

Week of July 17-23, 2023

## STUDY ARTICLE 21

### How Jehovah Answers Our Prayers

#### Paragraph 8

\*\*\*\*\*For a discussion of why Jehovah has permitted Satan to rule the world, see the article “Keep Your Eyes on the Big Issue,” published in The Watchtower of June 2017.

#### Keep Your Eyes on the Big Issue

“May people know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth.”—PS. 83:18.

SONGS: 9, 22

#### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

Why is the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty an important issue facing mankind?

How did Job’s integrity under trial support Jehovah’s sovereignty; yet, in what way did Job fall short?

What are some important ways that we show support for Jehovah’s sovereignty?

FOR many people today, money is the big issue. They are focused on accumulating wealth or on holding on to what they have. Others consider their big issue to be family, health, or personal accomplishments.

2 However, a very big issue facing all of us is the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty. We need to guard against losing sight of this vital issue. How could that happen? We could become so absorbed in the demands of our day-to-day life that we forget just how important the vindication of God’s sovereignty really is. Or we could allow the weight of our personal trials to eclipse that great issue. On the other hand, the keener our appreciation for the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty, the better equipped we are to meet challenges in our daily lives. And such appreciation will draw us closer to Jehovah.

#### WHY SO IMPORTANT?

3 The action of Satan the Devil has raised the question of the rightfulness of Jehovah’s sovereignty. He contends that God’s rulership is corrupt and that Jehovah withholds the best from his creatures. According to the Devil, humans would be far happier and better off ruling themselves. (Gen. 3:1-5) Satan has also implied that no human at heart is loyal to God—that under sufficient pressure, anyone will reject Jehovah’s rulership. (Job 2:4, 5) In connection with the Devil’s challenge, Jehovah is allowing time for human experience to reveal the unsavory truth about life outside of God’s righteous rule.

4 Of course, Jehovah knows that the Devil’s allegations are false. So why has God chosen to allow the issue to go on, giving Satan time to try to prove his point? The answer involves all intelligent creatures. (Read Psalm 83:18.) After all, the first human couple rejected Jehovah’s rulership, and so have many others since then. This could lead some to wonder whether there might be validity to the Devil’s claim. As long as the question remains unsettled in the minds of humans or angels, discord among nations, races, tribes, families, and individuals will exist. But after Jehovah’s sovereignty is vindicated, all will submit everlastingly to his righteous rule. Universal peace will be restored.—Eph. 1:9, 10.

5 The rightfulness of God’s sovereignty will be vindicated and rule by Satan and humans will utterly fail and be removed. Rule by God through his Messianic Kingdom will succeed, and integrity-keepers will have proved that humans can take their stand for God’s rulership. (Isa. 45:23, 24) Do you want to be among those who go on record as integrity-keeping supporters of Jehovah’s sovereignty? No doubt you do. To be integrity-keepers, we need to fix our eyes on that big issue and comprehend how important it really is.

#### VINDICATION—MORE IMPORTANT THAN SALVATION

6 As stated, the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty is a vital issue involving mankind. It is more important than the personal happiness of any individual. Does that fact undermine the value of

our salvation or imply that Jehovah does not really care for us? Not at all. Why not?

7 Jehovah deeply loves and values mankind. He was willing to use the blood of his Son to make possible our eternal salvation. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9) Were Jehovah to fail to fulfill his promises, the Devil would have an excuse to call God a liar who withholds good and thus rules in an unfair way. It would also vindicate opposers who mockingly ask: "Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as they were from creation's beginning." (2 Pet. 3:3, 4) Hence, Jehovah will see to it that the vindication of his sovereignty includes the salvation of obedient humans! (Read Isaiah 55:10, 11.) Furthermore, Jehovah's love characterizes his sovereignty. So we can be sure that he will always love, value, and appreciate his loyal servants.—Ex. 34:6.

8 In acknowledging the importance of Jehovah's sovereignty, we are not belittling our salvation or our worth in his eyes. We are merely keeping sovereignty and salvation in proper perspective. That correct perspective is important if we are to keep our eyes on this big issue and take our stand for Jehovah's righteous rule.

#### A LESSON IN PERSPECTIVE

9 The need for proper perspective is made quite clear in the book of Job, one of the earliest Bible books to be written. There we learn of Satan's contention that if subjected to intense suffering, Job would reject God. Satan suggested that God personally afflict Job. Jehovah did not do that, but he allowed Satan to test Job, stating: "Everything that he has is in your hand." (Read Job 1:7-12.) In a short time, Job lost his servants, his means of livelihood, and his ten beloved children. Satan accomplished this in a way that made it appear as if God himself had been the cause of Job's troubles. (Job 1:13-19) Satan next afflicted Job with a painful and repulsive illness. (Job 2:7) His despair was deepened further by the disheartening words of his wife and of three companions who acted as if they were his friends.—Job 2:9; 3:11; 16:2.

10 The result? Satan's claim was shown to be completely false. Job refused to turn his back on

God. (Job 27:5) However, Job temporarily lost the proper perspective. He became absorbed in establishing his own righteousness, even demanding a reason for his suffering. (Job 7:20; 13:24) We might think that would be understandable in the light of all that he had suffered. Yet, God saw the need to correct Job's thinking. What did Jehovah tell him?

11 God's words to Job fill four chapters in the book of Job—chapters 38 through 41. Nowhere do we read of God's telling Job specifically the reason behind his suffering. The main point of Jehovah's words was not to explain to Job why he was suffering, as if God had to justify himself. Rather, Jehovah wanted to help Job recognize his insignificance in comparison with God's greatness. And he helped Job to see that there were greater issues with which to be concerned. (Read Job 38:18-21.) This helped Job regain the proper perspective.

12 Was Jehovah harsh in giving such straightforward counsel after Job had endured so severe a trial? God was not, and Job did not think so. Despite his ordeal, Job finally began to speak appreciatively. He even stated: "I take back what I said, and I repent in dust and ashes." Such was the effect of Jehovah's pointed but refreshing counsel. (Job 42:1-6) Earlier, Job had also received corrective counsel from young Elihu. (Job 32:5-10) After Job responded to God's reproof and corrected his view, Jehovah expressed to others his approval of Job's faithfulness under trial.—Job 42:7, 8.

13 Jehovah's counsel would continue to benefit Job even after his trials were over. How so? Well, though "Jehovah blessed the last part of Job's life more than the beginning," restoration and recovery must have taken time. He later "came to have seven more sons and three more daughters." (Job 42:12-14) Surely Job missed his children who died earlier at Satan's hand. For some time, he likely experienced vivid memories of his suffering. Even if he eventually better understood the reason for his trials, he may on occasion have thought about why it was necessary for him to suffer to such an extent. Whatever his thoughts, he could reflect on God's counsel. Doing so would help him maintain the

proper perspective and, in turn, provide comfort.—Ps. 94:19, fn.

14 We too can acquire proper perspective and gain comfort from the account of Job. After all, Jehovah had it preserved “for our instruction, so that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Rom. 15:4) What is the lesson for us? Primarily this: Let us not become so absorbed in our own lives that we lose sight of this big issue—the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty. And let us appreciate that our role in this vital issue entails remaining faithful even under difficult circumstances, as did Job.

15 Why is it comforting to reflect on the value of our faithfulness? Because it means that our trials serve a purpose. Far from indicating Jehovah’s displeasure, they provide for us a means to show that we support God’s sovereignty. (Prov. 27:11) Our endurance produces “an approved condition” and strengthens our hope. (Read Romans 5:3-5.) The record of Job bears out that “Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful.” (Jas. 5:11) So we can be sure that he will reward us and all who uphold his sovereignty. Knowing this helps us “endure fully with patience and joy.”—Col. 1:11.

## REMAINING FOCUSED

16 Granted, keeping our eyes on the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty can be challenging. Our problems may seem to overwhelm us at times. Even relatively minor ones can loom large in our mind if we dwell on them. Therefore, we do well to remind ourselves regularly of the importance of supporting God’s sovereignty when we face difficult circumstances.

17 Continuing to have a regular share in Jehovah’s work can help us to stay focused on the big issue. For example, a Witness named Renee suffered a stroke and struggled with chronic pain and cancer. While being treated at medical facilities, she witnessed to hospital staff, patients, and visitors. At one facility, she spent 80 hours witnessing in just two and a half weeks. Even as she approached death, Renee never lost sight of Jehovah’s sovereignty. That, in turn, mitigated some of her distress.

18 Of course, we want to stay focused on Jehovah’s sovereignty also in the face of day-to-day pressures and inconveniences. Jennifer spent three days at an airport waiting for a flight home. One flight after another got canceled. Feeling alone and exhausted, she could easily have surrendered to self-pity. Instead, she prayed to see how she might be of spiritual help to others experiencing similar frustration. With what result? She witnessed to many people and placed much literature. She says, “I felt that Jehovah blessed me despite the trying experience and gave me enough strength to carry his name in a worthwhile way.” Indeed, she stayed focused on Jehovah’s purpose.

19 Appreciation for Jehovah’s sovereignty has distinguished true religion from false. God’s people have long upheld his sovereignty. As supporters of true worship, we individually should endeavor to maintain that same Scriptural perspective.

20 Be assured that Jehovah treasures your efforts to uphold his sovereignty by your faithful service and endurance of trials. (Ps. 18:25) The next article will consider further why Jehovah’s sovereignty is deserving of your wholehearted support and how you can uphold it.