAFE FROM SATAN’S CLUTCHES

¹⁸ Jehovah protects those who love and obey him. Like the Israelites at Rephidim, we look to God for safety when confronted by enemies. Jehovah has often protected us as a group, and he keeps us out of the Devil’s clutches. Think of the many occasions when God has safeguarded our brothers who were maintaining their Christian neutrality. For example, this was the case during the Nazi era in Germany and other countries in the 1930’s and early 1940’s. Reading and reflecting on life stories and *Yearbook* accounts of God’s protection during times of persecution will strengthen our trust in Jehovah as our Refuge.—Ps. 91:2.

¹⁹ Through Jehovah’s organization and its publications, we receive loving reminders for our protection. Consider how this has proved to be of benefit in recent times. As this world sinks further into the quagmire of debauchery and pornography, Jehovah has provided urgent reminders and practical help to

18, 19. What protection has God provided for his servants in our time?

alert us to moral dangers. For instance, we receive fatherly counsel to avoid bad associations through the misuse of social networking.*—1 Cor. 15:33.

²⁰ How can we demonstrate that we are really being “taught by Jehovah”? By carefully heeding his commands. (Isa. 54:13) In the safe haven of our congregations, we find needed guidance and protection, for it is there that faithful men who serve as elders provide Scriptural help and counsel. (Gal. 6:1) Much of Jehovah’s tender care reaches us through these “gifts in men.” (Eph. 4:7, 8) How should we respond? Willing submission and obedience result in God’s blessing.—Heb. 13:17.

²¹ Let us be determined to be led by holy spirit and thus yield to the guidance of our heavenly Father. We also need to meditate on the life course of his Son, Jesus Christ, whose peerless example we strive to follow. For his obedience even to the point of death, Jesus received a rich reward. (Phil. 2:5-11) Like him, we will be blessed for trusting in Jehovah with all our heart. (Prov. 3:5, 6) So may we always look to Jehovah as the Provider and Protector beyond compare. What a joy and great privilege it is to serve him! Our love for him will grow as we reflect on the third aspect of our Father’s care for us—his friendship. The next article focuses on how Jehovah is our best Friend.

* Examples of such reminders can be found in the articles “The Internet—Making Wise Use of a Global Tool” in *The Watchtower*, August 15, 2011, pages 3-5 and “Beware of the Devil’s Snares!” and “Stand Firm and Avoid Satan’s Traps!” in *The Watchtower*, August 15, 2012, pages 20-29.

20. What protection and guidance are available through the Christian congregation?

21. (a) We should be determined to do what? (b) What will be considered in the next article?



Jehovah Our Best Friend

"[Abraham] came to be called Jehovah's friend."

—JAS. 2:23.

"LIKE father, like son" is an oft-repeated phrase. Indeed, many children closely resemble their parents. After all, both the father and the mother contribute to their child's genetic heritage. Jehovah, our heavenly Father, is the Giver of life. (Ps. 36:9) And we, his human children, resemble him to some extent. Being created in his image, we have the ability to reason and draw conclusions and develop and maintain friendships.—Gen. 1:26.

² Jehovah can be our best Friend. Such friendship is based on God's love for us and our faith in him and his Son. Jesus stated: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) There are many examples of those who have had a close relationship with Jehovah. Let us consider two of them.

"ABRAHAM MY FRIEND"

³ Jehovah referred to the patriarch and ancestor of the

1. Having been created in God's image, we possess what ability?
2. On what basis can Jehovah become our Friend?
- 3, 4. As regards friendship with Jehovah, contrast Abraham with his descendants.

HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?

On what basis can Jehovah be your Friend?

According to Psalm 15:3, 5, what does God require of us if we are to enjoy his friendship?

What will help us to open our hearts to our best Friend?

“JEHOVAH IS PEACE”

Israelites as “Abraham my friend.” (Isa. 41:8) Second Chronicles 20:7 also calls Abraham a friend of God. What was the basis for that faithful man’s enduring friendship with his Creator? It was Abraham’s faith.—Gen. 15:6; **read James 2:21-23.**

⁴ Abraham’s descendants who became the nation of ancient Israel originally had Jehovah as their Father and Friend. Sadly, however, they lost their friendship with God. Why? Because they failed to keep exercising faith in Jehovah’s promises.

⁵ The more you learn about Jehovah, the stronger your faith in him becomes, and your love for him deepens. Think back to the time when you discovered that God is a real Person, someone with whom you could develop a close relationship. You also learned that all of us have been born in sin because of Adam’s disobedience. You came to understand that mankind as a whole is alienated from God. (Col. 1:21) Then you came to realize that our loving heavenly Father is not a remote person who is not interested in us. When we learned about his provision of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice and exercised faith in that provision, we began to build a friendship with God.

⁶ As we look back now, we might well ask ourselves: ‘Am I making progress in my friendship with God? Is my trust in him strong, and is my love for my beloved Friend, Jehovah, growing each day?’ Another person of ancient times who had a close relationship with Jehovah was Gideon. Let us now consider his fine example and take it to heart.

⁷ Judge Gideon served Jehovah during a turbulent period of Israel’s history after the nation entered the Promised Land. Judges chapter 6 relates that Jehovah’s angel visited Gideon at Ophrah. At that time, the neighboring Midianites were a real threat to Israel. For that reason, Gideon was threshing wheat, not in the open field, but in a winepress, where he could quickly hide the valuable grain. Surprised that the angel appeared and addressed him as a “mighty warrior,” Gideon questioned whether Jehovah, who had delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, was really going to help them now. Speaking on behalf of the Creator, the angel reassured Gideon that Jehovah truly was backing him.

⁸ Gideon wondered how it would be possible for him to “save Israel out of Midian’s hand.” The answer he received was direct: “Because I will be with you,” said Jehovah, “you will strike down Midian as if they were one man.” (Judg. 6:11-16) No doubt still wondering just how this would work out, Gideon sought a sign. Notice that in this conversation there is no question but that Gideon viewed Jehovah as a real Person.

⁹ What happened next strengthened Gideon’s faith and brought him closer to God. Gideon prepared a meal and served it to the angel. When the food was miraculously consumed by fire at the touch of the angel’s staff, Gideon realized that the angel was indeed Jehovah’s representative. Alarmed, Gideon exclaimed: “Alas, Sovereign Lord Jehovah, for I have seen Jehovah’s angel face-to-face!” (Judg. 6:17-22) But did that en-

5, 6. (a) How has Jehovah become your Friend? (b) What questions deserve our attention?

7-9. (a) What remarkable experience did Gideon have, and what was the result of it? (See opening image.) (b) How can we experience friendship with Jehovah?

counter erect a barrier between Gideon and his God? Certainly not! The opposite occurred. Gideon came to know Jehovah in such a way that he felt at peace with God. We know this from the name given to the altar that Gideon erected at that place—"Jehovah-shalom." That name means "Jehovah Is Peace." (Read **Judges 6:23, 24**; ftn.) When we meditate on what Jehovah does for us each day, we come to realize that he is a true Friend. Regular prayer to God increases our feeling of peace and strengthens our friendship with him.

WHO WILL BE 'A GUEST IN JEHOVAH'S TENT'?

¹⁰ For Jehovah to be our Friend, however, we must meet certain conditions. As recorded in Psalm 15, David sang about what is required for us to be 'a guest in Jehovah's tent,' that is, to be a friend of God. (Ps. 15:1) Let us focus on two of these requirements—avoiding slander and acting honestly in all our dealings. With regard to these matters, David said of a guest in Jehovah's tent: "He does not slander with his tongue . . . He does not accept a bribe against the innocent."—Ps. 15:3, 5.

¹¹ In another psalm, David warned: "Guard your tongue from what is bad." (Ps. 34:13) Failure to heed this inspired counsel would create a gap between us and our righteous heavenly Father. In fact, slander is a characteristic of Jehovah's great enemy, Satan. The term "Devil" is derived from a Greek word meaning "slanderer." Controlling what we say about others helps preserve closeness with Jehovah. Especially is this true of our attitude regarding ap-

10. According to Psalm 15:3, 5, what does Jehovah require of us if we are to be his friends?

11. Why must we avoid slandering anyone?

pointed men in the congregation.—Read **Hebrews 13:17**; **Jude 8**.

¹² Honesty, not exploitation, likewise characterizes Jehovah's servants. The apostle Paul wrote: "Keep praying for us, for we trust we have an honest conscience, as we wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things." (Heb. 13:18) Because we are determined to "conduct ourselves honestly in all things," we avoid taking advantage of our Christian brothers. For example, if they work for us secularly, we make sure that they are fairly treated and paid in line with the agreement we have made with them. As Christians, we deal honestly with our employees and with all others. And if we are employed by a fellow Christian, we are careful not to take advantage of him by demanding special privileges.

¹³ How often we hear expressions of appreciation from those in the world who have dealings with Jehovah's Witnesses! For example, the director of a large construction services organization noticed that Jehovah's Witnesses keep their word. "You always stick to what you have agreed to do," he said. (Ps. 15:4) Such conduct helps us to maintain our friendship with Jehovah. Moreover, it brings praise to our loving heavenly Father.

HELP OTHERS TO BECOME JEHOVAH'S FRIENDS

¹⁴ Though they may believe that God exists, many people we meet in our ministry do not view him as their best Friend. How can we help them? Consider the instructions Jesus gave 70 of his disciples when he sent them out by

12, 13. (a) Why should we be honest in all things? (b) How may our honesty affect others?

14, 15. In our ministry, how can we help others to become Jehovah's friends?



We help others to become Jehovah's friends
(See paragraphs 14, 15)

twos in order to preach: "Wherever you enter into a house, say first: 'May this house have peace.' And if a friend of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if there is not, it will return to you." (Luke 10:5, 6) We can attract people to the truth by our friendly approach. In the case of opposers, this may help to dispel hostility and pave the way for a better reception on another occasion.

¹⁵ When we meet individuals who are steeped in false religion or who follow unscriptural customs, we continue to manifest a friendly, peaceful attitude. We warmly welcome to our meetings those whose dissatisfaction with modern-day society awakens in them a desire to learn more about the God we worship. Articles in the series "The Bible Changes Lives" provide us with many fine examples.

WORKING WITH OUR BEST FRIEND

¹⁶ People who work together often develop close friendships. All who are dedicated to Jehovah have the privilege of being considered both his friends and his "fellow workers." (Read **1 Corinthians 3:9**.) Indeed, as we engage in the preaching and disciple-making work, we gain greater insight into the marvelous qualities of our heavenly Father. We see how his holy spirit helps to equip us to carry out our commission to preach the good news.

¹⁷ The greater our share in the disciple-making work, the closer we feel to Jehovah. For instance, we observe the way Jehovah thwarts opposers. Look back over the past few years. Have we not seen clearly the way God is guiding us? We marvel at the ongoing supply of rich spiritual food. Our convention and assembly programs reveal our Father's loving insight into our problems and needs. In a letter of appreciation for a convention, one family wrote: "The program really reached our hearts. We felt how much Jehovah loves each and every one of us and wants us to succeed." After attending a special convention in Ireland, a couple from Germany expressed gratitude for the way they had been warmly welcomed and cared for, adding: "But our greatest thanks go to Jehovah and his King Jesus Christ. They have invited us to be part of this truly united nation. We are not just talking about unity but are enjoying it every day. Our experiences in connection with the special convention in Dublin will always remind us of the precious privilege

16. In what sense can we be considered both Jehovah's friends and his "fellow workers"?

17. How does the spiritual food provided at our assemblies and conventions demonstrate that Jehovah is our Friend?

we have to serve our great God together with all of you.”

FRIENDS COMMUNICATE

18 Friendship deepens when good communication exists. Social networking and text messaging are very popular in this age of Internet and telecommunications technology. By comparison, though, how do we individually rate our personal communication with our best Friend, Jehovah? True, he is the “Hearer of prayer.” (Ps. 65:2) But how often do we take the initiative to speak to him?

19 Some servants of God do not find it easy to open their hearts and express their deep emotions. Yet, that is what Jehovah wants us to do when we pray. (Ps. 119:145; Lam. 3:41) Even if we find such heartfelt expressions difficult to put into words, we are not without help. Paul wrote to Christians in Rome: “The problem is that we do not know what we should pray for as we need to, but the spirit itself pleads for us with unuttered groanings. But the one who searches the hearts knows what the meaning of the spirit is, because it is pleading in harmony with God for the holy ones.” (Rom. 8:26, 27) Our meditating on the words recorded in such Bible books as Job, Psalms, and Proverbs will help us to express our inmost feelings to Jehovah.

20 When distressing situations confront us, let us heed Paul’s inspired advice to the Philippians: “Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with

18. What might we ask ourselves regarding our communication with Jehovah?

19. We have access to what help if we find it difficult to open our hearts to our heavenly Father?

20, 21. What comfort do Paul’s words at Philippians 4:6, 7 provide?



How does prayer strengthen our friendship with God?
(See paragraph 21)

thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God.” Such open communication with our best Friend will surely bring us comfort and consolation, for Paul adds: “The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:6, 7) May we always cherish the incomparable “peace of God” that really does guard our hearts and mental powers.

21 Prayer helps us to cultivate a friendship with Jehovah. Therefore, let us “pray constantly.” (1 Thess. 5:17) May this study strengthen our precious relationship with God and our determination to comply with his righteous requirements. And let us take time to meditate on the blessings we enjoy because Jehovah truly is our Father, our God, and our Friend.

What basis did first-century Jews have for being “in expectation” of the Messiah?

■ In the days of John the Baptizer, “the people were in expectation and all of them were reasoning in their hearts about John, ‘May he perhaps be the Christ?’” (Luke 3:15) Why might the Jews have expected the Messiah to appear at that time? There are a number of reasons.

After Jesus was born, Jehovah’s angel appeared to shepherds who were tending their flocks in the fields near Bethlehem. ⁽¹⁾ The angel proclaimed: “Today there was born to you in David’s city a savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:8-11) After that, the angel was joined by “a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: * ‘Glory in the heights above to God, and on earth peace among men of goodwill.’” —Luke 2:13, 14.

That announcement certainly had a powerful effect on those humble shepherds. They immediately set out for Bethlehem, and when they found Joseph and Mary and the infant Jesus, “they made known the message that they had been told concerning this young child.” As a result, “*all who heard* were astonished at what the shepherds told

them.” (Luke 2:17, 18) The expression “all who heard” implies that the shepherds spoke to others besides Joseph and Mary. Then, as the shepherds returned home, they kept “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.” (Luke 2:20) Those shepherds certainly were not keeping to themselves the good things they had heard about the Christ!

When Mary brought her firstborn son to Jerusalem in order to present him to Jehovah as the Mosaic Law required, the prophetess Anna “began giving thanks to God and *speaking about the child to all who were waiting for Jerusalem’s deliverance.*” ⁽²⁾ (Luke 2:36-38; Ex. 13:12) Thus, news of the Messiah’s appearance continued to spread.

Later, “astrologers from the East came to Jerusalem, saying: ‘Where is the one born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when we were in the East, and we have come to do obeisance to him.’” (Matt. 2:1, 2) Upon hearing this, “King Herod was agitated, and all Jerusalem with him. On gathering together *all the chief priests and scribes* of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to

* The Bible does not say that the angels “sang” at Jesus’ birth.

1



2



be born.”⁽³⁾ (Matt. 2:3, 4) So a great many people were being put on notice: The future Messiah had arrived!*

Luke 3:15, quoted earlier, indicates that some Jews thought that John the Baptizer might be the Christ. However, John put that notion to rest with the words: “The one coming after me is stronger than I am, whose sandals I am not worthy to take off. That one will baptize you with holy spirit and with fire.” (Matt. 3:11) John’s modest comment would not fail to heighten Messianic expectations.

Could the first-century Jews have calculated the time of the Messiah’s arrival on the basis of the prophecy of the 70 weeks recorded at Daniel 9:24-27? While that possibility cannot be ruled out, it cannot be confirmed. The fact is that there were many conflicting interpretations of the 70 weeks in Jesus’ day, and none come close to our present understanding.[#]

The Essenes, widely thought to have been a Jewish monastic sect, taught that two Messiahs would appear toward the end of 490 years, but we cannot be certain that the Essenes based their calculations on Daniel’s prophecy. Even if they had

* We might ask, How did the astrologers make the connection between the appearance of the “star” in the East and the birth of the “king of the Jews”? Could it be that they heard news of Jesus’ birth when traveling through Israel?

[#] For our present understanding of the prophecy of the 70 weeks, see *Pay Attention to Daniel’s Prophecy!* chapter 11.

done so, it is hard to imagine how the Jews in general would have come to be influenced by the chronology of such a reclusive group.

In the second century C.E., certain Jews believed that the 70 weeks covered the period from the destruction of the first temple in 607 B.C.E. to the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E., while others connected the fulfillment of the prophecy with the Maccabean period of the second century B.C.E. So there was no clear consensus as to how the 70 weeks should be counted.

If the timing of the 70 weeks had been correctly understood in the first century C.E., one would think that the apostles and other first-century Christians would have referred to it as proof that the promised Messiah had arrived right on time in the person of Jesus Christ. However, there is no evidence that the earliest Christians did so.

Another factor is worth noting. Gospel writers often pointed out that certain prophecies found in the Hebrew Scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. (Matt. 1:22, 23; 2:13-15; 4:13-16) Yet, not one of them connects Jesus’ appearance on earth with the prophecy of the 70 weeks.

In summary: We cannot confirm that people in Jesus’ day correctly understood the prophecy of the 70 weeks. However, the Gospels provide other sound reasons why the people would have been “in expectation” of the Messiah.



“Gaze Upon the Pleasantness of Jehovah”

Distressing circumstances can have a terrible impact on us. They can consume our thoughts, sap our strength, and affect our very outlook on life. King David of ancient Israel was beset by many hardships. How did he face them? In a touching psalm, David answers: “With my voice I call to Jehovah for help; with my voice I plead with Jehovah for favor. Before him I pour out my concern; before him I tell about my distress when my spirit fails within me. Then you watch my roadway.” Yes, David humbly prayed to God for help.—Ps. 142:1-3.

In another psalm, David sang: “One thing I have asked from Jehovah—it is what I will look for—that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to gaze upon the pleasantness of Jehovah and to look with appreciation upon his temple.” (Ps. 27:4) David was not a Levite, but imagine him standing outside the holy courtyard near the very center of true worship. David’s heart swells with such gratitude that he wants to spend the rest of his days there and thus “gaze upon the pleasantness of Jehovah.”

The word “pleasantness” is associated with the state or quality of being “agreeable or pleasing to the mind, feelings, or senses.” David always looked with appreciation upon God’s arrangement for worship. We might well ask ourselves, ‘Do I feel the way David felt?’

“LOOK WITH APPRECIATION” UPON GOD’S ARRANGEMENT

In our day, Jehovah’s arrangement for approach to him is not centered on a physical structure. Instead, it involves God’s great spiri-

tual temple—the sacred arrangement of true worship.* If we “look with appreciation” upon this arrangement, we too can “gaze upon the pleasantness of Jehovah.”

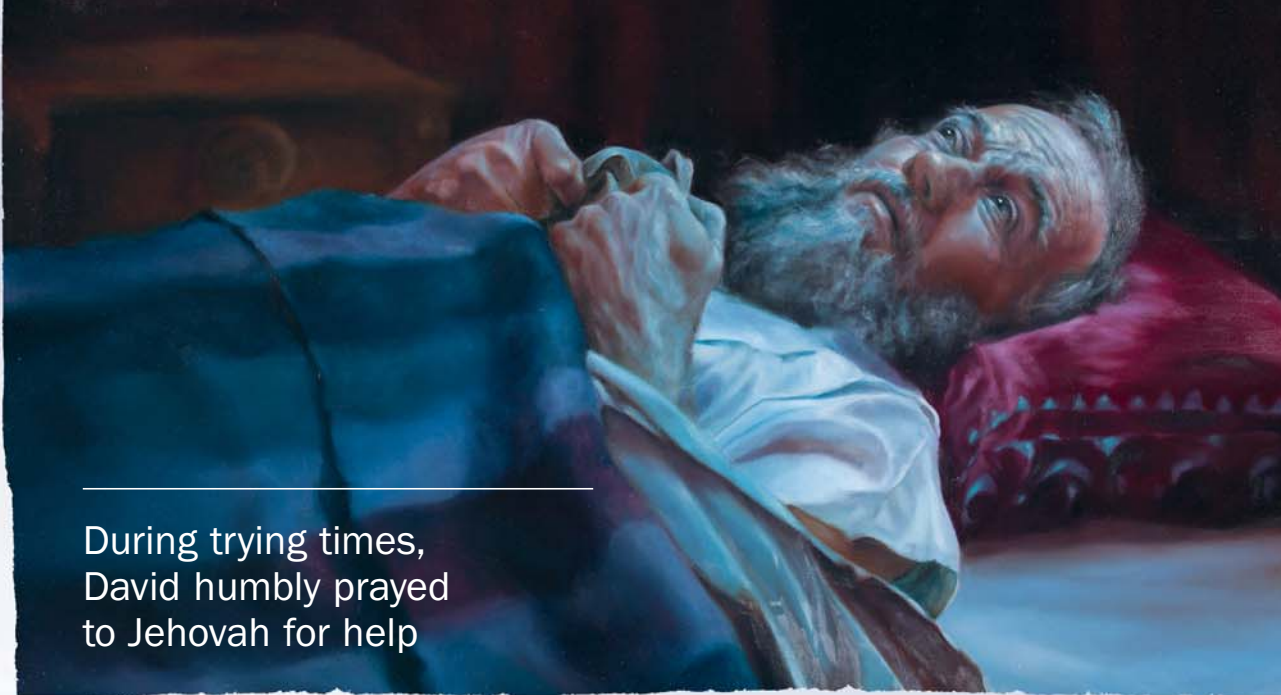
Consider the copper altar of burnt offering that stood before the entrance of the tabernacle. (Ex. 38:1, 2; 40:6) That altar represented God’s willingness to accept Jesus’ human life as a sacrifice. (Heb. 10:5-10) Think of what that means for us! The apostle Paul wrote: “When we were enemies we became reconciled to God through the death of his Son.” (Rom. 5:10) By exercising faith in the shed blood of Jesus, we can enjoy the favor and trust that come from being God’s friends. As a result, we experience “close friendship with Jehovah.”—Ps. 25:14.

Because we get our “sins blotted out,” we experience ‘seasons of refreshing from Jehovah.’ (Acts 3:19) Our situation is similar to that of a prisoner who regrets his past actions and makes drastic changes as he awaits his execution. Seeing this, a benevolent judge is moved to wipe the man’s record clean—lifting his death sentence. How relieved and elated such a prisoner feels! Like that judge, Jehovah turns toward repentant humans with favor and lifts the condemnation of death.

TAKE DELIGHT IN TRUE WORSHIP

Among the aspects of true worship that David could observe at the house of Jehovah were the gathering of throngs of fellow Israelites, the public reading and explaining of the Law, the

* See *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1996, pages 14-24.



During trying times, David humbly prayed to Jehovah for help

burning of incense, and the rendering of sacred service by the priests and Levites. (Ex. 30:34-38; Num. 3:5-8; Deut. 31:9-12) These features of true worship in ancient Israel have modern-day counterparts.

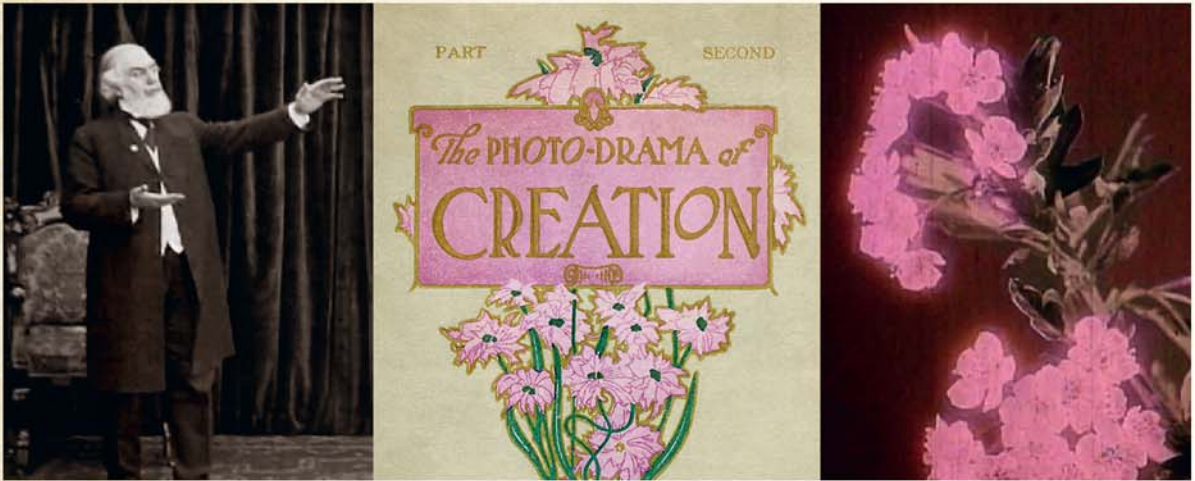
In our day as in the past, “how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!” (Ps. 133:1) Tremendous increase has taken place in our worldwide “association of brothers.” (1 Pet. 2:17) God’s Word is read and explained publicly at our meetings. Through his organization, Jehovah has provided a rich program of instruction. There is also abundant spiritual food available in printed form for our use in personal and family study. One member of the Governing Body observed: “Meditating on Jehovah’s Word, reflecting on its meaning, and searching for insight and understanding have filled my waking hours with spiritual riches and contentment.” Yes, ‘knowledge can become pleasant to our soul.’—Prov. 2:10.

Today, the acceptable prayers of God’s servants ascend to Jehovah daily. To Jehovah, such prayers are like the fragrant aroma of sweet-smelling incense. (Ps. 141:2) How agreeable it

is to our soul to realize that Jehovah God takes great pleasure in us when we approach him in humble prayer!

Moses prayed: “May the favor of Jehovah our God be upon us; may you prosper the work of our hands.” (Ps. 90:17) As we zealously carry out our ministry, Jehovah blesses our work. (Prov. 10:22) We may have assisted some to learn the truth. Perhaps we have endured in the ministry for many years despite apathy, ill health, emotional pain, or persecution. (1 Thess. 2:2) Nevertheless, have we not beheld “the pleasantness of Jehovah” and realized that our heavenly Father is highly pleased with our efforts?

“Jehovah is my portion, my allotted share, and my cup,” sang David. “You safeguard my inheritance. Pleasant places have been measured out to me.” (Ps. 16:5, 6) David was thankful for his “portion,” that is, for having an approved relationship with Jehovah and the privilege of serving him. Like David, we may suffer hardships, but we have so many spiritual blessings! Let us therefore continue to take delight in true worship and always “look with appreciation” upon Jehovah’s spiritual temple.



A 100-Year-Old Epic of Faith

“That looks more like Brother Russell than Brother Russell himself!”—Viewer of the “Photo-Drama” in 1914.

THIS year marks the 100th anniversary of the premiere of the “Photo-Drama of Creation,” an epic visual presentation designed to build faith in the Bible as the Word of God. In an age when belief in evolution, higher criticism, and skepticism had eroded the faith of many, the “Photo-Drama” championed Jehovah as the Creator.

Charles T. Russell, who took the lead among the Bible Students, constantly searched for the most effective and fastest means possible to spread Bible truth. The Bible Students had already been using the power of the printed page for more than three decades. Now a new possibility caught their attention—motion pictures.

SPREADING THE GOSPEL THROUGH MOTION PICTURES

The 1890’s introduced silent motion pictures to the public. As early as 1903, a religious film was shown in a New York City church. The motion-

picture industry was thus in its infancy in 1912 when Russell boldly launched preparations for the “Photo-Drama.” He realized that this mode of communication could convey Bible truth in a way that the printed page alone could not.

The eight-hour “Photo-Drama” presentation, usually shown in four parts, featured 96 brief recorded Bible lectures narrated by a well-known speaker with one of the most recognizable voices of that era. Classical music accompanied many scenes. Skilled operators played the voice and music recordings on phonographs, synchronizing the sound with color slides and film reenactments of famous Bible stories.

Most of the film footage and many of the glass slides came from commercial studios. Professional artists in Philadelphia, New York, Paris, and London hand painted the glass slides and the films, frame by frame. Teams of workers in Bethel’s Art Room also did much of the painting, often

making replacements for broken slides. In addition to the purchased films, Bethel family members were filmed in nearby Yonkers, New York, as they played the parts of Abraham, Isaac, and the angel who prevented Abraham from actually sacrificing his son.—Gen. 22:9-12.

An associate of Brother Russell told the press that this medium would “interest countless thousands in Scripture, more than anything that [had] been done for religious advancement in the past.” Would the clergy applaud such an innovative effort to reach the spiritually hungry masses? On the contrary, Christendom’s ministers as a whole denounced the “Photo-Drama,” some even using sly or brazen tactics to prevent the public from seeing it. In one venue, a ministers’ union had the electricity cut off.

Nevertheless, audiences packed out theaters to view the “Photo-Drama” free of charge. In the United States, up to 80 cities each day hosted the “Photo-Drama.” Many amazed viewers were seeing their first ‘talking movie.’ Time-lapse photography enabled them to watch a chick peck its way out of its shell and a blossom gracefully unfold. Scientific information of the day highlighted the marvelous wisdom of Jehovah. As mentioned

The “Photo-Drama” premiered on January 11, 1914, at this fine New York City theater then owned and staffed by the International Bible Students Association



at the outset, seeing Brother Russell on-screen introducing the “Photo-Drama,” one viewer even thought that the speaker looked “more like Brother Russell than Brother Russell himself!”

A MILESTONE IN BIBLE EDUCATION

Author and film historian Tim Dirks described the “Photo-Drama” as “the first major screenplay which incorporated synchronized sound (recorded speech), moving film, and magic lantern color slides.” Films that preceded the “Photo-Drama” had used some of these techniques but not all of them in one presentation, especially one with a Bible theme. And none had a greater audience—totaling some nine million in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand during the first year alone!

The “Photo-Drama” premiered on January 11, 1914, in New York City. Seven months thereafter came the cataclysm later called World War I. But crowds around the world continued gathering together to view the “Photo-Drama,” drawing solace from its vivid scenes of Kingdom blessings to come. By any measure, for the year 1914, the “Photo-Drama” was truly a remarkable presentation.



Usherettes from local congregations gave out millions of free copies of the *Scenario* containing “Photo-Drama” images

Those in attendance also received “Pax” pins with a picture of the boy Jesus. The pins reminded the wearer to be a “son of peace”

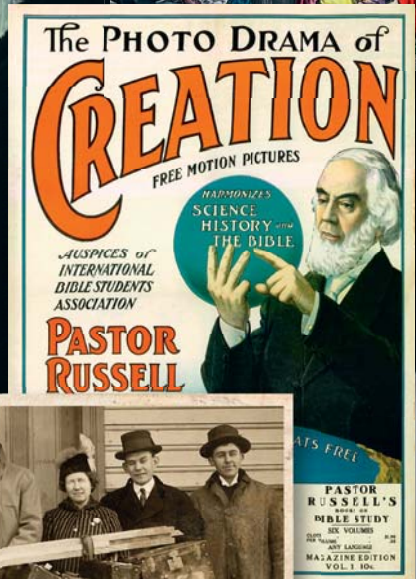


As 1914 approached, the I.B.S.A. mounted an all-out effort to give a worldwide witness. To that end, the "Photo-Drama of Creation" was produced. It entailed an enormous outlay of time, effort, and resources



"It encompassed the total picture from the creation of the stars to the glorious climax of Christ's Thousand Year Reign."

—F. Stuart Barnes, age 14 in 1914



With precision timing, trained operators coordinated the presentation of two miles of film, 26 phonograph records, and some 500 glass slides

Twenty individual "Photo-Drama" sets were used by teams throughout North America



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