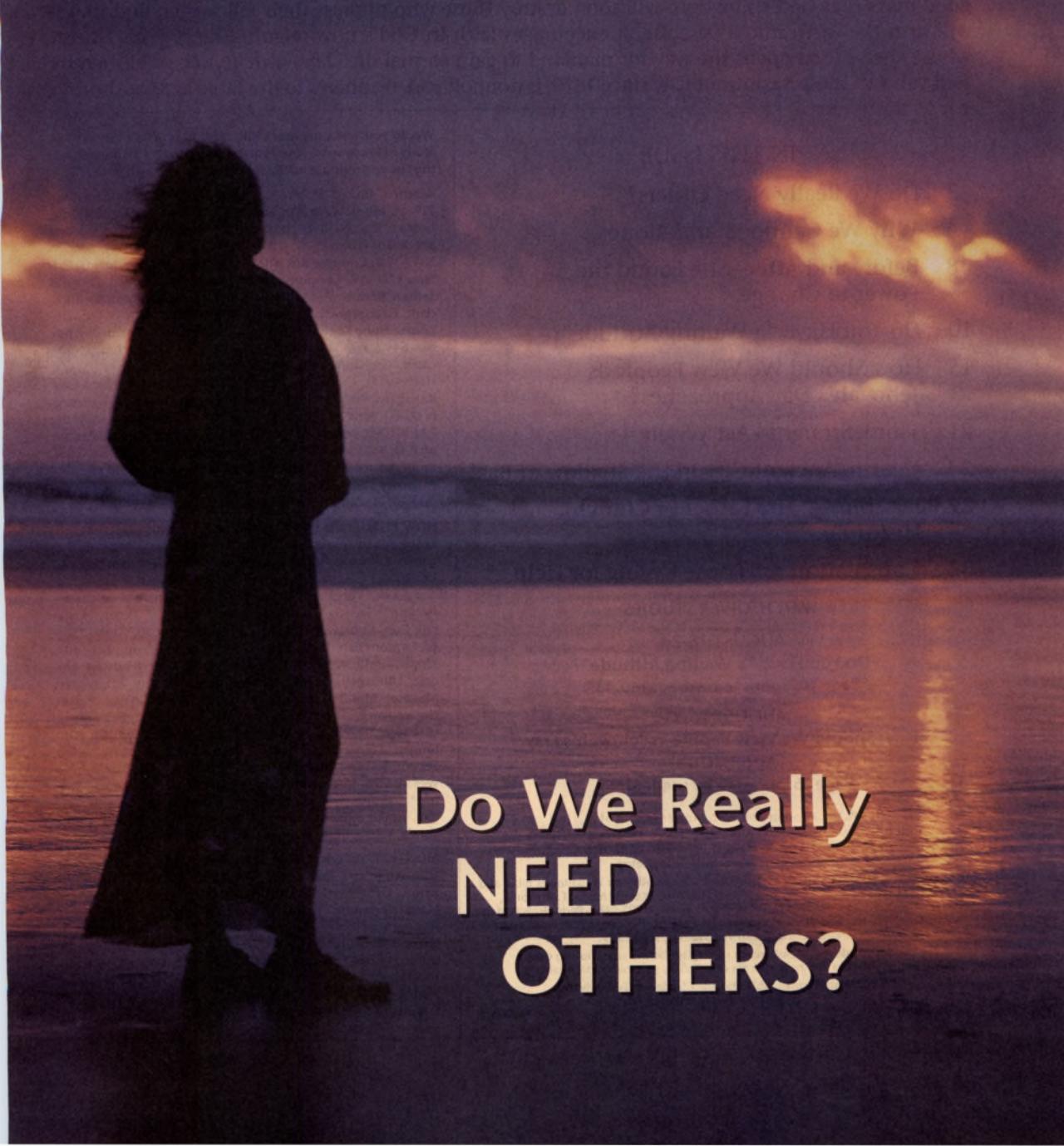




JULY 15, 2003

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Do We Really
NEED
OTHERS?



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Do We Really Need Others?
- 4 Why We Cannot Stand Alone
- 8 Before and After—She Found the Power to Change
- 10 Do You Have "a Waiting Attitude"?
- 15 How Should We View People as Jehovah's Day Approaches?
- 21 Think Straight—Act Wisely
- 24 Ugarit—Ancient City in the Shadow of Baal
- 29 Eusebius—"The Father of Church History"?
- 32 Consolation for Those Crying for Help

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

AUGUST 18-24:

Do You Have "a Waiting Attitude"?

Page 10. Songs to be used: 140, 137.

AUGUST 25-31:

How Should We View People as Jehovah's Day Approaches?

Page 15. Songs to be used: 81, 59.

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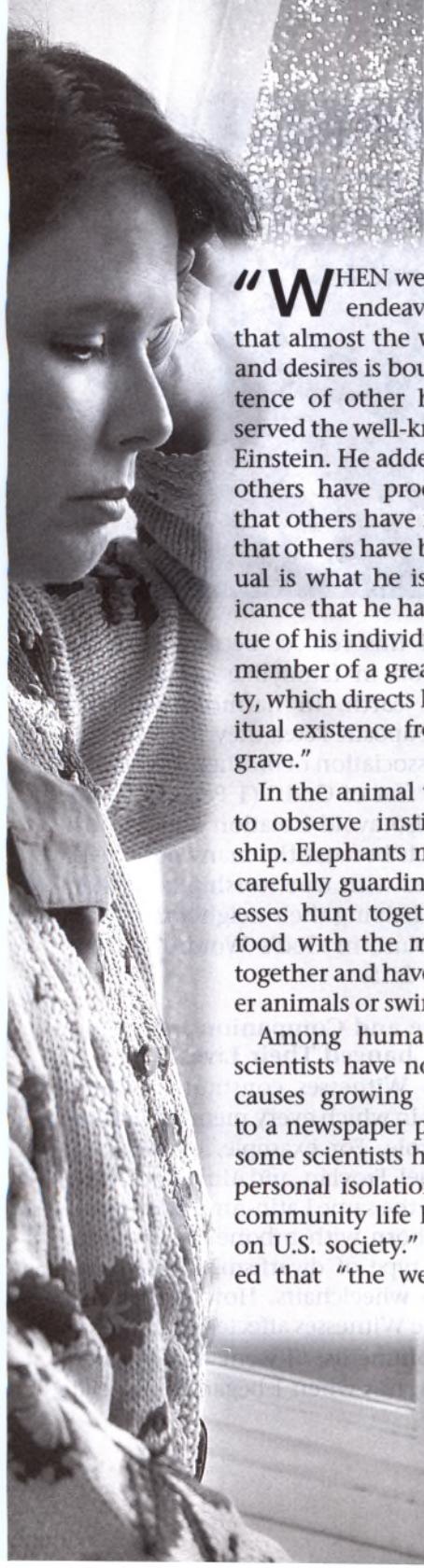
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DO WE REALLY NEED OTHERS?

WHEN we survey our lives and endeavors, we soon observe that almost the whole of our actions and desires is bound up with the existence of other human beings," observed the well-known scientist Albert Einstein. He added: "We eat food that others have produced, wear clothes that others have made, live in houses that others have built.... The individual is what he is and has the significance that he has not so much in virtue of his individuality, but rather as a member of a great human community, which directs his material and spiritual existence from the cradle to the grave."

In the animal world, it is common to observe instinctive companionship. Elephants move about in herds, carefully guarding their young. Lionesses hunt together and share their food with the males. Dolphins play together and have even protected other animals or swimmers in distress.

Among humans, however, social scientists have noted a tendency that causes growing concern. According to a newspaper published in Mexico, some scientists hold that "decades of personal isolation and an erosion of community life have had a huge toll on U.S. society." The newspaper stated that "the well-being of the na-

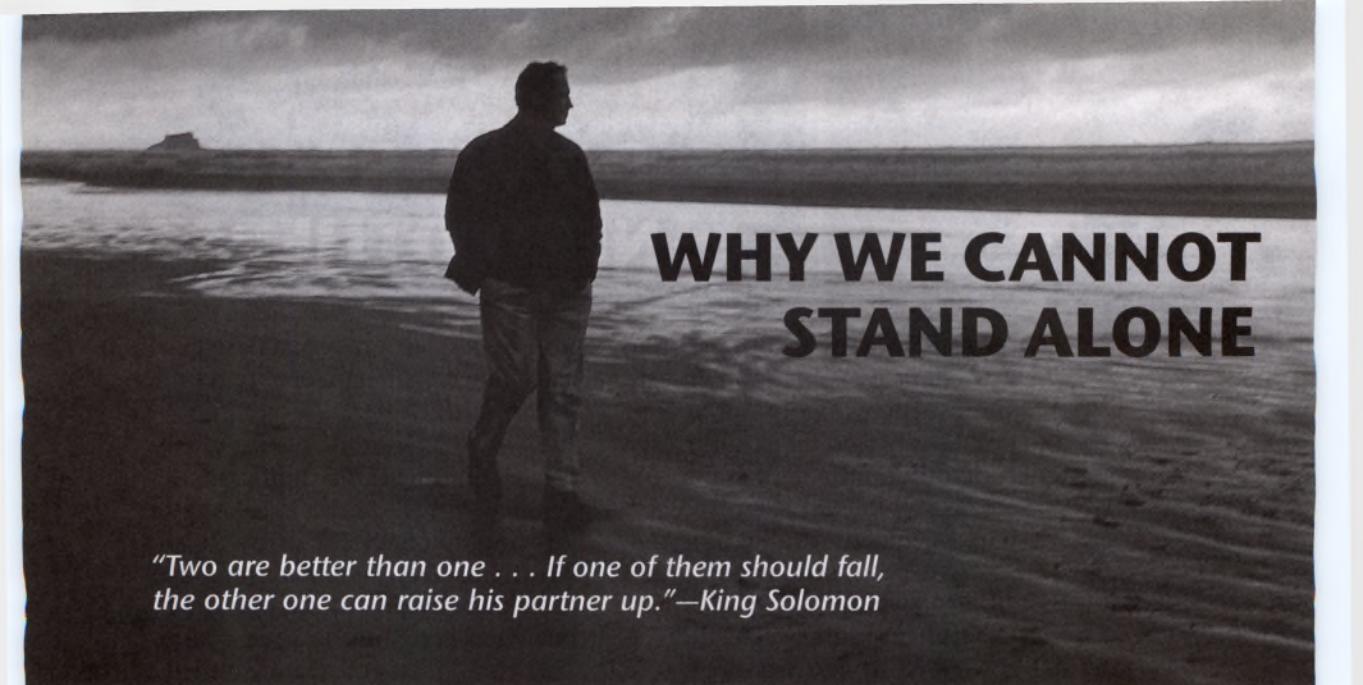
tion depended on broad-based social change, which involved a return to community life."

This problem has especially spread among those living in developed lands. There is a rapidly growing tendency for many to isolate themselves. People want to 'live their own lives' and strongly resist having others 'invade their space.' The view has been expressed that this attitude has led human society to be more prone to emotional problems, depression, and suicide.

In this regard, Dr. Daniel Goleman stated: "Social isolation—the notion that one doesn't have anyone else with whom to share private feelings or maintain close contact—doubles the possibility of sickness or death." A report published in the journal *Science* concluded that social isolation 'is as significant to mortality rates as the habit of smoking, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, obesity, and the lack of physical exercise.'

For various reasons, then, we really do need others. We cannot stand alone. So how can the problem of isolation be solved? What has given true meaning to the lives of many? The following article will address such questions.

"Almost the whole of our actions and desires is bound up with the existence of other human beings."—Albert Einstein



WHY WE CANNOT STAND ALONE

"Two are better than one . . . If one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up."—King Solomon

KING SOLOMON of ancient Israel declared: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up. But how will it be with just the one who falls when there is not another to raise him up?" (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10) This wise observer of human behavior thus highlights our need for companionship and the importance of not isolating ourselves. However, this was not just human opinion. Solomon's statement resulted from divine wisdom and inspiration.

It is not wise to isolate ourselves. People need one another. All of us need the strength and help that we can get from other humans. "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing," says a Bible proverb. "Against all practical wisdom he will break forth." (Proverbs 18:1) So it is not strange that social scientists encourage individuals to become part of a group and to take an interest in others.

Among recommendations for reviving community life, Professor Robert Putnam mentions "strengthening the influence of spiritual faith." Jehovah's Witnesses are out-

standing in this respect because they enjoy protection in familylike congregations around the earth. In harmony with the words of the apostle Peter, they "have love for the whole association of brothers," who have reverential "fear of God." (1 Peter 2:17) The Witnesses also avoid isolation and its detrimental effects because the many positive activities linked with true worship keep them involved in helping their neighbors to learn the truth found in God's Word, the Bible.
—2 Timothy 2:15.

Love and Companionship Changed Their Lives

Jehovah's Witnesses constitute a united community in which every member plays an important role. For example, consider the case of Miguel, Froylán, and Alma Ruth, three members of the same Latin-American family. They were born with a bone disorder that produces a type of dwarfism. All three are confined to wheelchairs. How has association with the Witnesses affected their lives?

Miguel comments: "I went through periods of crisis, but when I began to associate



Miguel: "I went through periods of crisis, but when I began to associate with Jehovah's people, my life changed"

with Jehovah's people, my life changed. Isolating oneself is very dangerous. Associating with fellow believers at Christian meetings, being with them every week, greatly helped me to find contentment and satisfaction."

Alma Ruth adds: "I used to have moments of great depression; I felt very sad. But upon learning about Jehovah, I felt that I could have a close relationship with him. That came to be the most valuable thing in life for me. My family has supported us a lot, and that has united us more."

Miguel's father lovingly taught Miguel to read and write. Then Miguel helped Froylán and Alma Ruth to do the same. This was essential for their spirituality. "Learning to read benefited us greatly because then we could be nourished spiritually by reading the Bible and Bible-based publications," says Alma Ruth.

At present, Miguel serves as a Christian elder. Froylán has read the Bible through nine times. Alma Ruth has widened out her service to Jehovah by serving as a pioneer minister, or full-time Kingdom proclaimer, since 1996. She comments: "With Jehovah's blessing I have reached this goal, as I have the support of my dear sisters who help me not only to preach but also to teach by conducting the 11 Bible studies that I have been able to start."

Another fine example has been set by Emelia, who had an accident that requires

her to use a wheelchair because of injuries to her legs and spine. Jehovah's Witnesses in Mexico City studied the Bible with her, and she was baptized in 1996. Emelia says: "Before knowing the truth, I wanted to kill myself; I didn't want to live anymore. I felt a great emptiness, crying day and night. But when I associated with Jehovah's people, I felt the love of the brothers. The personal interest they show in me has been an encouragement. One of the elders has been like a brother or father to me. He and certain ministerial servants take me to the meetings and in the preaching work in my wheelchair."

José, who was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1992, lives alone. He is 70 years old, having retired in 1990. José used to experience depression, but after a Witness preached to him, he immediately began to attend Christian meetings. He liked what he heard and saw there. For instance, he



Alma Ruth: "Upon learning about Jehovah, I felt that I could have a close relationship with him"



Emelia: "Before knowing the truth, . . . I felt a great emptiness"

observed the companionship of the brothers and felt their concern for him as a person. The elders and ministerial servants in his congregation now look after him. (Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:2) Such fellow believers are "a strengthening aid" to him. (Colossians 4:11) They take him to the doctor, visit him in his home, and have supported him during his four operations. He says: "They show concern for me. They are really my family. I enjoy their companionship."

There Is True Happiness in Giving

When King Solomon said that "two are better than one," he had just spoken about the futility of devoting all one's energies to the acquiring of material riches. (Ecclesiastes 4:7-9) That is precisely what many eagerly pursue today, even though this means sacrificing human relationships both inside and outside the family.

That spirit of greed and selfishness has led many to isolate themselves. This has brought them neither happiness nor satisfaction in life, for frustration and hopelessness are com-

mon among those who succumb to such a spirit. In contrast, the accounts just related show the good effects of associating with those who serve Jehovah and who are motivated by love for him and for their neighbor. Regular presence at Christian meetings, the support and concern of fellow Christians, and zealous activity in the ministry were vital factors in helping these individuals to overcome negative feelings associated with isolation.—Proverbs 17:17; Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Since we depend on one another, it is natural that doing things for others produces satisfaction. Albert Einstein, whose work benefited others, said: "The value of a man . . . should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive." This is in agreement with these words of our Lord Jesus Christ: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) Therefore, while it is good to receive love, it is also very healthy to show love for others.

A traveling overseer who for years has visited congregations to offer spiritual assistance and who has helped to build meeting places for Christians of little means expresses his feelings in this way: "The joy of serving my brothers and seeing their faces full of appreciation moves me to continue seeking opportunities to help. My experience has been that showing personal interest in others is the key to happiness. And I know that as elders, we should be 'like a hiding place from the wind . . . , like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land.'”—Isaiah 32:2.

How Pleasant to Dwell Together in Unity!

Surely there is great benefit and true happiness in helping others and in seeking companionship with those who serve Jehovah. "Look!" exclaimed the psalmist. "How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) Family unity

is a vital factor in supporting one another, as shown in the case of Miguel, Froylán, and Alma Ruth. And what a blessing it is to be united with one another in true worship! After giving counsel to Christian husbands and wives, the apostle Peter wrote: "Finally, all of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind."—1 Peter 3:8.

Genuine friendship brings great benefits, both emotionally and spiritually. Addressing companions in the faith, the apostle Paul exhorts: "Speak consolingly to the depressed souls, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all. . . . Always pursue what is good toward one another and to all others."—1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15.

Therefore, look for practical ways to do good to others. "Work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to [you] in the faith," for this will add real meaning to your life and will contribute to your contentment and satisfaction. (Galatians 6:9, 10) Jesus' disciple James wrote: "If a brother or a sister is in a naked state and lacking the food sufficient for the day, yet a certain one of you says to them: 'Go in peace, keep warm and well fed,' but you do not give them the necessities for their body, of what benefit is it?" (James 2:15, 16) The answer to that question is obvious. We need to 'keep an eye, not in personal interest upon just our own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others.'—Philippians 2:4.

In addition to helping others materially when there is a special need or when some disaster occurs, Jehovah's Witnesses are very busy benefiting fellow humans in a vitally important way—by preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) The participation of over 6,000,000 Witnesses in proclaiming this message of hope and comfort is evidence of their genuine, loving interest in others. But providing help from the Holy



Associating with true worshipers helps to satisfy our spiritual need

Scriptures also helps to meet another human need. What is that?

Meeting a Vital Need

To enjoy genuine happiness, we need to have a proper relationship with God. It has been said: "The fact that man, everywhere at all times, from the beginning to the present day, has felt the impulse to call upon something he believed to be higher and more powerful than himself, shows that religion is innate and should be scientifically recognized. . . . We should stand in awe, amazement and reverence to see the universality of man's search for, and belief in, a supreme being."—*Man Does Not Stand Alone*, by A. Cressey Morrison.

Jesus Christ declared: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." (Matthew 5:3) People do not fare well in prolonged isolation from other humans. However, it is far more serious to isolate ourselves from our Creator. (Revelation 4:11) Acquiring and applying "the very knowledge of God" should be an important element in our life. (Proverbs 2:1-5) Indeed, we should be determined to satisfy our spiritual need, for we cannot stand alone and apart from God. A happy and truly rewarding life depends on a good relationship with Jehovah, "the Most High over all the earth."—Psalm 83:18.



BEFORE AND AFTER

She Found the Power to Change

SANDRA, a woman in Mexico, described herself as the black sheep of her family. Rejection and lack of affection blighted her teenage years. She says: "I went through adolescence with a permanent feeling of emptiness and many doubts about my existence and about life."

While in high school, Sandra began to drink the wine that her father had at home. In time, she began to buy her own bottles and became an alcoholic. "I had no incentive to live," she admits. Out of desperation, Sandra turned to drugs. "The only thing that helped me to forget my problems," she says, "was what I carried in my purse: a bottle, some pills, or a little marijuana."

After Sandra finished medical school, she sank deeper into alcoholism. She attempted to end her life. But she survived.

Sandra looked in vain to many different religions for spiritual help and emotional support. Having lost hope and given in to despair, she repeatedly cried out to God: "Where are you? Why don't you help me?" Her feelings of self-worth had reached an all-time low when one of Jehovah's Witnesses spoke with her. This led to a personal Bible study. Sandra was deeply moved when she learned that "Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart." —Psalm 34:18.

Her Bible teacher helped Sandra to understand that Jehovah God knows that we are vul-

nerable because of the sin and imperfection we inherited from Adam. Sandra realized that God understands that we cannot measure up perfectly to righteous standards. (Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23; 5:12, 18) She was happy to learn that Jehovah does not dwell on our weaknesses, and he does not expect more of us than we can do. The psalmist asked: "If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand?"—Psalm 130:3.

An important Bible truth that warmed the heart of Sandra was the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Through it, Jehovah mercifully grants obedient humans an upright standing despite their imperfections. (1 John 2:2; 4:9, 10) Yes, we can get "the forgiveness of our trespasses" and thus be helped to overcome any feelings of worthlessness.

—Ephesians 1:7.

Sandra learned valuable lessons from the example of the apostle Paul. He greatly appreciated God's kindness in graciously forgiving his past errors and supporting his hard fight to overcome recurring weaknesses. (Romans 7:15-25; 1 Corinthians 15:9, 10) Paul corrected his course of life, 'pummeled his body and led it as a slave' in order to stay on the path approved by God. (1 Corinthians 9:27)



He did not let his sinful inclinations lead him as a slave.

Sandra's weaknesses plagued her, but she kept fighting them. She prayed earnestly for Jehovah's help to overcome them and sought his mercy. (Psalm 55:22; James 4:8) Sensing God's personal interest in her, Sandra was able to turn her life around. "I have the joy of teaching others the Bible full-time," she says. Sandra had the privilege of helping her older sister and her younger sister to get to know Jehovah. As she 'works what is good,' she also volunteers her medical skills at conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses.—Galatians 6:10.

What about Sandra's addictions? She confidently says: "My mind is clear. I no longer drink, smoke, or take drugs. I do not need them. I found what I was looking for."

► *"I found what I was looking for"*

◀ Bible Principles at Work ▶

Following are some Bible principles that have helped many break free from defiling addictions:

"Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear." (2 Corinthians 7:1) God blesses those who have cleansed themselves of defilement, avoiding unclean practices.

"The fear of Jehovah means the hating of bad." (Proverbs 8:13) Reverential fear of God helps a person to break free from bad habits, including drug abuse. Besides pleasing Jehovah, the changed person is protected against fearsome diseases.

"Be in subjection and be obedient to governments and authorities as rulers." (Titus 3:1) In many locations, possession or use of certain drugs is a violation of the law. True Christians do not possess or use illegal drugs.



DO YOU HAVE “A WAITING ATTITUDE”?

“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 PETER 3:11, 12.

PICTURE in your mind a family that is expecting guests for dinner. The set time for their arrival is rapidly approaching. The wife is busy putting the finishing touches on the meal. Her husband and their children are helping to make sure that everything is in order. Everyone is excited. Yes, the whole family is eagerly awaiting the arrival of the guests and is looking forward to a delicious meal and fine fellowship.

² As Christians, we are waiting for something even more important. For what? Why, all of us are waiting for “the day of Jehovah”! Until it arrives, we need to be like the prophet

1, 2. How might we illustrate having “a waiting attitude” regarding Jehovah’s day?

Micah, who said: “It is for Jehovah that I shall keep on the lookout. I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation.” (Micah 7:7) Does that imply inactivity? No. There is much work to be done.

³ The apostle Peter helps us to have the proper attitude while waiting. He says: “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 Peter 3: 11, 12) Note that this is an exclamatory statement. Peter was not asking a question. In his two divinely inspired letters, he described what sort of people Christians ought to be. He also admonished them to go on performing “holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion.” Although some 30 years had passed since Jesus Christ had given the sign “of the conclusion of the system of things,” Christians were not to let down their guard. (Matthew 24:3) They were to be “awaiting and keeping close in mind” the presence of Jehovah’s day.

⁴ The Greek word here rendered “keeping close in mind” literally means “speeding up.” Of course, we cannot literally ‘speed up’ the day of Jehovah. For that matter, we “know neither the day nor the hour” when Jesus Christ will come to execute judgment upon

3. According to 2 Peter 3:11, 12, what attitude are Christians to have?
4. What is involved in “keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah”?



his Father's enemies. (Matthew 24:36; 25:13) One reference work explains that the root verb of the expression "speeding up" here means "'to make haste' and is thus closely related to 'to be zealous, active, concerned about something.'" So Peter was urging fellow believers to be "ardently desiring" the presence of the day of Jehovah. They could do this by constantly keeping it in mind. (2 Peter 3:12, footnote) With "the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah" now so near, we should have the same mental attitude.—Joel 2:31.

Wait With "Holy Acts of Conduct"

⁵ If we are "ardently desiring" to survive Jehovah's day, we will make that evident by our "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion." The expression "holy acts of conduct" may well remind us of Peter's admonition: "As obedient children, quit being fashioned according to the desires you formerly had in your ignorance, but, 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 Peter 1:14-16.

⁶ To be holy, we must maintain physical, mental, moral, and spiritual cleanliness. Are we preparing for "the day of Jehovah" by keeping ourselves holy as individuals bearing Jehovah's name? It is not easy today to maintain such purity because the moral standards of the world are steadily deteriorating. (1 Corinthians 7:31; 2 Timothy 3:13) Are we find-

5. How can we show that we are "ardently desiring" to see "the day of Jehovah"?
6. To be holy, what must we do?



"A waiting attitude" is reflected in holy acts of conduct

ing the gap between our moral standards and those of the world widening? If not, we have cause for concern. Could it be that our personal standards, though higher than those of the world, are eroding? If so, we need to take positive action to correct matters in order to please God.

⁷ With the advent of pornography on the Internet and because of the privacy in which it is available, some who once had no access to such immoral material are now finding "an infinite supply of sexual opportunities," says one medical doctor. If we were to seek out such unclean Internet sites, we would certainly be ignoring the Bible's command to "touch nothing unclean." (Isaiah 52:11) Would we really be "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah"? Or might we be mentally postponing that day, reasoning that even if we are polluting our mind with filthy material, we still have time to cleanse ourselves? If we have encountered a problem along these lines, how urgent it would be to petition Jehovah to 'make our eyes pass on from seeing what is worthless and preserve us alive in his own way'!—Psalm 119:37.

⁸ The vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses, young and old, are sticking to God's high moral standards and avoiding this world's immoral enticements. Aware of the urgency of our times and of Peter's warning that "Jehovah's day will come as a thief," they continue to perform "holy acts of conduct." (2 Peter 3:10) Their actions prove that they

- 7, 8. (a) How might we lose sight of the importance of engaging in "holy acts of conduct"? (b) What corrective measures may be required?

are "awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah."⁹

Wait With "Deeds of Godly Devotion"

⁹ "Deeds of godly devotion" also are vital if we are to keep Jehovah's day in mind. "Godly devotion" involves reverence for God that moves us to do what is pleasing in his eyes. Loyal attachment to Jehovah is the motivating force behind such deeds of godly devotion. It is his will that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) God "does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) So, then, should not our godly devotion stimulate us to intensify our efforts to help people to learn about Jehovah and imitate him?—Ephesians 5:1.

¹⁰ Our life will abound with deeds of godly devotion if we seek God's Kingdom first. (Matthew 6:33) This involves our having a balanced view of material things. Jesus warned: "Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness, because even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15) Although it may be hard to picture ourselves becoming blinded by the love of money, we do well to note that "the *anxiety* of this system of things and the *deceptive power* of riches" can "choke the word" of God. (Matthew 13:22) It may not be easy to make a living. In some parts of the world, many therefore reason that to live a better life, they have to move to a more affluent land,

* For examples, see *The Watchtower* of January 1, 2000, page 16 and the 1997 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, page 51.

9. What should godly devotion move us to do?

10. Why should we guard against "the deceptive power of riches"?

perhaps leaving their family behind for years at a time. Even some of God's people have reasoned in this way. By going to another land, they may be able to supply their family with modern conveniences. However, what may happen to the spiritual state of their loved ones back home? Without the exercise of proper headship in the home, will they have the spirituality needed to survive Jehovah's day?

¹¹ A migrant worker from the Philippines learned Bible truth from Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan. Upon learning about the Scriptural responsibilities of headship, he realized that he needed to help his family to become worshipers of Jehovah. (1 Corinthians 11:3) His wife back home strongly opposed his newly found faith and wanted him to keep sending money instead of returning home to teach the family his Bible-based beliefs. Spurred on by the urgency of the times and concern for his loved ones, however, he went home. His patience in lovingly dealing with family members was rewarded. In time, his family became united in true worship, and his wife entered the full-time ministry.

11. How did one migrant worker demonstrate that deeds of godly devotion are more important than riches?

The Kingdom-preaching work is lifesaving





¹² Our situation might be likened to that of individuals in a burning building. Would it be wise to run around frantically in order to retrieve material things from the blazing structure that is about to collapse? Instead, would it not be far more important to save lives—our own and those of our family and others occupying the building? Well, this wicked system of things is rapidly heading for its collapse, and lives are at stake. Realizing this, surely we should put spiritual interests first and zealously concentrate on the lifesaving Kingdom-preaching work.—1 Timothy 4:16.

We Need to Be “Spotless”

¹³ Emphasizing the importance of maintaining a waiting attitude, Peter says: “Beloved ones, since you are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by [God] spotless and unblemished and in peace.” (2 Peter 3:14) Going beyond his admonition to engage in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, Peter emphasizes the importance of finally being found by Jehovah to be individuals cleansed by Jesus’ precious blood. (Revelation 7:9, 14) This requires that a person exercise faith in Jesus’ sacrifice and become a dedicated and baptized servant of Jehovah.

¹⁴ Peter urges us to do our utmost to be found “spotless.” Are we keeping our garments of Christian conduct and personality spotless, not tainted by the world? When we notice a spot on our clothes, we immediately try to remove it. If a favorite garment is involved, we are especially meticulous about cleaning it. Do we feel the same way if our Christian garments become stained, as it were, because of some flaw in our personality or conduct?

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12. Why should we put spiritual interests first in life?
 13. What condition should we want to be in when the day of Jehovah strikes?
 14. What does being “spotless” involve?

¹⁵ The Israelites were to make “fringed edges upon the skirts of their garments” and to “put a blue string above the fringed edge of the skirt.” Why? So that they would remember Jehovah’s commandments, obey them, and “prove to be holy” to their God. (Numbers 15:38-40) As Jehovah’s present-day servants, we stand out as different from the world because we observe divine laws and principles. For instance, we maintain moral cleanliness, we respect the sanctity of blood, and we avoid idolatry of all sorts. (Acts 15:28, 29) Many respect us for our firm determination to keep ourselves undefiled.—James 1:27.

We Need to Be “Unblemished”

¹⁶ Peter also says that we are to be found “unblemished.” How is that possible? A spot can generally be wiped off or cleansed away but not so a blemish. A blemish indicates that something on the inside is wrong, at fault. The apostle Paul admonished fellow Christians in Philippi: “Keep doing all things free from murmurings and arguments, that you

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15. (a) Why were the Israelites to make fringed edges upon the skirts of their garments? (b) Why do Jehovah’s present-day servants stand out as different?
 16. What is involved in keeping ourselves “unblemished”?

may come to be blameless and innocent, children of God without a blemish in among a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you are shining as illuminators in the world." (Philippians 2:14, 15) If we follow that admonition, we will avoid murmurings and arguments and will serve God out of a pure motive. We will be moved by love for Jehovah and our neighbors as we preach "this good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 22:35-40; 24:14) Moreover, we will continue to proclaim the good news even though people in general may not comprehend why we volunteer our time in an effort to help others to learn about God and his Word, the Bible.

¹⁷ Desirous of being found "unblemished," we do well to examine our motives in all our pursuits. We have left the world's way of doing things for selfish reasons, such as striving to obtain riches or power. If we are reaching out for privileges in the Christian congregation, may our motives remain pure and may we always be motivated by love for Jehovah and for others. It is refreshing to see spiritual men "reaching out for an office of overseer" with joy and a humble desire to slave for Jehovah and their fellow believers.

17. What should be our motive when we reach out for privileges in the Christian congregation?

Do You Recall?

- What does it mean to keep "close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah"?
- How is "a waiting attitude" demonstrated in connection with our conduct?
- Why are "deeds of godly devotion" vital?
- What must we do to be found by Jehovah "spotless and unblemished and in peace"?



*As we await Jehovah's day,
let us pursue peace with others*

(1 Timothy 3:1; 2 Corinthians 1:24) Indeed, those qualified to serve as elders "shepherd the flock of God . . . willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; neither as lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock."

—1 Peter 5:1-4.

We Need to Be "in Peace"

¹⁸ Finally, Peter tells us to be found "in peace." In order to live up to this requirement, we need to be at peace with Jehovah and our neighbor. Peter emphasizes the importance of having "intense love for one another" and of maintaining peace with our fellow Christians. (1 Peter 2:17; 3:10, 11; 4:8; 2 Peter 1:5-7) To maintain our peace, we must have love among ourselves. (John 13:34, 35; Ephesians 4:1, 2) Our love and peace are particularly evident when our international conventions are held. At a convention in Costa Rica in 1999, a vendor at the airport became upset because the local Witnesses welcoming arriving delegates inadvertently limited the visibility of his business place. On the second day, however, he noticed the love and peace demonstrated in the enthusiastic welcome that the delegates received, though the local Witnesses did not know them personally. On

18. For what qualities are Jehovah's Witnesses well-known?

the final day, the vendor joined in the welcome and requested a Bible study.

¹⁹ Our sincerity in pursuing peace with our spiritual brothers and sisters may well have a bearing on how earnestly we are awaiting Jehovah's day and his promised new world. (Psalm 37:11; 2 Peter 3:13) Suppose we find it difficult to maintain peace with a certain fellow believer. Can we see ourselves dwelling with him peacefully in Paradise? If a brother has something against us, we should promptly 'make our peace with him.' (Matthew 5:23, 24) Doing so is vital if we are to be at peace with Jehovah.—Psalm 35:27; 1 John 4:20.

19. Why is it vital to pursue peace with fellow believers?

²⁰ Are we personally "awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah"? Our ardent desire to see the end of wickedness is shown by our remaining holy in this immoral world. Moreover, our fervent longing for the coming of Jehovah's day and for life under Kingdom rule is made evident by our deeds of godly devotion. And our expectation of living in the peaceful new world is reflected in our pursuit of peace with our fellow worshipers now. By such means, we show that we have "a waiting attitude" and are "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah."

20. "A waiting attitude" should be manifest in what ways?

HOW SHOULD WE VIEW PEOPLE AS JEHOVAH'S DAY APPROACHES?

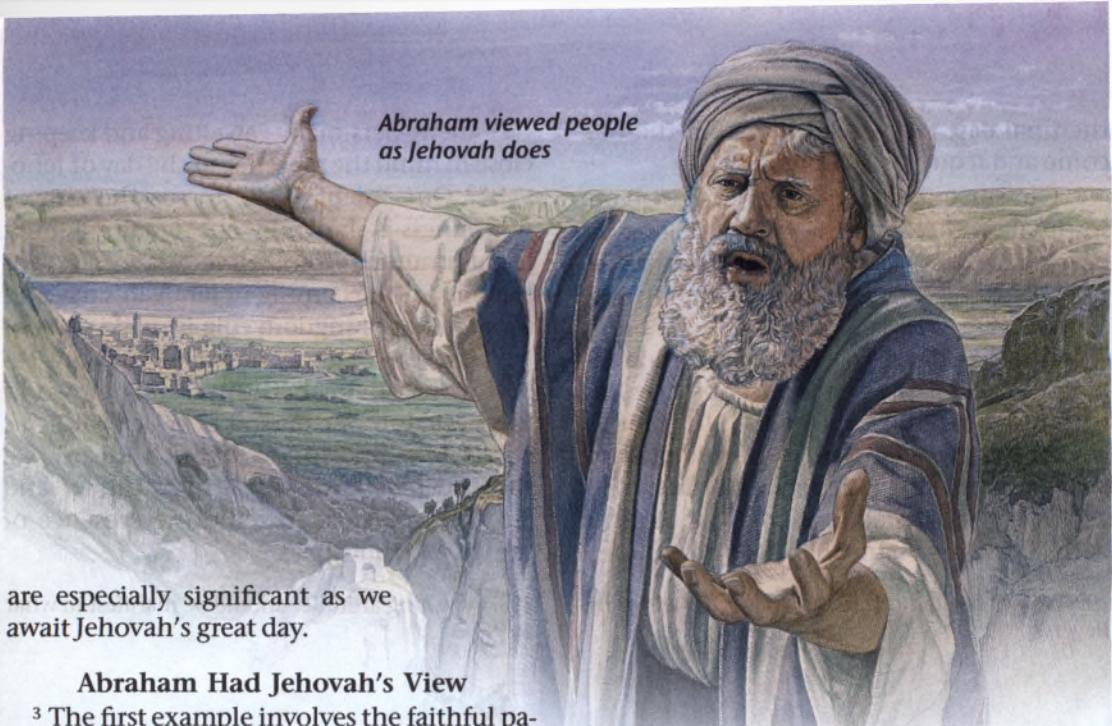
"Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, . . . but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance."—2 PETER 3:9.

JEHOVAH'S servants have a commission to "make disciples of people of all the nations." (Matthew 28:19) As we fulfill this assignment and await "the great day of Jehovah," we need to view people as he does. (Zephaniah 1:14) And how is that? The apostle Peter says: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) God views humans as individuals with the potential of attaining to repentance. His "will

is that all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) Why, Jehovah is delighted when "someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living"!—Ezekiel 33:11.

² Do we personally share Jehovah's view of people? Like him, do we consider individuals of every race and nation to be potential "sheep of his pasturage"? (Psalm 100:3; Acts 10:34, 35) Let us consider two examples that show the importance of having God's viewpoint. In both cases, destruction was imminent, and Jehovah's servants were given advance knowledge of this fact. These examples

1, 2. (a) How does Jehovah view people today?
(b) What questions can we ask ourselves?



are especially significant as we await Jehovah's great day.

Abraham Had Jehovah's View

³ The first example involves the faithful patriarch Abraham and the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. When Jehovah heard "the cry of complaint about Sodom and Gomorrah," he did not immediately destroy those cities and all their inhabitants. He first made an investigation. (Genesis 18:20, 21) Two angels were sent to Sodom, where they took up dwelling in the house of the righteous man Lot. On the night of the angels' arrival, "the men of the city . . . surrounded the house, from boy to old man, all the people in one mob," desiring to have homosexual intercourse with the angels. Clearly, the debased condition of the city's inhabitants proved that it deserved to be destroyed. Yet, the angels told Lot: "Do you have anyone else here? Son-in-law and your sons and your daughters and all who are yours in the city, bring out of the place!" Jehovah opened the way to save some residents of that city, but in the end, only Lot and his two daughters escaped destruction.—Genesis 19:4, 5, 12, 16, 23-26.

3. What was Jehovah's view of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah?

⁴ Now, let us go back to the time when Jehovah revealed his intention to inspect the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was then that Abraham pleaded: "Suppose there are fifty righteous men in the midst of the city. Will you, then, sweep them away and not pardon the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are inside it? It is unthinkable of you that you are acting in this manner to put to death the righteous man with the wicked one so that it has to occur with the righteous man as it does with the wicked! It is unthinkable of you. Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?" Abraham used the expression "it is unthinkable of you" twice. From his experience, Abraham knew that Jehovah would not destroy the righteous together with the wicked. When Jehovah said that he would not destroy Sodom if there were "fifty righteous men in the midst of the city," Abraham progressively reduced the number until it reached only ten.—Genesis 18:22-33.

4, 5. Why did Abraham plead for the inhabitants of Sodom, and was his view of people in harmony with that of Jehovah?

⁵ Would Jehovah have listened to Abraham's pleas if they were out of harmony with his own view? Obviously not. As "Jehovah's friend," Abraham apparently knew and shared His viewpoint. (James 2:23) When Jehovah turned his attention to Sodom and Gomorrah, he was willing to consider Abraham's petitions. Why? Because our heavenly Father "does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance."

Jonah's View of People —A Stark Contrast

⁶ Now consider the second example—that of Jonah. This time the city appointed for destruction was Nineveh. The prophet Jonah was told to proclaim that the badness of that city had 'come up before Jehovah.' (Jonah 1:2) Including its suburbs, Nineveh was a large city, "with a walking distance of three

6. How did the Ninevites react to Jonah's proclamation?

Jonah came to have Jehovah's view of the repentant Ninevites



days." When Jonah finally obeyed and entered Nineveh, he kept declaring: "Only forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown." At that, "the men of Nineveh began to put faith in God, and they proceeded to proclaim a fast and to put on sackcloth." Even the king of Nineveh repented.—Jonah 3:1-6.

⁷ That was quite a contrast to the response in Sodom! How did Jehovah view the repentant Ninevites? Jonah 3:10 says: "The true God felt regret over the calamity that he had spoken of causing to them; and he did not cause it." Jehovah "felt regret" in the sense that he altered his dealings with the Ninevites because they changed their ways. The divine standards did not change, but Jehovah changed his decision upon seeing that the Ninevites were repentant.—Malachi 3:6.

⁸ When Jonah realized that Nineveh would not be destroyed, did he see things from Jehovah's viewpoint? No, for we are told: "To Jonah, though, it was highly displeasing, and he got to be hot with anger." What else did Jonah do? The account says: "He prayed to Jehovah and said: 'Ah, now, O Jehovah, was not this an affair of mine, while I happened to be on my own ground? That is why I went ahead and ran away to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, and feeling regret over the calamity!'" (Jonah 4:1, 2) Jonah knew about Jehovah's qualities. At that point, however, the prophet became sullen and did not share God's view of the repentant inhabitants of Nineveh.

⁹ Jonah went out of Nineveh, built a booth, and sat in its shade "until he would see what

7. How did Jehovah view the repentant attitude of the Ninevites?

8. Why did Jonah become sullen?

9, 10. (a) What lesson did Jehovah provide for Jonah? (b) Why can we assume that Jonah eventually adopted Jehovah's view of the Ninevites?



Concern for people moves us to consider various times and ways to preach the good news



would become of the city." Jehovah let a bottle-gourd plant grow so that it would provide shade for Jonah. The next day, however, the plant withered. When Jonah became angry about that, Jehovah said: "You, for your part, felt sorry for the bottle-gourd plant . . . And, for my part, ought I not to feel sorry for Nineveh the great city, in which there exist more than one hundred and twenty thousand men who do not at all know the difference between their right hand and their left, besides many domestic animals?" (Jonah 4:5-11) What a lesson for Jonah regarding Jehovah's view of people!

¹⁰ Jonah's response to God's statement about feeling sorry for the people of Nineveh is not recorded. Yet, it is evident that the prophet adjusted his view of the repentant Ninevites. We draw that conclusion from the fact that Jehovah used him to record this inspired account.

Which Attitude Do You Have?

¹¹ Today, we are facing another destruction—that of the present wicked system of things during the great day of Jehovah. (Luke 17:26-30; Galatians 1:4; 2 Peter 3:10) How would

11. How would Abraham likely view people living today?

Abraham view the people living in this world that is soon to be destroyed? He most likely would be concerned about those who have not yet heard the "good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) Abraham repeatedly pleaded with God regarding possible righteous ones in Sodom. Are we personally concerned about people who would reject the ways of this world under Satan's control if given the opportunity to repent and serve God?—1 John 5:19; Revelation 18:2-4.

¹² It is proper to yearn for the end of wickedness. (Habakkuk 1:2, 3) Yet, it is so easy to develop a Jonahlike attitude, being unconcerned about the welfare of people who might repent. This is especially true if we keep meeting individuals who are apathetic, antagonistic, or even belligerent when we call at their homes with the Kingdom message. We may lose sight of those Jehovah will yet gather out of this wicked system of things. (Romans 2:4) If serious self-scrutiny reveals that we have even a little of Jonah's original attitude toward the Ninevites, we can pray for help to conform our view to that of Jehovah.

12. Why is it easy to develop a Jonahlike attitude toward people we meet in our ministry, and what can we do about this?

¹³ Jehovah is concerned about those not yet serving him, and he listens to the petitions of his dedicated people. (Matthew 10: 11) For instance, “he will cause justice to be done” in response to their prayers. (Luke 18: 7, 8) Moreover, Jehovah will fulfill all his promises and purposes in his own time. (Habakkuk 2:3) This will include ridding the earth of all evil, even as he destroyed Nineveh after her inhabitants relapsed into wickedness.—Nahum 3:5-7.

¹⁴ Until this wicked system of things is removed during the great day of Jehovah, will we be patiently waiting, busily involved in doing his will? We do not know the details about the extent of the preaching work yet to be accomplished before the arrival of Jehovah’s day, but we do know that the good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth to God’s satisfaction before the end comes. And surely we should be concerned about the “desirable things” yet to be brought in as Jehovah continues to fill his house with glory.—Haggai 2:7.

Our View Made Evident by Our Actions

¹⁵ Perhaps we live in a community where the preaching work is not well received and we are not in a position to move to where there is a greater need for Kingdom proclaimers. Suppose ten can be found in our territory before the end comes. Do we feel that those ten are worth searching for? Jesus “felt pity” for the crowds “because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36) By studying the Bible and carefully reading articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, we can gain greater insight into this world’s plight. In turn, this can heighten our appreciation for the need to

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13. Why can we say that Jehovah is concerned about people today?
 14. What should we be doing while awaiting Jehovah’s great day?
 15. What can heighten our appreciation for the preaching work?

preach the good news. Moreover, appreciative use of the Bible-based material provided through “the faithful and discreet slave” can add to our persuasiveness in frequently worked territory.—Matthew 24:45-47; 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

¹⁶ Our concern for those who may yet respond to the life-giving Bible message moves us to consider various times and ways to approach householders in our ministry. Do we find that many are not at home when we call? If so, we may be able to increase the effectiveness of our ministry by varying the times and places of our witnessing activity. Fishermen go fishing when they can catch fish. Can we do something similar in our spiritual fishing work? (Mark 1:16-18) Why not try evening witnessing and telephone witnessing, where that is legal? Some have found that parking lots, truck stops, gas stations, and stores are productive ‘fishing grounds.’ Our having an Abrahamlike attitude toward people also becomes evident when we seize opportunities to witness informally.

¹⁷ Millions have not yet heard the Kingdom message. In addition to our preaching, can we show concern for such people even without leaving home? Well, do we know missionaries or full-time ministers who are serving abroad? If so, we might well write them letters that show our appreciation for their work. How could that show concern for people in general? Our letters of encouragement and commendation could strengthen the missionaries to stay in their assignment, thus helping many more people to come to a knowledge of the truth. (Judges 11:40) We can also pray for missionaries and for those who are hungering for truth in other lands. (Ephesians 6:18-20) Another way to show

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16. How might we increase the effectiveness of our ministry?
 17. In what ways can we encourage missionaries and others serving in foreign lands?

concern is by making monetary donations to the worldwide work of Jehovah's Witnesses.—2 Corinthians 8:13, 14; 9:6, 7.

Would You Be Able to Move?

¹⁸ Those who have moved to places where the need for Kingdom proclaimers is greater have been blessed for their self-sacrificing efforts. While remaining in their own homeland, however, other Witnesses of Jehovah have learned another language so as to be of spiritual help to immigrants. Such efforts have been rewarding indeed. For example, seven Witnesses helping Chinese people in a city in Texas, U.S.A., welcomed 114 individuals to the observance of the Lord's Evening Meal in 2001. Those helping such groups have found their fields ready for harvesting.—Matthew 9:37, 38.

¹⁹ Perhaps you and your family feel that you are in a position to move to a place where the need for Kingdom preachers is greater. First, of course, it is wise to "sit down and calculate the expense." (Luke 14:28) Especially is this true when a person is contemplating a

18. What have some Christians done to promote Kingdom interests in the country where they reside?

19. What is it advisable to do if you are contemplating a move to a foreign country to further the Kingdom-preaching work there?

Do You Recall?

- As we await Jehovah's day, how should we view people?
- What was Abraham's view of righteous ones who might have been living in Sodom?
- How did Jonah view the repentant people of Nineveh?
- How can we show that we share Jehovah's view of people who have not yet heard the good news?

move to a foreign country. Anyone considering such a possibility might well ask himself such questions as these: 'Would I be able to support my family? Can I get an appropriate visa? Do I already speak the language of the country, or am I willing to learn it? Have I thought about the climate and the culture? Could I really be "a strengthening aid" and not a burden to fellow believers in that land?' (Colossians 4:10, 11) To find out how much need there is in the country to which you are thinking of moving, it is always appropriate to write to the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses supervising the preaching work in that area.*

²⁰ One Christian who has been involved in the construction of Kingdom Halls in Japan learned that there was a need for skilled workers to build a place of worship in Paraguay. Being single and having youthful vigor, he moved to that country and worked for eight months as the sole full-time worker on the project. During his stay, he learned Spanish and conducted home Bible studies. He could see the need for Kingdom proclaimers in the country. Although he returned to Japan, he soon went back to Paraguay and helped to gather people into that very Kingdom Hall.

²¹ God will see to it that the preaching work is carried out fully, in harmony with his will. Today, he is speeding up the final spiritual harvest. (Isaiah 60:22) As we await Jehovah's day, then, let us zealously share in the harvest work and view people as our loving God views them.

* It is not always helpful for you to move to a country where the preaching work is banned or restricted. Doing so might even harm the Kingdom publishers working discreetly under such circumstances.

20. How has one young Christian expended himself for the benefit of fellow believers and others in a foreign land?

21. What should be our principal concern and viewpoint as we await Jehovah's great day?

THINK STRAIGHT

Act Wisely

IMAGINE this scene: Jesus Christ is explaining that religious enemies in Jerusalem will cause him great pain and then kill him. His close friend the apostle Peter cannot believe it. In fact, he takes Jesus aside and rebukes him. Peter's sincerity and genuine concern are beyond doubt. But how does Jesus assess Peter's thinking? "Get behind me, Satan!" says Jesus. "You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not God's thoughts, but those of men."—Matthew 16:21-23.

What a shock that must have been to Peter! Instead of being a help and support, he was in this case "a stumbling block" to his beloved Master. How did this happen? Peter may have fallen prey to a common flaw in human thinking—believing only what he wanted to believe.

Do Not Be Overconfident

A threat to our ability to think straight is a tendency to be overconfident. The apostle Paul warned fellow Christians in ancient Corinth: "Let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12) Why did Paul say this? Apparently because he knew how easy it is for human thinking to become distorted—even for the minds of Christians to be "corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ."—2 Corinthians 11:3.

This had happened to a whole generation of Paul's ancestors. At the time, Jehovah told them: "The thoughts of you people are not my thoughts, nor are my ways your ways." (Isaiah 55:8) They had become "wise in their own eyes," with calamitous results. (Isaiah 5:

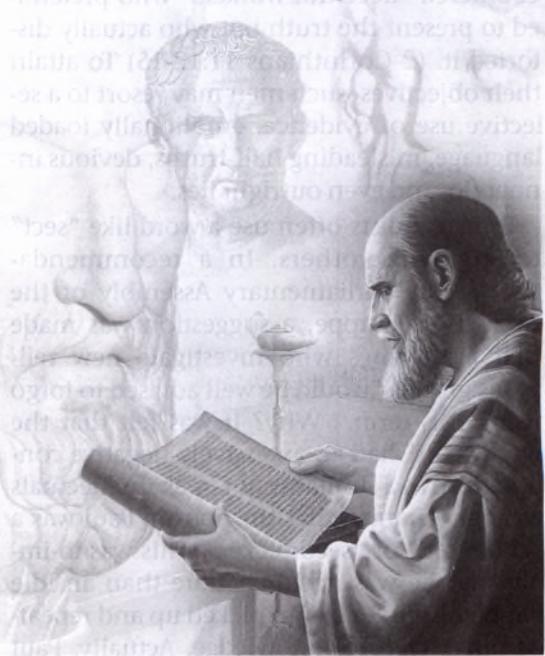
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Surely, then, it makes sense to examine how we can keep our own thinking straight and thus avoid similar calamity.

Beware of Fleshly Thinking

Some in Corinth were badly affected by fleshly thinking. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) They put more emphasis on human philosophies than on God's Word. No doubt the Greek thinkers of the day were very clever men. In God's eyes, however, they were foolish. Said Paul: "It is written: 'I will make the wisdom of the wise men perish, and the intelligence of the intellectual men I will shove aside.'

Early Christians let godly wisdom, not philosophical reasoning, shape their thinking



Philosophers left to right: Epicurus: Photograph taken by courtesy of the British Museum; Cicero: Reproduced from *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*; Plato: Roma, Musei Capitolini

Where is the wise man? Where the scribe? Where the debater of this system of things? Did not God make the wisdom of the world foolish?" (1 Corinthians 1:19, 20) Such intellectuals were governed by "the spirit of the world" rather than by the spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:12) Their philosophies and ideas were out of harmony with Jehovah's thinking.

The ultimate source of such fleshly thinking is Satan the Devil, who used the serpent to seduce Eve. (Genesis 3:1-6; 2 Corinthians 11:3) Is he still a danger to us? Yes! According to God's Word, Satan "has blinded the minds" of people to such an extent that he is now "misleading the entire inhabited earth." (2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9) How important it is to be alert to his designs!—2 Corinthians 2:11.

Look Out for "the Trickery of Men"

The apostle Paul also warned against "the trickery of men." (Ephesians 4:14) He encountered "deceitful workers" who pretended to present the truth but who actually distorted it. (2 Corinthians 11:12-15) To attain their objectives, such men may resort to a selective use of evidence, emotionally loaded language, misleading half-truths, devious innuendo, and even outright lies.

Propagandists often use a word like "sect" to stigmatize others. In a recommendation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, a suggestion was made that authorities who investigate new religious groups "would be well advised to forgo using this term." Why? It was felt that the word "cult" had an excessively negative connotation. In a similar way, Greek intellectuals wrongly charged that the apostle Paul was a "chatterer," or "seed picker." This was to imply that he was nothing more than an idle babbler, someone who picked up and repeated only scraps of knowledge. Actually, Paul

"was declaring the good news of Jesus and the resurrection."—Acts 17:18; footnote.

Do the techniques of propagandists work? Yes. They have been a major factor in creating ethnic and religious hatreds by distorting people's perceptions of other nations or religions. Many have used them to marginalize unpopular minorities. Adolf Hitler used such methods effectively when he portrayed the Jews and others as "degenerate," "evil," and a "threat" to the State. Never allow this kind of trickery to poison your thinking.—Acts 28:19-22.

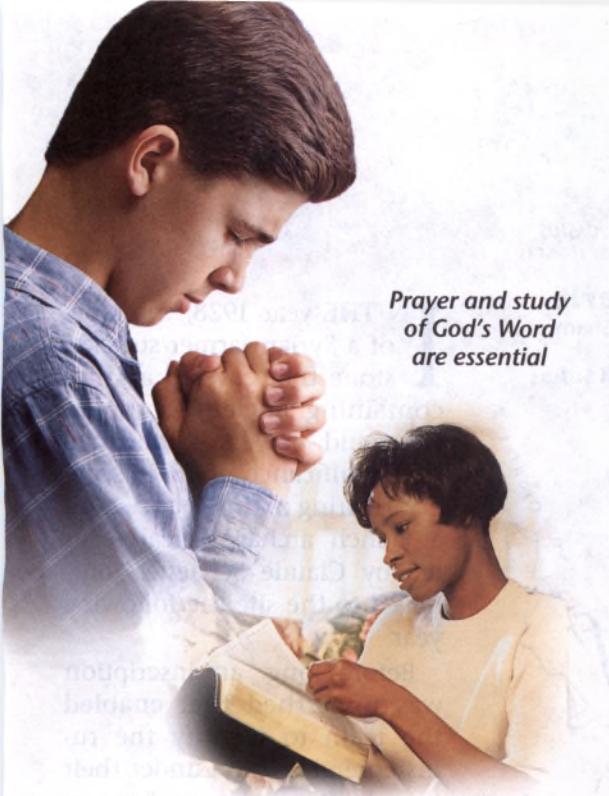
Do Not Deceive Yourself

It is also easy to deceive ourselves. In fact, it may be very difficult to give up or even question deeply cherished opinions. Why? Because we become emotionally attached to our views. Then we may deceive ourselves by rationalizing—by manufacturing reasons to justify what are really mistaken and misleading beliefs.

This happened to some first-century Christians. They knew God's Word, but they did not let it govern their thinking. They ended up "deceiving [themselves] with false reasoning." (James 1:22, 26) One indication that we may have fallen prey to this kind of self-deception is if we find ourselves becoming angry when our beliefs are challenged. Instead of getting angry, it is wise to keep an open mind and carefully listen to what others have to say—even when we feel sure that our opinion is right.—Proverbs 18:17.

Dig for "the Very Knowledge of God"

What can we do to keep our thinking straight? There is much help available, but we must be willing to work for it. Wise King Solomon said: "My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, so as to pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment; if,



*Prayer and study
of God's Word
are essential*

moreover, you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, if you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God." (Proverbs 2:1-5) Yes, if we personally make the effort to fill our mind and heart with the truths of God's Word, we will gain real wisdom, insight, and discernment. In effect, we will be digging for things of far greater value than silver or any other material treasure.—Proverbs 3:13-15.

Wisdom and knowledge certainly are vital factors in straight thinking. "When wisdom enters into your heart and knowledge itself becomes pleasant to your very soul," says God's Word, "thinking ability itself will keep guard over you, discernment itself will safeguard you, to deliver you from the bad way, from the man speaking perverse things, from those leaving the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness."—Proverbs 2:10-13.

It is especially important to let God's thoughts guide our thinking in times of stress or danger. Strong emotions like anger or fear can make it difficult to think straight. "Oppression may make a wise one act crazy," says Solomon. (Ecclesiastes 7:7) It is even possible to become "enraged against Jehovah himself." (Proverbs 19:3) How? By blaming God for our problems and using them to justify doing things that are out of harmony with his laws and principles. Instead of thinking that we always know best, may we humbly listen to wise counselors who seek to help us by using the Scriptures. And if necessary, let us be prepared to abandon even strongly held points of view when it becomes evident that they are mistaken.—Proverbs 1:1-5; 15:22.

"Keep On Asking God"

We live in confusing and dangerous times. Regular prayer for Jehovah's direction is essential if we are to exercise good judgment and act wisely. "Do not be anxious over anything," writes Paul, "but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6, 7) If we lack the wisdom to handle perplexing problems or trials, we need to "keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching." —James 1:5-8.

Aware that fellow Christians needed to exercise wisdom, the apostle Peter sought to 'arouse their clear thinking faculties.' He wanted them to "remember the sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior," Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:1, 2) If we do this and keep our mind aligned with Jehovah's Word, we will think straight and act wisely.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

UGARIT

Ancient City in the Shadow of BAAL

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Hittite Empire in the
14th century B.C.E.

Statuette of Baal and rhyton in the shape
of an animal's head: Musée du Louvre,
Paris; painting of the royal palace:
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EGYPT

MT. CASIUS
(JEBEL EL-AGRA)

Ugarit
(Ras Shamra)

Tell Sukas

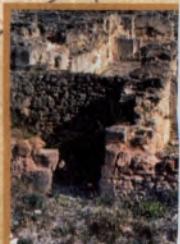
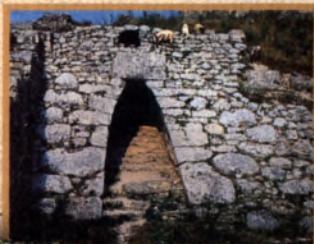
Orontes

SYRIA



IN THE year 1928, the plow of a Syrian farmer struck a stone that covered a tomb containing ancient ceramics. He could not have imagined the significance of his discovery. Hearing of this chance find, a French archaeological team led by Claude Schaeffer journeyed to the site the following year.

Before long, an inscription was unearthed that enabled the team to identify the ruins emerging from under their trowels. It was Ugarit, "one of



the most important ancient cities of the Near East." Writer Barry Hoberman even said: "No archaeological discovery, not even that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, has had a more profound impact on our understanding of the Bible."—*The Atlantic Monthly*.

Where Paths Crossed

Situated in a mound known as Ras Shamra, on the Mediterranean Coast of what is now northern Syria, Ugarit was a flourishing cosmopolitan city in the second millennium B.C.E. Its territory covered an area extending some 35 miles from Mt. Casius in the north to Tell Sukas in the south and 20 to 30 miles from the Mediterranean in the west to the Orontes Valley in the east.

Livestock flourished in Ugarit's temperate climate. The region produced cereals, olive oil, wine, and timber—a product

Archaeological discoveries at Ugarit have enhanced our understanding of the Scriptures



sorely lacking in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Moreover, the city's location at the junction of strategic trade routes made it one of the first great international ports. At Ugarit, merchants from the Aegean, Anatolia, Babylon, Egypt, and other parts of the Middle East traded metals, agricultural products, and a host of locally produced goods.

Despite its material prosperity, Ugarit was always a vassal kingdom. The city was the northernmost outpost of the Egyptian

Empire until incorporated into the secular Hittite Empire in the 14th century B.C.E. Ugarit was obliged to pay tribute and to supply its overlord with troops. When invading "Sea Peoples"^{*} began ravaging Anatolia (central Turkey) and northern Syria, Ugarit's troops and fleet were requisitioned by the Hittites. As a result, Ugarit itself was defenseless and was completely destroyed in about 1200 B.C.E.

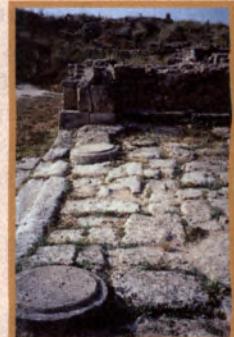
Resurrecting the Past

The destruction of Ugarit left a huge mound almost 60 feet high and covering more than 60 acres. Only one sixth of this area has been excavated. Among the ruins, archaeologists have uncovered the remains of an immense palace complex with almost a hundred rooms and courtyards and covering some 100,000 square feet. The complex had running water, bathrooms, and a sewage system. Furniture was inlaid with gold, lapis lazuli, and ivory. Intricately carved ivory panels have been found. A walled garden and sunken basin added to the charm of the palace.

The city and the surrounding plain were dominated by the temples of Baal and Dagan.[#] These temple towers, perhaps 60 feet tall, consisted of a small vestibule leading to an inner room that housed an image of the

* The "Sea Peoples" are generally identified as seafarers from Mediterranean islands and coastlands. The Philistines may have been among them.—Amos 9:7.

[#] While opinions vary, some identify the temple of Dagan as the temple of El. Roland de Vaux, a French scholar and professor at the Jerusalem School of Biblical Studies, suggested that Dagan—the Dagon of Judges 16:23 and 1 Samuel 5:1-5—is the proper name of El. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* comments that possibly "Dagan was in some sense identified with or assimilated to [El]." In the Ras Shamra texts, Baal is called the son of Dagan, but the meaning of "son" here is uncertain.



Remains of the entrance to the palace

god. A staircase led up to a terrace where the king officiated at various ceremonies. At night or during storms, beacons may have been lit on the summit of the temples in order to guide ships safely into the harbor. Sailors who attributed their safe return to the storm god Baal-Hadad no doubt made the votive offerings of 17 stone anchors found in his sanctuary.

Treasure Trove of Inscriptions

Thousands of clay tablets were discovered throughout the ruins of Ugarit. Economic, legal, diplomatic, and administrative texts have been found in eight languages, written in five scripts. Schaeffer's team found inscriptions in a hitherto unknown language—given the name Ugaritic—using 30

cuneiform signs, which made up one of the oldest alphabets ever discovered.

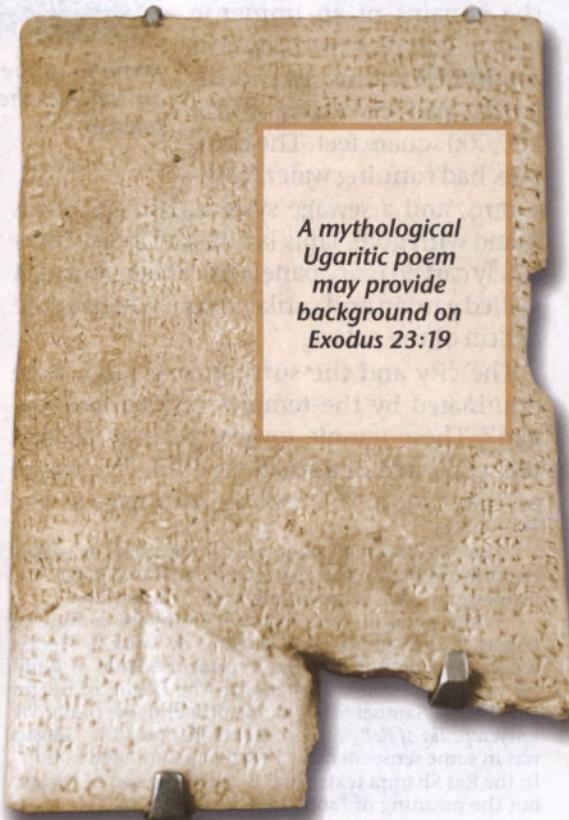
In addition to covering mundane matters, Ugaritic documents contain literary texts that opened a new door to the religious concepts and practices of the time. The religion of Ugarit appears to have borne great similarities to that practiced by the neighboring Canaanites. According to Roland de Vaux, these texts “are a fairly accurate reflection of civilization in the land of Canaan just prior to the Israelite conquest.”

Religion in the City of Baal

More than 200 gods and goddesses are mentioned in the Ras Shamra texts. The supreme deity was El, called the father of the gods and of man. And the storm god Baal-Hadad was “the rider of the clouds” and “the lord of the earth.” El is depicted as a wise, white-bearded old man remote from humanity. On the other hand, Baal is a strong and ambitious deity who seeks to rule over the gods and mankind.

The discovered texts were probably recited during religious festivals, such as the new year or the harvest. However, the exact interpretation is obscure. In one poem about a dispute over rulership, Baal defeats El’s favorite son, the sea-god Yamm. This victory perhaps gave Ugarit’s sailors confidence that Baal would protect them at sea. In a duel with Mot, Baal is overcome and descends to the underworld. A drought ensues, and human activities cease. Baal’s wife and sister Anat—goddess of love and war—kills Mot and restores Baal to life. Baal massacres the sons of El’s wife, Athirat (Asherah), and regains the throne. But Mot returns seven years later.

Some interpret this poem as a symbol of the annual cycle of the seasons during which life-giving rains are overcome by the torrid heat of summer and return



in the autumn. Others think that the seven-year cycle relates to fear of famine and drought. In either case, Baal's preeminence was considered essential for the success of human endeavors. Scholar Peter Craigie notes: "The goal of Baal's religion was to secure his supremacy; only while he remained supreme, so his worshipers believed, would the crops and cattle so essential to human survival continue."

A Rampart Against Paganism

Clearly evident in the texts unearthed is the depravity of Ugaritic religion. *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* comments: "The texts show the degrading results of the worship of these deities; with their emphasis on war, sacred prostitution, sensuous love and the consequent social degradation." De Vaux observes: "On reading these poems, one understands the repulsion that true believers in Yahwism and the great prophets felt for this worship." The Law that God gave the ancient nation of Israel was a rampart against such false religion.

Divination, astrology, and magic were widely practiced in Ugarit. Signs and omens were sought not only in the heavenly bodies but also in deformed fetuses and the viscera of slaughtered animals. "It was believed that the god to whom a ritually sacrificed animal was



Stela of Baal



Gold dish representing a hunting scene

Ivory cosmetic-box cover depicting a fertility goddess



offered identified with it and that the god's spirit fused with the animal's spirit," comments historian Jacqueline Gachet. "As a result, by reading the signs visible on these organs, it was possible to have clear access to the spirit of divinities who were able to give either a positive or a negative answer to a question on future events or on the course of action to take in a specific situation." (*Le pays d'Ugarit autour de 1200 av.J.C.*) In contrast, the Israelites were to shun such practices.—Deuteronomy 18:9-14.

The Mosaic Law clearly forbade bestiality. (Leviticus 18:23) How was this practice viewed in Ugarit? In the discovered texts, Baal copulates with a heifer. "If it be argued that Baal assumes the shape of a bull for the act," commented archaeologist Cyrus Gordon, "the same cannot be said for his priests who re-enacted his mythological career."

The Israelites were commanded: "You must not make cuts in your flesh for a deceased soul." (Leviticus 19:28) Reacting to Baal's death, however, El "cut his skin with a knife, he made incisions with a razor; he cut his cheeks and chin." Ritual laceration was apparently a custom among Baal worshipers. —1 Kings 18:28.

One Ugaritic poem seems to indicate that cooking a kid in milk was part of a fertility rite common in Canaanite religion.

In the Mosaic Law, however, the Israelites were ordered: "You must not boil a kid in its mother's milk."—Exodus 23:19.

Comparisons With Bible Texts

Ugaritic texts were originally translated primarily with the help of Biblical Hebrew. Peter Craigie observes: "There are many words employed in the Hebrew text whose meanings are unclear and, sometimes, unknown; translators prior to the 20th century surmised, by various means, their possible meaning. But when the same words occur in the Ugaritic text, progress is possible."

For example, a Hebrew word used at Isaiah 3:18 is generally translated "headbands." A similar Ugaritic root designates both the sun and the sun-goddess. Hence, the women of Jerusalem mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy may have been adorned with little sun pendants as well as "moon-shaped ornaments" in honor of Canaanite gods.

At Proverbs 26:23 in the Masoretic text, "burning lips and a wicked heart" are compared to an earthen vessel covered with "silver dross." A Ugaritic root allows for the comparison to be rendered "like glaze upon a potsherd." The *New World Translation* appropriately renders this proverb: "As a silver glazing overlaid upon a fragment of earthenware are fervent lips along with a bad heart."

Biblical Substratum?

Examination of the Ras Shamra texts has led some scholars to claim that certain Bible passages are adaptations of Ugaritic poetic literature. André Caquot, member of the French Institute, speaks of "the Canaanite cultural substratum at the heart of Israelite religion."

Regarding Psalm 29, Mitchell Dahood of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome comments: "This psalm is a Yahwistic adaptation of an older Canaanite hymn to the storm-god Baal. . . . Virtually every word in the

psalm can now be duplicated in older Canaanite texts." Is such a conclusion justified? No indeed!

More moderate scholars recognize that similarities have been exaggerated. Others have criticized what they call pan-Ugaritism. "No single Ugaritic text parallels Psalm 29 in full," states theologian Garry Brantley. "To suggest that Psalm 29 (or any other biblical text) is an adaptation of a pagan myth has no evidential basis."

Is the fact that similarities exist in figures of speech, poetic parallels, and stylistic features proof of adaptation? On the contrary, such parallels are to be expected. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* notes: "The reason for this similarity of form and content is cultural: notwithstanding the significant geographical and temporal differences between Ugarit and Israel, they were part of a larger cultural entity that shared a common poetic and religious vocabulary." Garry Brantley therefore concludes: "It is improper exegesis to force pagan beliefs into the biblical text simply because of linguistic similarities."

Finally, it should be noted that if any parallels do exist between the Ras Shamra texts and the Bible, they are purely literary, not spiritual. "The ethical and moral heights reached in the Bible are [not] to be found in Ugarit," remarks archaeologist Cyrus Gordon. Indeed, the differences far outweigh any similarities.

Ugaritic studies are likely to continue to help Bible students to understand the cultural, historic, and religious environment of Bible writers and of the Hebrew nation in general. Further examination of the Ras Shamra texts may also throw new light on comprehension of ancient Hebrew. Above all, however, the archaeological finds at Ugarit eloquently highlight the contrast between the degrading devotion to Baal and the pure worship of Jehovah.

EUSEBIUS

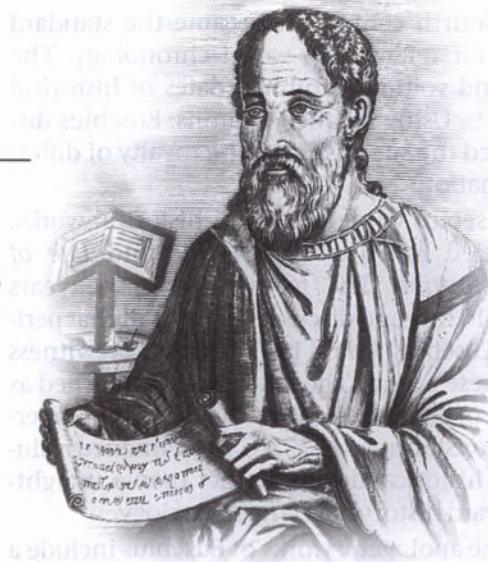
"The Father of Church History"?

IN THE year 325 C.E., Roman Emperor Constantine summoned all bishops to Nicaea. His objective: to settle the much debated issue of God's relationship to his Son. Among those present was the man regarded the most learned of his age, Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius had studied the Scriptures diligently and had been a defender of Christian monotheism.

At the Council of Nicaea, "Constantine himself presided," relates The *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "actively guiding the discussions, and personally proposed . . . the crucial formula expressing the relation of Christ to God in the creed issued by the council, 'of one substance with the Father' . . . Overawed by the emperor, the bishops, with two exceptions only, signed the creed, many of them much against their inclination." Was Eusebius among the exceptions? What lesson can we learn from the stand that he took? Let us look at the background of Eusebius—his credentials and undertakings.

His Noteworthy Writings

Likely, Eusebius was born in Palestine about 260 C.E. At an early age, he associated himself with Pamphilus, an overseer of the church in Caesarea. Joining the theological school of Pamphilus, Eusebius became an earnest student. He made diligent use of Pamphilus' magnificent library. Eusebius de-



Courtesy of Special Collections Library, University of Michigan

voted himself to his studies, especially to the study of the Bible. He also became a devoted friend of Pamphilus, later referring to himself as "Eusebius of Pamphilus."

Concerning his aspirations, Eusebius stated: "It is my purpose to write an account of the successions of the holy Apostles as well as of the times which have elapsed from the day of our Saviour to our own; to relate how many and important events are said to have occurred in the history of the church; and to mention those who have governed and presided over the church in the most prominent parishes, and those who in each generation have proclaimed the divine word either orally or in writing."

Eusebius is remembered for his highly regarded work entitled *History of the Christian Church*. His ten volumes published about 324 C.E. are considered the most important ecclesiastical history dating from antiquity. As a result of this accomplishment, Eusebius became known as the father of church history.

Beyond *Church History*, Eusebius penned *Chronicle*, in two volumes. The first volume was an epitome of universal history. In

the fourth century, it became the standard text for referencing world chronology. The second volume exhibited dates of historical events. Using parallel columns, Eusebius displayed the succession of the royalty of different nations.

Eusebius wrote two other historical works, entitled *Martyrs of Palestine* and *Life of Constantine*. The former spans the years 303-10 C.E. and discusses martyrs of that period. Eusebius would have been an eyewitness of these events. The latter work, published as a set of four books after the death of Emperor Constantine in 337 C.E., contained valuable historical details. Rather than a straightforward history, it is largely a eulogy.

The apologetic works of Eusebius include a reply to Hierocles—a contemporary Roman governor. When Hierocles wrote against the Christians, Eusebius responded in defense. Moreover, in support of the divine authorship of the Scriptures, he wrote 35 books, considered to be the most important and elaborate effort of its kind. The first 15 of these endeavor to justify the Christian acceptance of the sacred writings of the Hebrews. The other 20 offer proof that Christians are right in going beyond the Jewish precepts and adopting new principles and practices. Together, these books present a comprehensive defense of Christianity as understood by Eusebius.

Eusebius lived for some 80 years (c.260-c.340 C.E.), becoming one of the most prolific writers of antiquity. His writings encompass the events of the first three centuries to the time of Emperor Constantine. In the latter part of his life, his work as a writer was coupled with his activities as bishop of Caesarea. Though best known as a historian, Eusebius was also an apologist, topographer, preacher, critic, and exegetical writer.

His Twofold Motive

Why did Eusebius embark upon such unprecedented huge projects? The answer lies in his belief that he was living in a time of transition into a new age. He felt that great events had occurred during generations past and a written record was needed for posterity.

Eusebius had an additional purpose—that of an apologist. He believed that Christianity was of divine origin. But some were fighting against this idea. Eusebius wrote: “It is my purpose also to give the names and number and times of those who through love of innovation have run into the greatest errors, and proclaiming themselves discoverers of knowledge, falsely so called, have like fierce wolves unmercifully devastated the flock of Christ.”

Did Eusebius consider himself a Christian? Apparently he did, for he referred to Christ as “our Saviour.” He stated: “It is my intention . . . to recount the misfortunes which immediately came on the whole Jewish nation in consequence of their plots against our Saviour, and to record the ways and times in which the divine word has been attacked by the Gentiles, and to describe the character of those who at various periods have contended for it in the face of blood and tortures, as well as the confessions which have been made in our own day, and the gracious and kindly succour which our Saviour has accorded them all.”

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Poverty—Finding the Permanent Solution

Imitating the God of Truth

Learning the Art of Being Tactful



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Fresco depicting the Council of Nicaea

His Extensive Research

The number of books Eusebius personally read and referenced is enormous. It is only through Eusebius' writings that many prominent individuals of the first three centuries of the Common Era have been revealed. Useful accounts shedding light on important movements surface in his writings alone. They are from sources of knowledge no longer accessible.

In gathering material, Eusebius was diligent and thorough. He seems to have carefully endeavored to discriminate between trustworthy and untrustworthy reports. Yet, his work is not flawless. At times, he misinterprets and even misunderstands men and their actions. In chronology, he is sometimes inaccurate. Eusebius also lacked artistic skill of presentation. Regardless of evident deficiencies, however, his many works are regarded as a priceless treasury.

A Lover of Truth?

Eusebius was concerned about the unsettled issue of how the Father and the Son were related. Did the Father exist before the Son, as Eusebius believed? Or did the Father and Son coexist? "If they co-exist," he asked, "how will the Father be Father and the Son be Son?" He even supported his belief with Scriptural references, citing John 14:28, which says that 'the Father is greater than Jesus,' and John 17:3, where Jesus is referred to as the one "sent forth" by the only true God.

Alluding to Colossians 1:15 and John 1:1, Eusebius argued that the Logos, or the Word, is "the image of the invisible God"—God's Son.

Amazingly, though, at the closing of the Council of Nicaea, Eusebius gave his support to the opposing view. Contrary to his Scriptural stand that God and Christ were not coexisting equals, he went along with the emperor.

A Lesson to Be Learned

Why did Eusebius cave in at the Council of Nicaea and support an unscriptural doctrine? Did he have political objectives in mind? Why did he attend the council in the first place? Although all the bishops were summoned, only a fraction—300—actually attended. Was Eusebius perhaps concerned about preserving his social status? And why did Emperor Constantine regard him very highly? Eusebius sat at the right hand of the emperor at the council.

Apparently Eusebius ignored Jesus' requirement that His followers be "no part of the world." (John 17:16; 18:36) "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God?" asked the disciple James. (James 4:4) And how appropriate is Paul's admonition: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers"! (2 Corinthians 6:14) May we remain separate from the world as we "worship [the Father] with spirit and truth."—John 4:24.



Consolation for Those Crying for Help

THE Bible is not a mental-health manual. However, it gives us consolation and helps us to appreciate life despite the troubles we encounter. Realistically, the Scriptures do say: "Man, born of woman, is short-lived and glutted with agitation." (Job 14:1) Our own imperfection accounts for some of our trials. But who is primarily responsible for human suffering?

The Bible identifies that one as a wicked spirit called Devil and Satan. He is "misleading the entire inhabited earth" and causing many of the troubles that beset mankind. Yet, the Bible also tells us that his time is running out. (Revelation 12:9, 12) Soon all the distress that Satan has brought upon earth's inhabitants will end by divine intervention. According to the Bible, God's promised new world of righteousness will end hopelessness and despair.

—2 Peter 3:13.

What a comfort it is to know that human suffering is temporary! Under the rule of God's heavenly Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ, injustice and suffering will end. Regarding God's appointed King, the Scriptures state: "He will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper. He will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul, and their blood will be precious in his eyes."—Psalm 72:12-14.

The time for the fulfillment of these prophetic words is very near. We can enjoy everlasting life on a paradise earth under wonderful conditions. (Luke 23:43; John 17:3) Knowledge of these comforting Scriptural promises gives hope and consolation to those crying for help.

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