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THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE
WEEKS OF:

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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLES 1, 2 PAGES 3-11

In his second letter, the apostle Peter expressed deep concern for Christians living in the time of the end. These two articles will help us to keep Jehovah's day close in mind. We will consider what we must avoid and what we must do to be prepared for Jehovah's great day.

STUDY ARTICLE 3 PAGES 16-20

We are living in the time of a great spiritual harvest. What qualities do we need in order to have a full share in the preaching work? How can we do our best under adverse circumstances? This article will address these questions.

STUDY ARTICLE 4 PAGES 20-24

This article considers what we personally can do to benefit fully from the role that God's spirit plays in helping us to understand his Word.

WHAT JEHOVAH'S DAY WILL REVEAL

"Jehovah's day will come as a thief, . . . and earth and the works in it will be discovered."—2 PET. 3:10.

THE present wicked system of things is founded on the fundamental lie that man can successfully rule the earth independent of Jehovah. (Ps. 2:2, 3) Can anything founded on falsehood stand forever? Absolutely not! Still, we do not have to wait for Satan's world to end of its own accord. Rather, it will be destroyed by God at his appointed time and in his way. God's action against this wicked world will perfectly reflect both his justice and his love.—Ps. 92:7; Prov. 2:21, 22.

² "Jehovah's day," wrote the apostle Peter, "will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and earth and the works in it will be discovered." (2 Pet. 3:10) What are "the heavens" and the "earth" mentioned here? What are "the elements" that will be dissolved? And what did Peter mean by the "earth and the works in it" being "discovered"? Knowing the answers to these questions will help us to be prepared for the fear-inspiring events that will occur in the near future.

The Heavens and the Earth That Will Pass Away

³ When used symbolically in the Bible, the term "heavens" often refers to ruling

- 1, 2. (a) How will the present wicked system of things end? (b) What questions will we consider?
3. What are the "heavens" mentioned at 2 Peter 3:10, and how will they pass away?

powers, which are elevated above their subjects. (Isa. 14:13, 14; Rev. 21:1, 2) "The heavens [that] will pass away" represent human rule over ungodly society. Their passing away with a loud "hissing noise"—or "a mighty roar," according to another rendering—may indicate the swift annihilation of these heavens.

⁴ The "earth" represents the world of mankind alienated from God. Such a world existed in Noah's day and, by divine decree, ended with the Flood. "By the same word the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." (2 Pet. 3:7) Whereas the Flood destroyed the ungodly all at one time, the coming destruction will occur in stages during "the great tribulation." (Rev. 7:14) In the first phase of that tribulation, God will move the political rulers of this world to destroy "Babylon the Great," thus showing his contempt for that religious harlot. (Rev. 17:5, 16; 18:8) Then, in the war of Armageddon, the final phase of the great tribulation, Jehovah himself will wipe out the rest of Satan's world.—Rev. 16:14, 16; 19:19-21.

"The Elements . . . Will Be Dissolved"

⁵ What are "the elements" that "will be dissolved"? A Bible dictionary defines "elements" as "first principles," or "rudiments."

4. What is the "earth," and how will it be destroyed?
5. The figurative elements include what?

The term, it says, “was used of the letters of the alphabet, as elements of speech.” Thus, “the elements” mentioned by Peter refer to the fundamental things that give the world its ungodly characteristics, attitudes, ways, and goals. “The elements” include “the spirit of the world,” which “operates in the sons of disobedience.” (1 Cor. 2:12; read *Ephesians 2:1-3*.) That spirit, or “air,” pervades Satan’s world. It impels people to think, plan, speak, and act in ways that reflect the mind of Satan, the proud, defiant “ruler of the authority of the air.”

⁶ Therefore, knowingly or unknowingly, those infected by the world’s spirit allow their minds and hearts to be influenced by Satan, so that they reflect his thinking and attitude. As a result, they do what they want, without regard for the will of God. They react to situations on the basis of pride or selfishness, they manifest a rebellious attitude toward authority, and they give free rein to “the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes.”—Read 1 John 2:15-17.*

⁷ How important, then, that we “safeguard [our] heart” by exercising godly wisdom in our choice of associates, reading matter, entertainment, and Web sites that we may visit on the Internet! (Prov. 4:23) The apostle Paul wrote: “Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ.” (Col. 2:8) That injunction becomes all the more urgent as Jehovah’s day approaches,

* For a more complete description of the traits fostered by the world’s spirit, see *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, pages 389-393.

6. How does the spirit of the world manifest itself?
7. Why must we “safeguard [our] heart”?

for its unprecedented ‘heat’ will melt away all “the elements” of Satan’s system, exposing them as totally lacking in fire-resistant qualities. This calls to mind the words of Malachi 4:1: “The day is coming that is burning like the furnace, and all the presumptuous ones and all those doing wickedness must become as stubble. And the day that is coming will certainly devour them.”

“Earth and the Works in It Will Be Discovered”

⁸ What did Peter mean when he wrote that “earth and the works in it will be discovered”? The word “discovered” can also be rendered “found out” or “laid bare.” Peter meant that during the great tribulation, Jehovah will lay bare Satan’s world, exposing it as being against Him and His Kingdom and thus deserving of destruction. Speaking prophetically of that time, Isaiah 26:21 reads: “Jehovah is coming forth from his place to call to account the error of the inhabitant of the land against him, and the land will certainly expose her bloodshed and will no longer cover over her killed ones.”

⁹ During Jehovah’s day, those who have been molded by the world and its evil spirit will display their true nature, even slaughtering one another. In fact, it could well be that the numerous forms of violent entertainment popular today are conditioning the minds of many for the time when each man’s hand “will actually come up against the hand of his companion.” (Zech. 14:13) How important, then, that we reject anything—movies, books, video games, and so on—that may engender within us traits

8. How are the earth and the works in it “discovered”?
9. (a) What should we reject, and why? (b) What should we cultivate, and why?

that are detestable to God, such as pride and the love of violence! (2 Sam. 22:28; Ps. 11:5) Rather, let us cultivate the fruitage of God's holy spirit, for such qualities will prove to be incombustible when the figurative heat is on.—Gal. 5:22, 23.

A “New Heavens and a New Earth”

¹⁰ *Read 2 Peter 3:13.* The “new heavens” is God's heavenly Kingdom, which was established in the year 1914 when “the appointed times of the nations” ended. (Luke 21:24) This royal government is made up of Christ Jesus and his 144,000 corulers, most of whom have received their heavenly reward. In the book of Revelation, these chosen ones are portrayed as “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev. 21:1, 2, 22-24) Just as earthly Jerusalem was the seat of government in ancient Israel, the New Jerusalem and her Bridegroom make up the government of the new system of things. This cele-

10, 11. What are the “new heavens” and “new earth”?

How can you “safeguard your heart” and remain separate from the world?



tial city will ‘come down out of heaven’ by directing its attention to the earth.

¹¹ The “new earth” refers to the new earthly society of humans who will have demonstrated their willing submission to God's Kingdom. The spiritual paradise that God's people enjoy even now will at last be in its rightful setting in that beautiful “inhabited earth to come.” (Heb. 2:5) How can we be a part of that new system of things?

Prepare for Jehovah's Great Day

¹² Both Paul and Peter foretold that Jehovah's day would come “as a thief”—stealthily, unexpectedly. (*Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1, 2.*) Even true Christians, who are keeping in expectation of that day, will be surprised by its suddenness. (Matt. 24:44) The world, however, will experience much more than surprise. Paul wrote: “Whenever it is that they [who are alienated from Jehovah] 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 Thess. 5:3.

¹³ The cry “Peace and security!” will be just another demon-inspired lie; yet, it will not fool Jehovah's servants. “You are not in darkness,” wrote Paul, “so that that day should overtake you as it would thieves, for you are all sons of light and sons of day.” (1 Thess. 5:4, 5) So let us stay in the light, far away from the darkness of Satan's world. Peter wrote: “Beloved ones, having this advance knowledge, be on your guard that you may not be led away with them [false teachers within the Christian congregation] by the error of the law-defying people and

12. Why will Jehovah's day come as a shock to the world?

13. How can we avoid letting the cry “Peace and security!” deceive us?

fall from your own steadfastness.”—2 Pet. 3:17.

¹⁴ Note that Jehovah does not simply tell us to ‘be on our guard’ and then leave it at that. Rather, he dignifies us by kindly granting us “advance knowledge” in the form of a general outline of what is to occur in the future.

¹⁵ Sadly, though, some have become casual or even cynical about reminders concerning the need to stay awake. ‘We have heard that same reminder for decades,’ they may say. However, those individuals should keep in mind that by making such remarks, they are actually questioning Jehovah and his Son, not just the faithful slave class. “Keep in expectation,” Jehovah said. (Hab. 2:3) Likewise, Jesus stated: “Keep on the watch . . . because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” (Matt. 24:42) In addition, Peter wrote: “What sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah!” (2 Pet. 3:11, 12) Never will the faithful slave class and its Governing Body take a casual view of those earnest words!

¹⁶ Indeed, it is the “evil slave” who concludes that the Master is delaying. (Matt. 24: 48) That evil slave is part of a group de-

14, 15. (a) How does Jehovah dignify us? (b) What inspired words should we take to heart?

16. What attitude should we avoid, and why?

Can You Explain?

- What are represented by . . .
the present ‘heavens and earth’?
“the elements”?
the ‘new heavens and new earth’?
- Why do we put our full trust in God?



How do we demonstrate that we “consider the patience of our Lord as salvation”?

scribed at 2 Peter 3:3, 4. “In the last days,” wrote Peter, “there will come ridiculers” who, “according to their own desires,” mock those who obediently keep Jehovah’s day close in mind. Yes, rather than focus on Kingdom interests, such ridiculers focus on themselves and on their own selfish desires. Let us never develop such a disobedient and dangerous frame of mind! Rather, may we “consider the patience of our Lord as salvation” by keeping busy in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work and by not being overly anxious about the timing of events that belongs to Jehovah God.—2 Pet. 3:15; *read Acts 1:6, 7.*

Trust in the God of Salvation

¹⁷ After the Roman armies invaded Judea in 66 C.E., faithful Christians acted on Jesus’ admonition to flee the city of Jerusalem at the first opportunity. (Luke 21:20-23) Why did they act promptly and decisively? No doubt, they had kept Jesus’ warning close in mind. To be sure, they expected that their decision would involve hardship, as Christ

17. How did faithful Christians respond to Jesus’ admonition to flee Jerusalem, and why?

had forewarned. But at the same time, they knew that Jehovah would never forsake his loyal ones.—Ps. 55:22.

¹⁸ We too must fully trust in Jehovah, for he alone will be our salvation when the present system undergoes the greatest tribulation of all human history. At some point after the beginning of the great tribulation but before Jehovah executes his judgment upon the rest of the world, people will “become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited

18. How do Jesus’ words found at Luke 21:25-28 influence your view of the coming great tribulation?

earth.” However, while God’s enemies tremble with fear, Jehovah’s loyal servants will feel no dread. On the contrary, they will rejoice because they know that their deliverance is near.—*Read Luke 21:25-28.*

¹⁹ Yes, what a thrilling future awaits those who remain separate from the world and its “elements”! As the next article explains, however, if we want to gain life, we must do more than merely avoid what is bad. We need to develop qualities that please Jehovah and perform works that are acceptable to him.—2 Pet. 3:11.

19. What will be considered in the next article?

“WHAT SORT OF PERSONS OUGHT YOU TO BE!”

“Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion!”

—2 PET. 3:11.

WHEN the apostle Peter wrote his second inspired letter, the Christian congregation had already endured much persecution, but this had not dampened its zeal or slowed its growth. So the Devil employed another tactic, one that had succeeded many times before. As revealed by Peter, Satan tried to corrupt God’s people by means of false teachers who had “eyes full of adultery” and “a heart trained in covetousness.” (2 Pet. 2:1-3, 14; Jude 4) Accordingly, Peter’s second letter is a heartfelt exhortation to faithfulness.

1. Why was Peter’s second letter a timely exhortation to Christians in his day?

² Peter wrote: “I consider it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to rouse you up by way of reminding you, knowing as I do that the putting off of my tabernacle is soon to be . . . So I will do my utmost also at every time that, after my departure, you may be able to make mention of these things for yourselves.” (2 Pet. 1:13-15) Yes, Peter knew that his death was near, but he desired that his timely reminders would live on. And, indeed, they became part of the Bible and can be read by all of us today. Chapter 3 of Peter’s second letter is of particular interest

2. What is the focus of 2 Peter chapter 3, and what questions should we ask ourselves?

to us, for it focuses on “the last days” of the present system of things and on the destruction of the figurative heavens and earth. (2 Pet. 3:3, 7, 10) What counsel does Peter have for us? How will applying his counsel help us to merit Jehovah’s approval?

³ After mentioning the dissolution of Satan’s world, Peter stated: “What sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion!” (2 Pet. 3:11, 12) Evidently, he was not posing a question but making a rousing statement, an exclamation. Peter knew that only those who do Jehovah’s will and exhibit godly traits will be preserved through the coming “day of vengeance.” (Isa. 61:2) Thus, the apostle added: “You, therefore, beloved ones, having this advance knowledge, be on your guard that you may not be led away with them [false teachers] by the error of the law-defying people and fall from your own steadfastness.”—2 Pet. 3:17.

⁴ Being among those who had “advance knowledge,” Peter knew that in the last days, Christians would have to be especially on guard in order to maintain their integrity. Later, the apostle John clearly explained why. He foresaw Satan’s eviction from heaven and his “great anger” against those “who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus.” (Rev. 12:9, 12, 17) God’s loyal anointed servants along with their faithful “other sheep” companions will come off victorious. (John 10:16) But what about us individually? Will we maintain our integrity? We will be helped to do so if we strive to (1) cultivate godly qualities, (2) remain morally and spiritually spotless and unblemished,

3, 4. (a) What exclamation did Peter make, and what warning did he give? (b) What three points will we consider?

and (3) have the right view of trials. Let us consider these points.

Cultivate Godly Qualities

⁵ Early in his second letter, Peter wrote: “By your contributing in response all earnest effort, supply to your faith virtue, to your virtue knowledge, to your knowledge self-control, to your self-control endurance, to your endurance godly devotion, to your godly devotion brotherly affection, to your brotherly affection love. For if these things exist in you and overflow, they will prevent you from being either inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—2 Pet. 1:5-8.

⁶ True, it takes “earnest effort” to share in activities that help us cultivate godly qualities. For example, it takes effort to attend all Christian meetings, to read the Bible daily, and to maintain a good personal study program. And it may require hard work along with good planning to have a regular, enjoyable, and meaningful Family Worship evening. But once we get into a good routine, wholesome habits become easier—especially when we taste the benefits.

⁷ Concerning the family worship arrangement, a sister writes: “It allows us to learn about so many subjects.” Another says: “To be honest, I did not want the book study to end. It was my favorite meeting. But now, as we have our Family Worship night, I realize that Jehovah knows what we need and when we need it.” A family head states: “Family worship helps us tremendously. Having a meeting tailored to our specific needs as a couple is great! We both feel that we are improving in displaying the fruitage of the

5, 6. What qualities should we strive to cultivate, and why does this take “earnest effort”?

7, 8. (a) What have some said about the Family Worship evening? (b) How are you benefiting from your family worship?

holy spirit, and we are finding more joy than ever in our ministry.” Another family head says: “The children are doing their own research and are learning much—and they enjoy it. The arrangement just makes us more confident that Jehovah knows our concerns and answers our prayers.” Do these sentiments reflect your view of this wonderful spiritual provision?

⁸ Do not allow minor things to interfere with family worship. A married couple said, “Every Thursday night for the last four weeks, something happened in our family that almost stopped us from having our study, but we did not let it interfere.” Of course, at times you may have to adjust your schedule. Still, be determined not to cancel your Family Worship evening—not even for one week!

⁹ The prophet Jeremiah serves as a fine example for us. He needed the spiritual sustenance he received from Jehovah and deeply appreciated it. That nourishment enabled him to preach with endurance to an unresponsive people. “The word of Jehovah . . .

9. How did Jehovah sustain Jeremiah, and what can we learn from his example?

What will help you husbands to cultivate godly qualities in you and your family?



proved to be like a burning fire shut up in my bones,” he said. (Jer. 20:8, 9) It also helped him to endure the hard times that climaxed with the destruction of Jerusalem. Today, we have the complete written Word of God. When we study it diligently and make God’s thoughts our thoughts, we, like Jeremiah, will be able to endure joyfully in the ministry, stay faithful through trials, and remain morally and spiritually clean.—Jas. 5:10.

Remain “Spotless and Unblemished”

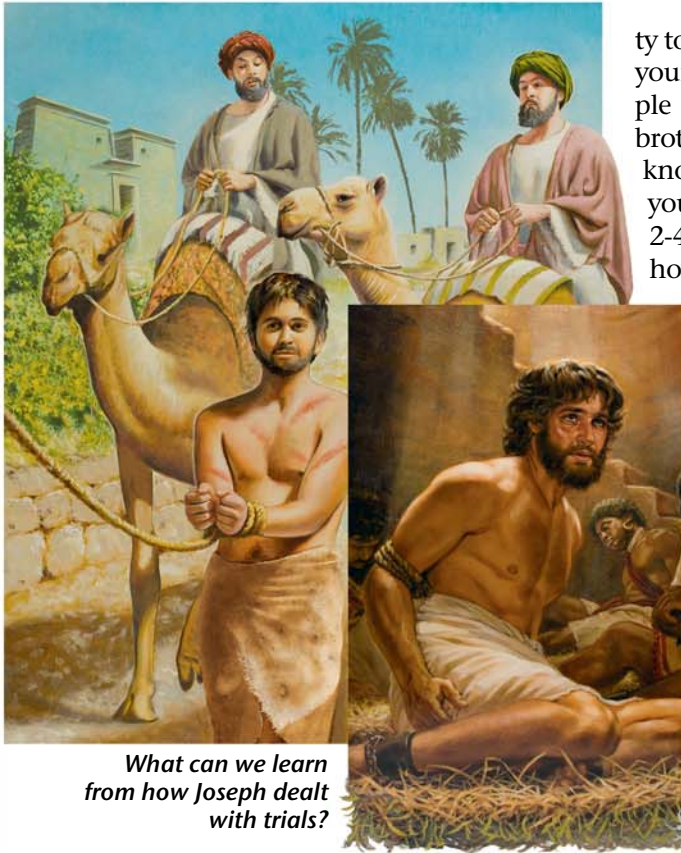
¹⁰ As Christians, we know we are living in the time of the end. Therefore, we are not surprised that the world has become obsessed with things that Jehovah detests, such as greed, sexual depravity, and violence. Satan’s strategy might be summed up in this way: ‘If God’s servants cannot be frightened, perhaps they can be corrupted.’ (Rev. 2:13, 14) Hence, we must take to heart Peter’s loving admonition: “Do your *utmost* to be found finally by [God] spotless and unblemished and in peace.”—2 Pet. 3:14.

¹¹ The expression “do your utmost” is similar to Peter’s earlier exhortation to contribute “all earnest effort.” Clearly, Jehovah—the one who inspired Peter to express those sentiments—knows that we need to exert ourselves to remain “spotless and unblemished,” untainted by the filth of Satan’s world. Exerting ourselves includes protecting our heart from being overtaken by wrong desires. (Read *Proverbs 4:23; James 1:14, 15.*) It also includes standing firm against those who are puzzled about our Christian way of life and who “go on speaking abusively of [us].”—1 Pet. 4:4.

¹² Because of our imperfection, it is a

10, 11. Why must we do our utmost to remain “spotless and unblemished,” and what does that require of us?

12. What assurance do we find at Luke 11:13?



What can we learn from how Joseph dealt with trials?

struggle to do what is right. (Rom. 7:21-25) We can hope to succeed only if we turn to Jehovah, who generously gives holy spirit to those sincerely asking him. (Luke 11:13) That spirit, in turn, nurtures within us qualities that merit God’s approval and that help us to cope not only with life’s temptations but also with its trials, which may well increase as Jehovah’s day draws near.

Let Trials Strengthen You

¹³ As long as we live in this old system of things, trials of one form or another are inevitable. But instead of becoming downhearted, why not view trials as an opportuni-

13. When trials arise in our life, what will help us to endure?

ty to confirm your love for God and to refine your faith in him and his Word? The disciple James wrote: “Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out endurance.” (Jas. 1: 2-4) Remember, too, that “Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial.”—2 Pet. 2:9.

¹⁴ Consider the example of Jacob’s son Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his own brothers. (Gen. 37:23-28; 42:21) Did Joseph’s faith crumble as a result of that act of cruelty? Did he become embittered against God for allowing evil to befall him? God’s Word clearly answers no! Moreover, that was not the end of Joseph’s trials. Later, he was falsely accused of attempted rape and was imprisoned. Once again, though, he never wavered in his godly devotion. (Gen. 39:9-21) Rather, he let trials strengthen him, and for this he was richly rewarded.

¹⁵ Granted, trials can sadden or even depress us. Perhaps Joseph felt that way at times. Other faithful servants of God certainly did. Consider Naomi, who lost both her husband and her two sons. “Do not call me Naomi,” she said. “Call me Mara [meaning “Bitter”], for the Almighty has made it very bitter for me.” (Ruth 1:20, 21, ftn.) Naomi’s reaction was natural and understandable. Like Joseph, though, she neither stumbled spiritually nor wavered in her integrity. Jehovah, in turn, rewarded that precious woman. (Ruth 4:13-17, 22) What is more, in the earthly Paradise to come, he will undo all the harm caused by Satan and his wicked world. “The former things will

14. How does Joseph’s example encourage you?

15. What can we learn from the example of Naomi?

not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart.”—Isa. 65:17.

¹⁶ No matter what trials may befall us, God’s love is there to sustain us. (*Read Romans 8:35-39.*) Though Satan will not stop trying to discourage us, he will fail if we remain “sound in mind” and “vigilant with a view to prayers.” (1 Pet. 4:7) Jesus said: “Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man.” (Luke 21:36) Note Jesus’ use of the word “supplication,” which is a very earnest form of prayer. By admonishing us to make supplication, Jesus emphasized that this is no time to be casual about standing before him and his Father. Only those standing in an approved condition will have the prospect of surviving Jehovah’s day.

Keep Active in Jehovah’s Service

¹⁷ Sharing in spiritual activities refreshes us. This calls to mind Peter’s words: “What sort of persons ought you to be in holy *acts* of conduct and *deeds* of godly devotion!” (2 Pet. 3:11) Foremost among those deeds is the proclaiming of the good news. (Matt. 24:14) True, in some territories the preaching work may be a challenge, perhaps because of apathy or opposition or simply because people are preoccupied with the everyday concerns of life. Jehovah’s servants of old had to contend with similar attitudes. Yet, they never gave up but kept going back “again and again” with their God-given message. (*Read 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16; Jer. 7:24-26*) What helped them to endure? They viewed their assignment from Jehovah’s point of

16. What should be our attitude toward prayer, and why so?

17. If your witnessing territory is a challenge, how can you benefit from the good example of the prophets of old?

view, not from that of the world. Also, they considered it the greatest honor to bear God’s name.—Jer. 15:16.

¹⁸ We too have the privilege of announcing Jehovah’s name and purpose. Think of this: As a direct result of our preaching work, God’s enemies will not be able to plead ignorance when they come face-to-face with him during his great day. Indeed, like Pharaoh of old, they will know that it is Jehovah who is acting against them. (Ex. 8:1, 20; 14:25) At the same time, Jehovah will honor his faithful servants by making it abundantly clear that they were, indeed, his representatives.—*Read Ezekiel 2:5; 33:33.*

¹⁹ Near the end of his second letter, Peter wrote to his fellow believers: “Consider the patience of our Lord as salvation.” (2 Pet. 3:15) Yes, let us continue to make good use of Jehovah’s patience. How? By developing qualities that please him, by remaining “spotless and unblemished,” by having the right attitude toward trials, and by keeping busy in Kingdom service. In so doing, we put ourselves in line for the endless blessings associated with the ‘new heavens and new earth.’—2 Pet. 3:13.

18. What bearing will the Kingdom-preaching work have on the future magnifying of God’s name?

19. How can we show that we desire to make good use of Jehovah’s patience?

Do You Recall?

- How can we cultivate godly qualities?
- How can we remain “spotless and unblemished”?
- What can we learn from Joseph and Naomi?
- Why is sharing in the preaching work a great privilege?

HAVE A FULL SHARE IN THE GREAT SPIRITUAL HARVEST

'Have plenty to do in the work of the Lord.'—1 COR. 15:58.

WHILE traveling through the region of Samaria at the close of 30 C.E., Jesus paused to rest at a well near the town of Sychar. There he said to his disciples: “Lift up your eyes and view the fields, that they are white for harvesting.” (John 4:35) Jesus was referring, not to a literal harvest, but to a spiritual ingathering of righthearthed individuals who would become his followers. His words were, in effect, a call to action. There was much work to be done and only a brief space of time in which to accomplish it!

² Jesus' words about a harvest have special meaning for our day. We live at a time when the world field of humanity is “white for harvesting.” Yearly, millions of people receive the invitation to take in life-giving truths, and many thousands of new disciples are baptized. Ours is the privilege to take part in the greatest harvest of all time, under the supervision of the Master of the harvest, Jehovah God. Are you having “plenty to do” in this harvest work?—1 Cor. 15:58.

³ During his three-and-a-half-year earthly ministry, Jesus groomed his disciples for their role as harvest workers. This article will consider three of the many important lessons that Jesus taught his disciples. Each lesson highlights a quality that is of great value to us as we strive to do our best in the

modern-day ingathering of disciples. Let us consider these qualities one at a time.

Humility Is Essential

⁴ Picture the scene: The disciples have just argued about who is the greatest. Feelings of distrust and ill will are likely still visible on their faces. So Jesus calls a young child to stand in their midst. Focusing attention on the small figure, he says: “Whoever will humble himself [or, “whoever makes himself small,” *Byington*] like this young child is the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens.” (*Read Matthew 18:1-4.*) Instead of thinking like the world, which measures a person by his power, wealth, and position, the disciples needed to understand that their greatness depended on ‘making themselves small’ in the eyes of others. Jehovah would bless them and use them only if they showed true humility.

⁵ To this day, many in the world dedicate their lives to the pursuit of power, wealth, and position. As a result, they have little or no time for spiritual interests. (Matt. 13:22) In contrast, Jehovah's people are happy to ‘make themselves small’ in the eyes of others in order to win the blessing and approval of the Master of the harvest.—Matt. 6:24; 2 Cor. 11:7; Phil. 3:8.

⁶ Consider the example of Francisco, who serves as an elder in South America. As a

1. What invitation did Jesus extend to his disciples?
2, 3. (a) What indicates that we are living in the harvesttime? (b) What will this article consider?

4. How did Jesus illustrate the importance of humility?

5, 6. Why must you be humble in order to have a full share in the harvest work? Illustrate.

young man, he quit the university to become a pioneer. “When I later got engaged to be married,” he recalls, “I could have found a job that would have brought my wife and me greater financial security. Instead, we decided to simplify our lives and continue together in the full-time service. Later, children came along, and the challenges increased. But Jehovah helped us stick to our decision.” Francisco concludes: “For more than 30 years, I have enjoyed the privilege of serving as an elder, in addition to many other special assignments. Never for a moment have we regretted living a simple life.”

⁷ If you say no to the “lofty things” of this world and allow yourself to be “led along with the lowly things,” you too can expect to enjoy many additional blessings and privileges in the harvest work.—Rom. 12:16; Matt. 4:19, 20; Luke 18:28-30.

7. How have you tried to apply the counsel found at Romans 12:16?

Diligence Brings Rewards

⁸ Another quality that we need in order to have a full share in the harvest work is diligence. Jesus illustrated this in the parable of the talents.* That illustration is about a man who, before traveling abroad, entrusted his belongings to three slaves. The first and second slave received five and two talents respectively; the third, one talent. After their master left, the first two slaves acted with diligence and immediately “did business” with their talents. In contrast, the third slave was “sluggish.” He buried his talent in the ground. Upon returning, the man rewarded the first two slaves by appointing them “over many things.” He took away the talent that he had given to the third slave and expelled that slave from his household.—Matt. 25:14-30.

⁹ No doubt your heart’s desire is to imitate the diligent slaves in Jesus’ parable and have as full a share as possible in the disciple-making work. But what if circumstances severely limit what you are currently able to do? Perhaps harsh economic conditions force you to work long hours to provide for your family. Or maybe you no longer enjoy youthful vigor and good health. If that is the case, the parable of the talents contains an encouraging message for you.

* The parable of the talents is primarily about how Jesus deals with his anointed disciples, but it contains principles that apply to all Christians.

8, 9. (a) Summarize Jesus’ illustration of the talents. (b) For whom especially can this illustration be encouraging?

Humility can help us to lead a simple life that centers on Kingdom interests



¹⁰ Note that the master in the parable recognized that each of his slaves had different potential. He indicated this when he assigned talents to “each one according to his own ability.” (Matt. 25:15) As expected, the first slave produced significantly more than the second slave. However, the master recognized the diligent efforts of both of these slaves by pronouncing the slaves “good and faithful” and giving them identical rewards. (Matt. 25:21, 23) Similarly, the Master of the harvest, Jehovah God, knows that your circumstances affect what you are able to do in his service. He will not fail to recognize your whole-souled efforts to serve him and reward you accordingly.—Mark 14:3-9; *read Luke 21:1-4.*

¹¹ The example of Selmira, a Christian sister living in Brazil, shows that being diligent in God’s service does not depend on having favorable circumstances in life. Twenty years ago, Selmira’s husband was gunned down in a robbery, leaving her with three young children to rear. Her job as a maid involved working long hours and making tiring journeys in packed urban transportation. Despite these difficulties, she organized her affairs so that she could serve as a regular pioneer. Two of her three children later joined her in the pioneer service. “Over the years, I have studied the Bible with more than 20 people, and they have become members of my ‘family,’” she relates. “To this day, I enjoy their love and friendship. It is a treasure that money cannot buy.” The Master of the harvest has certainly rewarded Selmira’s diligent efforts!

¹² If current circumstances in life limit the

10. How did the master in the parable of the talents show reasonableness, and why do you find this encouraging?

11. Illustrate how diligence in trying circumstances can result in rich blessings.

12. How can we show diligence in the preaching work?

time that you have available to spend in the ministry, you could still try to increase your share in the harvest work by making your ministry more productive. When you carefully apply the practical suggestions presented at the weekly Service Meeting, you will hone your preaching skills and explore new witnessing opportunities. (2 Tim. 2:15) Also, if it is possible, you could reschedule or sacrifice nonessential activities so that you can regularly support congregation field service arrangements.—Col. 4:5.

¹³ Keep in mind that diligence springs from an appreciative heart. (Ps. 40:8) The third slave mentioned in Jesus’ parable was afraid of his master, viewing him as a demanding and unreasonable person. As a result, the man buried his talent instead of using it to increase his master’s belongings. To avoid a similar negligent attitude, we need to cultivate and maintain a warm relationship with the Master of the harvest, Jehovah. Set aside time to study and meditate on his appealing qualities—his love, patience, and mercy. In that way, you will be moved from the heart to do your best in his service.—Luke 6:45; Phil. 1:9-11.

“You Must Be Holy”

¹⁴ Quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures, the apostle Peter states God’s express will for his earthly servants, saying: “In accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct, because it is written: ‘You must be holy, because I am holy.’” (1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Lev. 19:2; Deut. 18:13) This statement highlights that harvest workers need to be morally and spiritually clean. We can meet that important requirement by taking steps to be washed

13. What is the key to cultivating and maintaining diligence?

14. What important requirement must be met by those who want to be harvest workers?

clean, figuratively speaking. How can that be done? With the help of God's word of truth.

¹⁵ God's word of truth is likened to water that cleanses. For instance, the apostle Paul wrote that the congregation of anointed Christians is clean in the sight of God, like a chaste bride for Christ, who cleansed it "with the bath of water by means of the word . . . , that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:25-27) Earlier, Jesus too had spoken of the cleansing power of the word of God, which he proclaimed. In speaking to his disciples, Jesus stated: "You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you." (John 15:3) Hence, the truth of God's word has power to carry out moral and spiritual cleansing. Only if we allow God's truth to cleanse us in this way will our worship be acceptable to him.

¹⁶ Thus, to become workers in God's harvest, we first eliminate all morally and spiritually defiling practices from our life. Yes, in order to continue to qualify for the privilege of being a harvest worker, we must be exemplary in upholding Jehovah's high moral and spiritual standards. (*Read 1 Peter 1:14-16.*) Just as we give constant attention to our physical hygiene, so we must regularly submit to the purifying influence of God's word

15. The truth of God's word has the power to do what in our behalf?

16. How can we keep ourselves spiritually and morally clean?

Do You Recall?

As you strive to have a full share in the harvest work . . .

- why is it essential to display humility?
- how can you cultivate and maintain diligence?
- why is it important to keep morally and spiritually clean?

of truth. This involves reading the Bible and attending Christian meetings. It also means making a sincere effort to apply God's reminders in our life. Doing so will enable us to combat our own sinful tendencies and resist the contaminating influences of this world. (Ps. 119:9; Jas. 1:21-25) Yes, how comforting it is to know that with the help of God's word of truth, we can be "washed clean" of even serious sin!—1 Cor. 6:9-11.

¹⁷ Do you welcome the cleansing influence of God's word of truth in your life? How do you react, for example, when you are alerted to the dangers of this world's degrading entertainment? (Ps. 101:3) Do you avoid unnecessary fellowship with schoolmates and fellow workers who do not share your beliefs? (1 Cor. 15:33) Are you sincere in your efforts to overcome personal weaknesses that could make you impure in Jehovah's eyes? (Col. 3:5) Do you keep separate from this world's political disputes and the nationalistic spirit that permeates many competitive sports?—Jas. 4:4.

¹⁸ Your faithful compliance in such matters will bring excellent results. Comparing his anointed disciples to the branches of a vine, Jesus stated: "Every branch in me not bearing fruit [my Father] takes away, and every one bearing fruit he cleans, *that it may bear more fruit.*" (John 15:2) As you submit to the cleansing water of Bible truth, you will produce even more fruit.

Blessings Now and in the Future

¹⁹ The faithful disciples who responded to Jesus' training were later empowered by holy spirit at Pentecost 33 C.E. to be witnesses "to

17. In order to remain clean, what Bible counsel must we heed?

18. How will being morally and spiritually clean help us to be productive harvest workers?

19. How were Jesus' disciples blessed in their efforts as harvest workers?

the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) They went on to serve as members of the governing body, as missionaries, and as traveling elders, and they played a key role in preaching the good news “in all creation that is under heaven.” (Col. 1:23) What blessings they reaped, and what joy they brought to others!

²⁰ Yes, by demonstrating humility, displaying diligence, and upholding the high

20. (a) What blessings have you received from having a full share in the spiritual harvest? (b) What are you determined to do?

standards of God’s Word, we will continue to enjoy a full and meaningful share in the great spiritual harvest now under way. While many suffer the pain and frustration that accompany this world’s materialistic and pleasure-seeking lifestyle, we experience genuine joy and contentment. (Ps. 126:6) Most important of all, our “labor is not in vain in connection with the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58) The Master of the harvest, Jehovah God, will reward us eternally for ‘our work and the love we show for his name.’ —Heb. 6:10-12.

“THE SPIRIT SEARCHES INTO . . . THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD”

“The spirit searches into all things, even the deep things of God.”—1 COR. 2:10.

HOW grateful we can be for the operation of Jehovah’s holy spirit! The Scriptures speak of the spirit as a helper, a gift, a witness bearer, and one that pleads for us. (John 14:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 8:16, 26, 27) The apostle Paul highlighted another vital role that the holy spirit plays: “The spirit searches into all things, even the deep things of God.” (1 Cor. 2:10) Indeed, Jehovah uses his holy spirit to reveal deep spiritual truths. Without this help, where would we be in our understanding of Jehovah’s purposes? (*Read 1 Corinthians 2:9-12.*) However, sev-

1. What role of the holy spirit is highlighted by Paul at 1 Corinthians 2:10, and what questions arise?

eral questions arise: How does ‘the spirit search into the deep things of God’? Through whom did Jehovah reveal these things in the first century C.E.? How and through whom does the spirit search into these deep things in our day?

² Jesus indicated a twofold way in which the spirit would operate. Shortly before his death, he told his apostles: “The helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you.” (John 14:26) The holy spirit would thus act as a teacher and as a remembrancer. As a teacher, it would help Chris-

2. In what twofold way would the spirit operate?

tians grasp things not previously understood. As a remembrancer, it would help them recall and apply correctly what had been explained.

In the First Century

³ Jesus himself taught his disciples many truths that were new to them. They still had much to learn, however. Jesus told the apostles: “I have many things yet to say to you, but you are not able to bear them at present. However, when that one arrives, the spirit of the truth, he will guide you into all the truth.” (John 16:12, 13) Jesus thus indicated that by means of holy spirit, deep spiritual things would be progressively revealed.

⁴ On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., “the spirit of the truth” arrived, being poured out on about 120 Christians gathered together in Jerusalem. There were visible and audible evidences of this. (Acts 1:4, 5, 15; 2:1-4) The disciples spoke in a variety of tongues “about the magnificent things of God.” (Acts 2:5-11) It was now time for something new to be revealed. The prophet Joel had foretold this outpouring of holy spirit. (Joel 2:28-32) Onlookers were witnessing the fulfillment in a way none of them had expected, and the apostle Peter took the lead in explaining this development. (*Read Acts 2:14-18.*) The holy spirit thus acted as a teacher in making clear to Peter that what the disciples had experienced was in fulfillment of that ancient prophecy. The spirit also acted as a remembrancer, for Peter quoted not only Joel but two psalms of David as well. (Ps. 16:8-11; 110:1; Acts 2:25-28, 34, 35) What all those assembled

3. What words of Jesus indicated that “the deep things of God” would be revealed progressively?

4. On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., how did the holy spirit act as a teacher and as a remembrancer?

saw and heard were truly deep things of God.

⁵ Many matters still needed clarification for the first-century Christians. For example, there were questions about the new covenant that had gone into effect on that day of Pentecost. Was the new covenant limited to Jews and Jewish proselytes? Could Gentiles also be accepted into it and be anointed with holy spirit? (Acts 10:45) Would Gentile males first need to be circumcised and to submit to the Mosaic Law? (Acts 15:1, 5) These were momentous questions. Jehovah’s spirit was needed to search into these deep things. Through whom, though, would it operate?

⁶ It was through responsible brothers that each issue was raised for consideration. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas were at that meeting of the governing body and recounted how Jehovah had been dealing with uncircumcised Gentiles. (Acts 15:7-12) After considering this evidence in the light of indications in the Hebrew Scriptures and with the help of holy spirit, the governing body made a decision. Then they informed the congregations in writing about that decision.—*Read Acts 15:25-30; 16:4, 5; Eph. 3:5, 6.*

⁷ Many other matters were clarified through the inspired writings of John, Peter, James, and Paul. But at some point after the Christian Scriptures were completed, gifts of prophesying and miraculously revealed knowledge ceased. (1 Cor. 13:8) Would the spirit continue to act as a teacher and a remembrancer? Would it continue to help Christians to search into the deep things of God? Prophecy indicated that it would.

5, 6. (a) After Pentecost 33 C.E., what important questions regarding the new covenant needed to be answered? (b) Through whom were these issues raised, and how were decisions made?

7. By what means were deep truths revealed?

How the Spirit Revealed the Meaning of the Spiritual Temple

Among “the deep things of God” revealed during the first century was that the tabernacle and later the temples foreshadowed a much greater spiritual reality. Paul called that reality “the true tent, which Jehovah put up, and not man.” (Heb. 8:2) This was a great spiritual temple, an arrangement for approach to God made possible by the sacrifice and priesthood of Jesus Christ.

“The true tent” came into existence in 29 C.E. when Jesus was baptized and Jehovah accepted him as the one to become a perfect sacrifice. (Heb. 10:5-10) After his death and resurrection, Jesus entered the Most Holy of the spiritual temple and presented the value of his sacrifice “before the person of God.” —Heb. 9:11, 12, 24.

Elsewhere, the apostle Paul wrote of anointed Christians as “growing into a holy temple for Jehovah.” (Eph. 2:20-22) Was this temple to be the same as “the true tent” that he later described in his letter to the Hebrews? For decades, Jehovah’s servants thought that it was. It seemed that anointed

Christians were being fitted on earth to become “stones” in the heavenly temple of Jehovah.—1 Pet. 2:5.

Toward the year 1971, however, responsible members of the slave class began to discern that the temple spoken of by Paul in Ephesians could not be Jehovah’s great spiritual temple. If “the true tent” were composed of resurrected anointed Christians, it would first come into existence after their resurrection began during “the presence of the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4:15-17) But referring to the tabernacle, Paul wrote: “This very tent is an illustration for the appointed time that is *now here*.” —Heb. 9:9.

By carefully comparing these and other scriptures, it became clear that the spiritual temple is not in the process of being built and that anointed Christians are not “stones” being fashioned on earth for inclusion in it. Rather, anointed Christians are serving in the courtyard and in the Holy of the spiritual temple, daily offering to God “a sacrifice of praise.”—Heb. 13:15.

During the Time of the End

⁸ Speaking about the time of the end, an angel foretold: “The ones having insight will shine like the brightness of the expanse; and those who are bringing the many to righteousness, like the stars to time indefinite, even forever. . . . And the true knowledge will become abundant.” (Dan. 12:3, 4) Who would be the ones having insight and who would shine? Jesus provided a clue in his illustration of the wheat and the weeds. Speaking about the “conclusion

8, 9. Who would “shine” with spiritual insight during the time of the end?

of a system of things,” he stated: “At that time the righteous ones will shine as brightly as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (Matt. 13:39, 43) In his explanation, Jesus identified “the righteous ones” as “the sons of the kingdom,” anointed Christians.—Matt. 13:38.

⁹ Would all anointed Christians “shine”? In a sense, yes, for all Christians would participate in preaching, in disciple making, and in building one another up at meetings. Anointed ones would set the example. (Zech. 8:23) In addition to this, however, deep things were to be revealed during the

time of the end. The very prophecy Daniel recorded was “sealed up” until that time. (Dan. 12:9) How and through whom would the spirit search into these deep things?

¹⁰ When the time comes to clarify a spiritual matter in our day, holy spirit helps responsible representatives of “the faithful and discreet slave” at world headquarters to discern deep truths that were not previously understood. (Matt. 24:45; 1 Cor. 2:13) The Governing Body as a whole considers adjusted explanations. (Acts 15:6) What they learn, they publish for the benefit of all. (Matt. 10:27) As time goes on, further clarifications may be needed, and these too are honestly explained.—See the box “How the Spirit Revealed the Meaning of the Spiritual Temple.”

Benefiting From the Spirit’s Role Today

¹¹ All faithful Christians benefit from the holy spirit’s role in revealing the deep things of God. Like the first-century Christians, we today study and later recall and apply information that the holy spirit helps us to understand. (Luke 12:11, 12) We do not need extensive formal education in order to comprehend deep spiritual truths that have been published. (Acts 4:13) How might we go about improving our understanding of the deep things of God? Consider a few suggestions.

¹² *Pray for holy spirit.* When we are about to consider Scriptural material, we should first ask in prayer for holy spirit to guide us.

10. (a) Through whom does the spirit reveal deep truths during the last days? (b) Explain how truths regarding Jehovah’s great spiritual temple were clarified.

11. How do all Christians today benefit from the holy spirit’s role in revealing the deep things of God?

12. When should we pray for holy spirit?

This is true even if we are alone or the time we have available is short. Such humble petitions will surely warm our heavenly Father’s heart. As Jesus indicated, Jehovah will provide his holy spirit freely at our sincere request.—Luke 11:13.

¹³ *Prepare for meetings.* We receive “food at the proper time” through the slave class. The “slave” fulfills its assignment by supplying Scriptural material and by arranging programs for study and meetings. There are well-thought-out reasons for asking “the whole association of brothers” to consider certain information. (1 Pet. 2:17; Col. 4:16; Jude 3) We cooperate with the holy spirit when we do our best to follow the recommendations provided.—Rev. 2:29.

¹⁴ When preparing for Christian meetings, we do well to look up the cited Scriptures and to try to discern how each applies to the subject at hand. This practice will gradually deepen our understanding of the Bible. (Acts 17:11, 12) Looking them up

13, 14. What role does preparing for meetings play in understanding the deep things of God?

How can we improve our understanding of “the deep things of God”?



makes a mental impression that the holy spirit can help us recall. Additionally, if we see the text on the page in the Bible, this will leave a visual impression that can help us find the passage when we need to.

¹⁵ *Keep up-to-date.* Some published material is not reviewed at our meetings, but it is prepared for our benefit. Even issues of our journals that are offered to the public are prepared with us in mind. In this complicated world, we often have to wait for someone or something. If we carry with us a publication that we have not read or have only partially read, we may be able to use these opportunities to read a portion. Some keep up-to-date by listening to audio recordings of our publications while walking or while riding in a vehicle. Carefully researched but written for enjoyment by average readers, all this material deepens our appreciation for spiritual things.—Hab. 2:2.

¹⁶ *Meditate.* When you read the Bible or publications based on it, take time to think. As you carefully follow the line of thought,

15. Why should we keep up-to-date with published material, and how do you accomplish this?

16. What benefit is there in noting and pursuing questions that come to mind?

How Would You Answer?

- In what twofold way does the spirit help us to search into “the deep things of God”?
- Through whom did the holy spirit reveal deep truths in the first century?
- How does the holy spirit operate to clarify matters in our day?
- What can you do to benefit from the spirit’s role?

questions may occur to you. You might make a note of such questions and follow up on them later. It is often when we pursue matters that intrigue us that we delve the deepest. The understanding we acquire becomes part of the personal treasure we can draw from as we need to.—Matt. 13:52.

¹⁷ *Schedule a time for family worship.* The Governing Body has encouraged all of us to set aside an evening or other period each week for personal or family study. Our adjusted meeting schedule opens the way for us to apply this counsel. What do you consider during Family Worship evenings? Some read the Bible, researching verses that raise questions in their mind and making brief explanatory notes in their Bible. Many families take time to make family application of the material studied. Certain family heads select material that they feel the family needs to consider or that deals with subjects or questions the family has asked to consider. You will no doubt think of other subjects to consider as time goes on.*

¹⁸ Jesus said that the spirit would act as a helper. So we should not shrink back from studying the deeper truths of God’s Word. Such truths are part of the precious “knowledge of God,” and we are invited to search into them. (*Read Proverbs 2:1-5.*) They reveal much about “the things that God has prepared for those who love him.” As we make the effort to learn more about Jehovah’s Word, holy spirit will help us, for “the spirit searches into all things, even the deep things of God.”—1 Cor. 2:9, 10.

* See also *Our Kingdom Ministry* of October 2008, page 8.

17. What program do you follow for family or personal study?

18. Why should we not shrink back from studying the deeper truths of God’s Word?