

THE WATCHTOWER

JULY 15, 2000

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Can
Your Life
Have
Greater
Meaning?



THE WATCHTOWER®

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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 Can Your Life Have Greater Meaning?
- 4 How Your Life Can Have Greater Meaning
- 8 Declaring the Good News in the Rice Fields of Taiwan
- 10 The Resurrection Hope Is Sure!
- 16 The Resurrection Hope Has Power
- 21 Have You Been Influenced by Cynics?
- 24 Persecution Sparks Growth in Antioch
- 28 You Can Remain Chaste in an Immoral World
- 32 Fine Works Bring Glory to God

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

AUGUST 21-27:

The Resurrection Hope Is Sure!
Page 10. Songs to be used: 23, 185.

AUGUST 28-SEPTEMBER 3:

The Resurrection Hope Has Power.
Page 16. Songs to be used: 218, 71.

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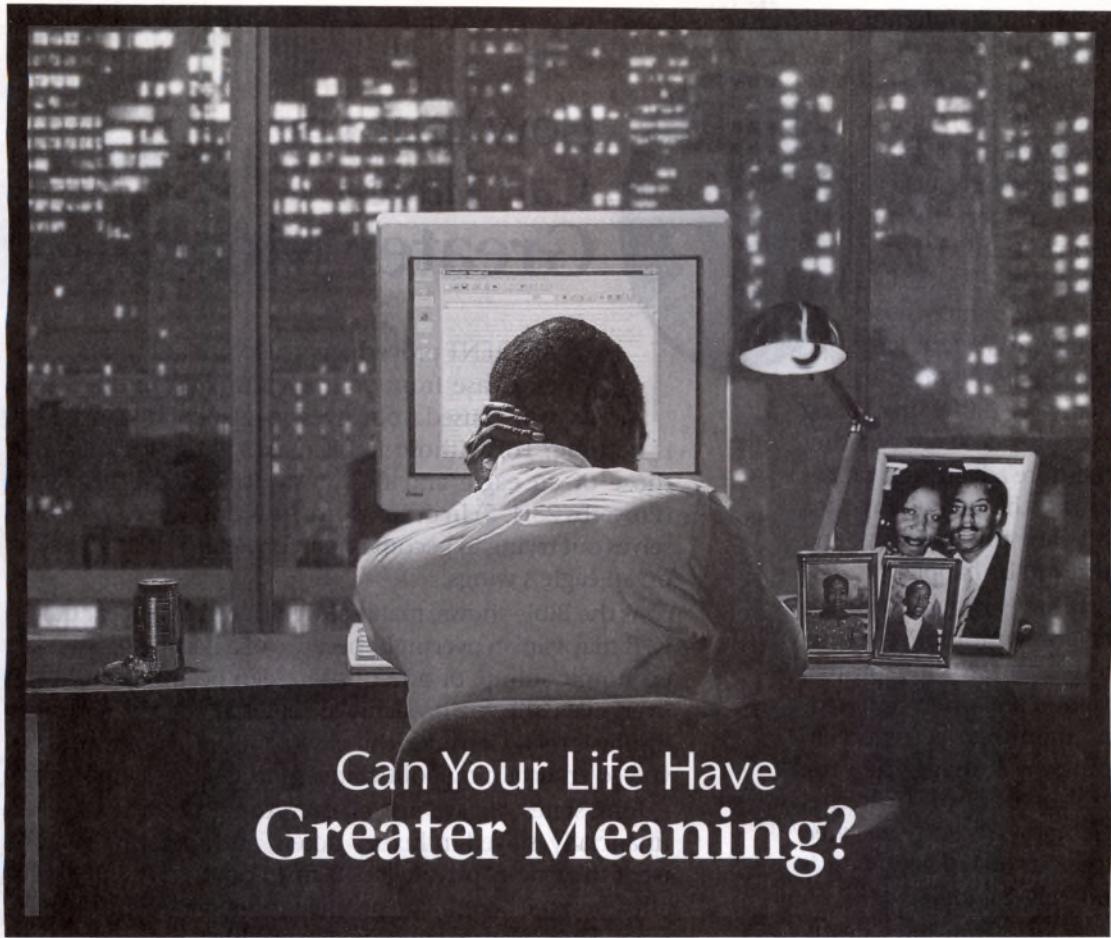
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Can Your Life Have Greater Meaning?

TRUE value is not always what it seems to be. The largest bank note issued in the United States had a face value of \$10,000. Yet, the paper on which it is printed is worth only a few cents.

Have you ever wondered if pieces of paper that have little intrinsic value can give real meaning to your life? Many people think that they can. Millions work night and day in order to earn as much money as they possibly can. Sometimes the pursuit of money means sacrificing their

health, their friends, and even their family. To what avail? Can money—or what we buy with it—bring real and lasting satisfaction?

According to researchers, the more we seek satisfaction based on material possessions, the less likely we are to find it. Journalist Alfie Kohn concludes that "satisfaction simply is not for sale. . . . People for whom affluence is a priority in life tend to experience an unusual degree of anxiety and depression as well as a lower overall level of

well-being."—*International Herald Tribune*.

Though researchers may realize that a meaningful life calls for something other than money, many people think otherwise. This is hardly surprising, since those living in Western lands may be bombarded by as many as 3,000 marketing messages a day. Whether these are advertising cars or candy, the underlying idea is: 'Buy this product, and you will be happier.'

What is the result of the relentless promotion of material values? Why, spiritual values are often ignored! According to a report in *Newsweek* magazine, the archbishop of Cologne, Germany, recently declared that "in our society, God is no longer a topic."

Perhaps you have devoted nearly all your energies to making a living. Maybe you feel that you have little time to do anything else. Occasionally, however, you may sense that there must be more to life than endlessly running on a treadmill until your health or your age calls a halt to it.

Can more attention to spiritual matters bring you increased satisfaction? What would give your life greater meaning?



How Your Life Can Have Greater Meaning

AN ANCIENT proverb says: "Do not toil to gain riches. Cease from your own understanding. Have you caused your eyes to glance at it, when it is nothing? For without fail it makes wings for itself like those of an eagle and flies away toward the heavens." (Proverbs 23:4, 5) In other words, it is not wise to wear ourselves out trying to become rich, for wealth can fly away as on an eagle's wings.

As the Bible shows, material wealth can disappear quickly. It may vanish overnight because of a natural disaster, an economic slump, or other unforeseen occurrences. Moreover, even those who achieve material success are often disillusioned. Consider the case of John, whose work involved entertaining politicians, sports figures, and royalty.

John states: "I gave my job everything I had. I prospered financially, stayed in luxury hotels, and sometimes I even went to work by private jet. At first I enjoyed it, but gradually I became bored. The people I catered to seemed superficial. There was no substance to my life."

As John discovered, a life devoid of spiritual values is unsatisfying. In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ showed how to experience lasting happiness. He said: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them." (Matthew 5:3) Clearly, then, it is wise to put spiritual matters first in life. However, other factors can also help to give life greater meaning.

Your Family and Friends Really Matter

Would you enjoy life if you had no contact with your family and had no close friends? Obviously not. Our Creator made us with a need to love and be loved. That is one reason why Jesus highlighted the importance of 'loving our neighbor as ourselves.' (Matthew 22:39) The family is

a divine gift that provides an ideal setting for displaying unselfish love.—Ephesians 3:14, 15.

How can our family give our life greater meaning? Well, a united family might be compared to a beautiful garden that provides a refreshing refuge from the stress of everyday life. Similarly, within the family, we can find refreshing companionship and warmth that banish feelings of loneliness. Of course, a family does not automatically provide such a haven. As we strengthen family bonds, however, we grow closer to one another, and life becomes richer. For instance, the time and attention we give to showing love and respect for our marriage mate are daily investments that may ultimately yield rich dividends.—Ephesians 5:33.

If we have children, we should strive to provide the right environment in which to bring them up. Spending time with them, keeping open the lines of communication, and giving them spiritual instruction may be demanding. But such time and effort can bring us great satisfaction. Successful parents view children as a blessing, as an inheritance from God that should be well cared for.—Psalm 127:3.

Good friends also contribute to a satisfying and meaningful life. (Proverbs 27:9) We can make many friends by showing fellow feeling. (1 Peter 3:8) Genuine friends help to lift us up when we stumble. (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10) And “a true companion . . . is a brother that is born for when there is distress.”—Proverbs 17:17.

How satisfying true friendship can be! A sunset is more spectacular, a meal more tasty, and music more enjoyable when shared with a friend. Of course, a close family and trustworthy friends are just two facets of a meaningful life. What other provisions has God made that can give our lives greater meaning?

Satisfying Our Spiritual Need

As noted earlier, Jesus Christ associated happiness with awareness of our spiritual need.

We have been created with both a spiritual and a moral capacity. Hence, the Bible refers to “the spiritual man” and “the secret person of the heart.”—1 Corinthians 2:15; 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

According to *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine, the figurative heart stands for “man’s entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements.” By way of explanation, Vine adds: “In other words, the heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life.” The same work also notes that “the heart, as lying deep within, contains ‘the hidden man,’ . . . the real man.”

How can we satisfy the needs of “the spiritual man,” or “the hidden man,” that is, “the secret person of the heart”? We take an important step in doing this and satisfying our spiritual need when we acknowledge the point made by the inspired psalmist who sang: “Know that Jehovah is God. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasturage.” (Psalm 100:3) Recognition of this reasonably leads us to conclude that we are accountable to God. If we want to be included among “his people and the sheep of his pasturage,” we must act in harmony with his Word, the Bible.

Is that a bad thing? No, for awareness that our conduct matters to God adds meaning to our lives. It encourages us to be better individuals—certainly a worthwhile goal. “Happy is the man in fear of Jehovah, in whose commandments he has taken very much delight,” says Psalm 112:1. Reverential fear of God and heartfelt obedience to his commandments can give our lives greater meaning.

Why does obedience to God satisfy us? Because we have a conscience, a gift that God has bestowed on all mankind. The conscience is a moral examiner that registers approval or disapproval of what we have done or consider doing. We have all experienced the distress of a troubled conscience. (Romans 2:15)

But our conscience can also reward us. When we act unselfishly toward God and fellow humans, we feel contented and satisfied. We find that "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) There is an important reason for this.

Our Creator made us in such a way that the desires and needs of fellow humans affect us. Helping others produces pleasure in our own hearts. Additionally, the Bible assures us that when we give to someone in need, God considers this a favor done to him.—Proverbs 19:17.

Apart from giving inner satisfaction, can attention to our spiritual needs help us in a practical way? Well, a Middle Eastern businessman named Raymond believes that it can. "My goal, pure and simple, was to make money," he says. "But from the time I accepted in my heart that there is a God and that the Bible expresses his wishes, I was a different man. Making a living now takes second place in my life. By trying to please God, I have been spared the destructive feeling of hatred. Though my father died during a conflict, I have no wish to take revenge on those responsible."

As Raymond discovered, caring well for the needs of "the spiritual man" can heal deep emotional wounds. However, unless we cope with the problems that each day brings, life will not be entirely satisfying.

We Can Have "the Peace of God"

In this hectic world, few days pass by smoothly. Accidents occur, plans go wrong, and people disappoint us. These setbacks may rob us of happiness. To those serving Jehovah God, though, the Bible promises an inner contentment—"the peace of God." How do we acquire this peace?

The apostle Paul wrote: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and



Prayer can bring us "the peace of God"

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) Instead of trying to carry our problems alone, we need to pray fervently, throwing our daily burdens on God. (Psalm 55:22) Faith that he responds to such supplication through his Son, Jesus Christ, will increase as we grow spiritually and discern how God helps us.—John 14:6, 14; 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

After we have built up our confidence in Jehovah God, the "Hearer of prayer," we are better able to cope with trials, such as prolonged sickness, old age, or bereavement. (Psalm 65:2) For a truly meaningful life, however, we must also take the future into account.

Rejoice in the Hope Ahead

The Bible promises "new heavens and a new earth," a righteous, caring heavenly government ruling over an obedient human family. (2 Peter 3:13) In that new world promised by God, war and injustice will be replaced by



Do you know what can make family life more satisfying?

peace and justice. This is not just a fleeting wish, but it is a conviction that can grow stronger every day. It is good news indeed and surely a reason for rejoicing.—Romans 12:12; Titus 1:2.

John, mentioned at the outset, now feels that his life has greater meaning. "Though I was never very religious, I always believed in God," he says. "But I did nothing about this belief until two of Jehovah's Witnesses called on me. I barraged them with questions, such as, 'What are we doing here? Where are we going?' Their satisfying Scriptural answers

gave me a sense of purpose for the first time in my life. That was only the beginning. I developed a thirst for truth that led me to change my entire set of values. Even though I am no longer rich materially, I feel like a millionaire spiritually."

Like John, perhaps you have let your spiritual capacity lie dormant for many years. By developing "a heart of wisdom," however, you can revive it. (Psalm 90:12) With determination and effort, you can have genuine joy, peace, and hope. (Romans 15:13) Yes, and your life can have greater meaning.

Declaring the Good News in the Rice Fields of Taiwan

TAIWAN usually enjoys bountiful rainfall, which enables it to reap two good crops of rice each year. Occasionally, though, the rains do not come when they should, and the seedlings die. When this happens, does the farmer give up? No. He knows that perseverance is needed. He grows new seedlings and replants the fields. Then, if conditions improve, the farmer harvests a good crop. Spiritual planting and harvesting are sometimes very similar.

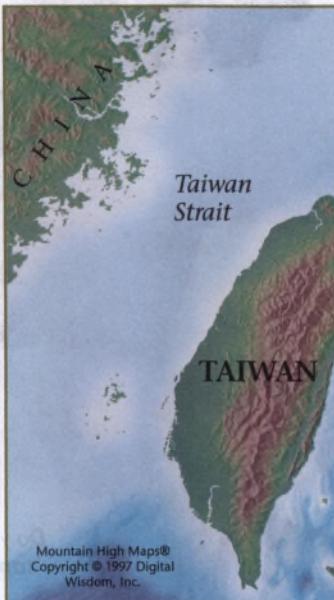
Persevering in the Spiritual Harvest

Over the years Jehovah's Witnesses in Taiwan have worked hard to plant and harvest seeds of Scriptural truth in some areas that did not seem to be productive. One example is Miao-li County. There had been little response to the occasional efforts to witness in the area. So in 1973 a special pioneer couple were assigned to work there as full-time Kingdom proclaimers. Initially, some showed interest in the good news. However, that interest soon withered away. The special pioneers were then assigned to another area.

In 1991 two other special pioneers were assigned there. But again developments indicated that the climate was not right for spiritual growth. After a few years, the special pioneers were reassigned to what would hopefully be more productive fields. Thus, the land lay fallow for a period of time.

Renewed Efforts Reap Success

In September 1998 it was decided to make an effort to seek out the more productive areas



in the vast unassigned territory in Taiwan. How was this to be accomplished? By assigning some 40 temporary special pioneers to work in the more densely populated unassigned territories.

Two adjoining cities in Miao-li County were among the territories selected for the campaign. Four single sisters were to work there for three months to test the territory. Soon after their arrival, they wrote glowing reports about the number of interested people they were locating. By the time they finished their three months of pioneering in the area, they were conducting many home Bible studies. They also established a book study group with the help of an elder from a nearby congregation.

Three of these sisters made it clear that they would like to continue to care for the tender "seedlings" that were growing so well. Consequently, two of them were appointed as permanent special pioneers, and the third continued to work there as a regular pioneer. An elder from the nearby congregation moved into the area to help them. More than 60 attended the first public talk given in that area. Now the nearby congregation is helping this fledgling group to hold regular Sunday meetings in addition to several book studies. Soon a new congregation may be formed in the area.

Perseverance Brings Blessings in Other Parts of Taiwan

Other areas responded in a similar way. In I-lan County in the northeastern part of the is-



land, a new Congregation Book Study was established in the area where the temporary special pioneers worked.

While making house-to-house calls one evening, a temporary special pioneer met a young man and showed him a handbill listing congregation meetings. He immediately asked: "May I attend the meeting tomorrow night? If so, what should I wear?" This pioneer found herself conducting eight Bible studies with interested ones each week. Several of the Bible students were soon making plans to become publishers of the good news themselves, with the goal of being baptized.

Another person in this same town had been a churchgoer for many years but could find no one to teach her the Bible. When she heard about the Bible study arrangement, she seized the opportunity. She was encouraged to prepare her lesson in advance. When the temporary special pioneer arrived to conduct the study, she found that the woman had done

her "homework" by purchasing a notebook in which she had written down the printed questions in her study material. Then she had written out her answers to each question. She had also copied in her notebook all the cited scriptures in her lesson. By the time the sister arrived to conduct the first study, the woman had already prepared the first three lessons!

Similar results were seen in the town of Dong-shih in central Taiwan. The temporary special pioneers placed more than 2,000 brochures in the three months they worked there. By the third month, they were conducting 16 home Bible studies. The town was largely destroyed by an earthquake that struck central Taiwan on September 21, 1999, but some interested ones continue to make spiritual progress, even though they have to travel for up to an hour to attend meetings at the nearest Kingdom Hall. Yes, perseverance is needed to reap a good crop, whether of material produce or that of a spiritual kind.

THE RESURRECTION HOPE IS SURE!

"I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection."—ACTS 24:15.

JEHOVAH has given us sound reasons for hope in the resurrection. We have his word that the dead will rise, standing up again to life. And his purpose regarding those asleep in death is sure to be fulfilled. (Isaiah 55:11; Luke 18:27) In fact, God has already shown his power to raise the dead.

² Faith in God's provision for raising the dead by means of his Son, Jesus Christ, can sustain us in times of stress. The sureness of the resurrection hope can also help us

1. Why can we hope in the resurrection?
2. How can the resurrection hope benefit us?

to maintain integrity to our heavenly Father even to the point of death. Likely, our resurrection hope will be strengthened as we consider restorations to life recorded in the Bible. All these miracles were accomplished through power from the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

They Received Their Dead by Resurrection

³ In a thrilling review of the faith displayed by Jehovah's pre-Christian witnesses, the

3. What was Elijah empowered to do when the son of a widow in Zarephath died?

With power from Jehovah, Elijah restored life to a widow's young son



apostle Paul wrote: "Women received their dead by resurrection." (Hebrews 11:35; 12:1) One of those women was a poor widow in the Phoenician town of Zarephath. Because she was hospitable to God's prophet Elijah, her flour and oil were miraculously sustained during a famine that would have claimed her life and that of her son. When the child later died, Elijah laid him on a couch, prayed, stretched himself upon the boy three times, and pleaded: "O Jehovah my God, please, cause the soul of this child to come back within him." God did cause the soul, or life, to come back within the boy. (1 Kings 17:8-24) Imagine that widow's joy as her faith was rewarded by the first recorded resurrection—that of her own dear son!

⁴ Another woman who received her dead by resurrection lived in the town of Shunem. The wife of an aged man, she showed kindness to the prophet Elisha and his attendant. She was rewarded with a son. Several years later, however, she summoned the prophet, who found the boy dead in her home. After Elisha prayed and took certain steps, "gradually the child's flesh grew warm." He "began to sneeze as many as seven times, after which the boy opened his eyes." This resurrection undoubtedly brought great joy to both the mother and her son. (2 Kings 4:8-37; 8:1-6) But how much happier they will be when raised to life on earth in the "better resurrection"—one that sets before them the possibility of never having to die again! What a cause for thankfulness to the loving God of resurrection, Jehovah!—Hebrews 11:35.

⁵ Even after Elisha's death and burial, God made his bones powerful by holy spirit. We read: "As [certain Israelites] were burying a man, why, here they saw [a Moabite] marauding band. At once they threw the man into

4. What miracle did Elisha perform in Shunem?
5. How was Elisha involved in a miracle even after his death?

Elisha's burial place and went off. When the [dead] man touched the bones of Elisha, he immediately came to life and stood upon his feet." (2 Kings 13:20, 21) How surprised and happy that man must have been! Imagine the joy that will be experienced when our loved ones are raised to life in harmony with the unfailing purpose of Jehovah God!

God's Son Raised the Dead

⁶ God's Son, Jesus Christ, has given us sound reasons for believing that the dead can be resurrected, with the prospect of everlasting life. An incident that occurred near the city of Nain can help us to realize that such a miracle is possible through God-given power. On one occasion, Jesus met mourners carrying the body of a young man out of the city for burial. He was the only child of a widow. Jesus told her: "Stop weeping." Then he touched the bier and said: "Young man, I say to you, Get up!" At that he sat up and spoke. (Luke 7:11-15) This miracle certainly bolsters our conviction that the resurrection hope is sure.

⁷ Consider, too, an event involving Jairus, a presiding officer of the synagogue in Capernaum. He asked Jesus to come and help his beloved 12-year-old daughter, who lay near death. Soon it was reported that the girl had died. Urging grief-stricken Jairus to exercise faith, Jesus accompanied him to his home, where a crowd was weeping. They laughed when Jesus told them: "The young child has not died, but is sleeping." She was indeed dead, but Jesus was about to show that people can be raised to life just as they can be awakened from a deep sleep. Taking the girl by the hand, he said: "Girl, get up!" She rose instantly, and "her parents were beside themselves"

6. What miracle did Jesus perform near the city of Nain, and how may this incident affect us?
7. What took place in connection with the daughter of Jairus?

When Jesus raised Jairus' daughter to life, her parents were beside themselves with ecstasy

with ecstasy. (Mark 5:35-43; Luke 8:49-56) Undoubtedly, family members will be "beside themselves" when their dead loved ones are raised to life on a paradise earth.

⁸ Lazarus had been dead for four days when Jesus approached his tomb and had the stone at its entrance removed. After praying publicly so that observers would know that he depended on God-given power, Jesus said in a loud voice: "Lazarus, come on out!" And out he came! His hands and feet were still bound with burial wrappings, and his face was covered with a cloth. "Loose him and let him go," said Jesus. Seeing this miracle, many who were there to comfort Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, put faith in Jesus. (John 11:1-45) Does not this account fill you with hope that your loved ones may be raised to life in God's new world?

⁹ When John the Baptizer was in prison, Jesus sent him this heartening message: "The blind are seeing again, . . . and the dead are being raised up." (Matthew 11:4-6) Since Jesus when on earth resurrected the dead, he can surely do so as a mighty spirit creature empowered by God. Jesus is "the resurrection and the life," and how comforting it is to know that in the near future "all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out!"—John 5:28, 29; 11:25.

8. What did Jesus do at the tomb of Lazarus?
9. Why can we be sure that Jesus can now resurrect the dead?



Other Resurrections Strengthen Our Hope

¹⁰ When Jesus sent his apostles out as Kingdom preachers, he said: "Raise up dead persons." (Matthew 10:5-8) To do this, of course, they had to rely on God's power. At Joppa in 36 C.E., the godly woman Dorcas (Tabitha) fell asleep in death. Her good deeds had included the making of garments for needy widows, among whom her death caused much weeping. The disciples prepared her for burial and sent for the apostle Peter, perhaps for consolation. (Acts 9:32-38) He dismissed everyone from the upper chamber, prayed, and said: "Tabitha, rise!" She opened her eyes, sat up, took Peter's hand, and he raised her up. This first reported resurrection by an apostle caused many to become believers. (Acts 9:39-42) It also gives us added reason for hope in the resurrection.

¹¹ The last resurrection of Bible record occurred in Troas. When Paul stopped there on his third missionary trip, he prolonged his dis-

10. How would you describe the first reported resurrection by an apostle?
11. What was the last resurrection of Bible record?

course until midnight. Overcome by weariness and perhaps by the heat of many lamps and the crowded conditions in the meeting place, a young man named Eutychus fell asleep and tumbled from a third-story window. He "was picked up dead," not merely unconscious. Paul threw himself upon Eutychus, embraced him, and told onlookers: "Stop raising a clamor, for his soul is in him." Paul meant that the young man's life had been restored. Those present "were comforted beyond measure." (Acts 20:7-12) Today, God's servants find great comfort in the knowledge that their former associates in God's service will experience the fulfillment of the resurrection hope.

Resurrection—A Long-Standing Hope

¹² When on trial before Roman Governor Felix, Paul testified: "I believe all the things set forth in the Law and written in the Prophets; and I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:14, 15) How do parts of God's Word, such as "the Law," point to the raising of the dead?

¹³ God himself alluded to a resurrection when he gave the first prophecy in Eden. When sentencing "the original serpent," Satan the Devil, God said: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Revelation 12:9; Genesis 3:14, 15) Bruising the heel of the woman's seed meant the killing of Jesus Christ. If that Seed was to bruise the serpent's head thereafter, Christ would have to be raised from the dead.

¹⁴ Jesus declared: "That the dead are raised up even Moses disclosed, in the account about

12. What conviction did Paul express when before Roman Governor Felix?

13. Why can it be said that God alluded to the resurrection when he gave the first prophecy?

14. How is it that Jehovah is "a God, not of the dead, but of the living"?

the thornbush, when he calls Jehovah 'the God of Abraham and God of Isaac and God of Jacob.' He is a God, not of the dead, but of the living, for they are all living to him." (Luke 20: 27, 37, 38; Exodus 3:6) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead, but God's purpose to resurrect them was so sure to be fulfilled that to him they were as good as alive.

¹⁵ Abraham had reason for hope in the resurrection, for when he and his wife, Sarah, were very old, and they were dead as regards ability to produce children, God miraculously restored their reproductive powers. This was like a resurrection. (Genesis 18:9-11; 21:1-3; Hebrews 11:11, 12) When their son, Isaac, was about 25 years old, God told Abraham to sacrifice him. Just as Abraham was about to strike Isaac dead, however, Jehovah's angel stayed his hand. Abraham had "reckoned that God was able to raise [Isaac] up even from the dead; and from there he did receive him also in an illustrative way."—Hebrews 11:17-19; Genesis 22:1-18.

¹⁶ Abraham hoped in a resurrection under the rule of the Messiah, the promised Seed. From his prehuman vantage point, God's Son noted Abraham's faith. As the man Jesus Christ, he therefore told the Jews: "Abraham your father rejoiced greatly in the prospect of seeing my day." (John 8:56-58; Proverbs 8:30, 31) Abraham now sleeps in death, awaiting a resurrection to life on earth under God's Messianic Kingdom.—Hebrews 11:8-10, 13.

Testimony From the Law and the Psalms

¹⁷ Paul's resurrection hope was in harmony with "things set forth in the Law." God told the Israelites: "You must . . . bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

15. Why did Abraham have reason for belief in the resurrection?

16. Abraham now sleeps in death, awaiting what?

17. How did "things set forth in the Law" point to the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

And [on Nisan 16] he must wave the sheaf to and fro before Jehovah to gain approval for you." (Leviticus 23:9-14) Perhaps with this law in mind, Paul wrote: "Christ has been raised up from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death." As "the firstfruits," Jesus was resurrected on Nisan 16, 33 C.E. Later, during his presence, there would be a resurrection of 'afterfruits'—his spirit-anointed followers.—1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27.

¹⁸ The Psalms also furnish support of the resurrection. On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., the apostle Peter quoted from Psalm 16:8-11, saying: "David says respecting [Christ], 'I had Jehovah constantly before my eyes; because he is at my right hand that I may never be shaken. On this account my heart became cheerful and my tongue rejoiced greatly. Moreover, even my flesh will abide in hope; because you will not leave my soul in Hades, neither will you allow your loyal one to see corruption.'" Peter added: "[David] saw beforehand and spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he forsaken in Hades nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God resurrected."—Acts 2:25-32.

18. How did Peter show that Jesus' resurrection was foretold in the Psalms?

What Is Your Answer?

- How can faith in God's provision for raising the dead benefit us?
- What incidents recorded in the Scriptures give us reason for hope in the resurrection?
- Why can it be said that the resurrection is a long-standing hope?
- What sustaining hope can we entertain regarding the dead?

¹⁹ Some days later, Peter stood before the Sanhedrin and again quoted from the Psalms. Asked how he cured a lame beggar, the apostle said: "Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you impaled but whom God raised up from the dead, by this one does this man stand here sound in front of you. This [Jesus] is 'the stone that was rejected by you builders as of no account that has become the head of the corner.' Furthermore, there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved."—Acts 4:10-12.

²⁰ Peter here quoted from Psalm 118:22, applying what it said to Jesus' death and resurrection. Goaded on by their religious leaders, the Jews rejected Jesus. (John 19:14-18; Acts 3:14, 15) 'The builders' rejecting the stone' resulted in Christ's death, but 'the stone's becoming the head of the corner' signified his being raised to spirit glory in heaven. As the psalmist foretold, 'this came to be from Jehovah himself.' (Psalm 118:23) Making "the stone" the Head of the corner involved exalting him as King-Designate.—Ephesians 1:19, 20.

Sustained by the Resurrection Hope

²¹ Though we personally have never seen anyone raised from the dead, we have noted certain Scriptural accounts that assure us of the resurrection. We can, therefore, entertain the hope expressed by the upright man Job. When he was suffering, he pleaded: "O that in Sheol you [Jehovah] would conceal me, . . . that you would set a time limit for me and remember me! If an able-bodied man dies can he live again? . . . You will call, and I myself shall answer you. For the work of your hands

19, 20. When did Peter quote from Psalm 118:22, and how was this associated with Jesus' death and resurrection?

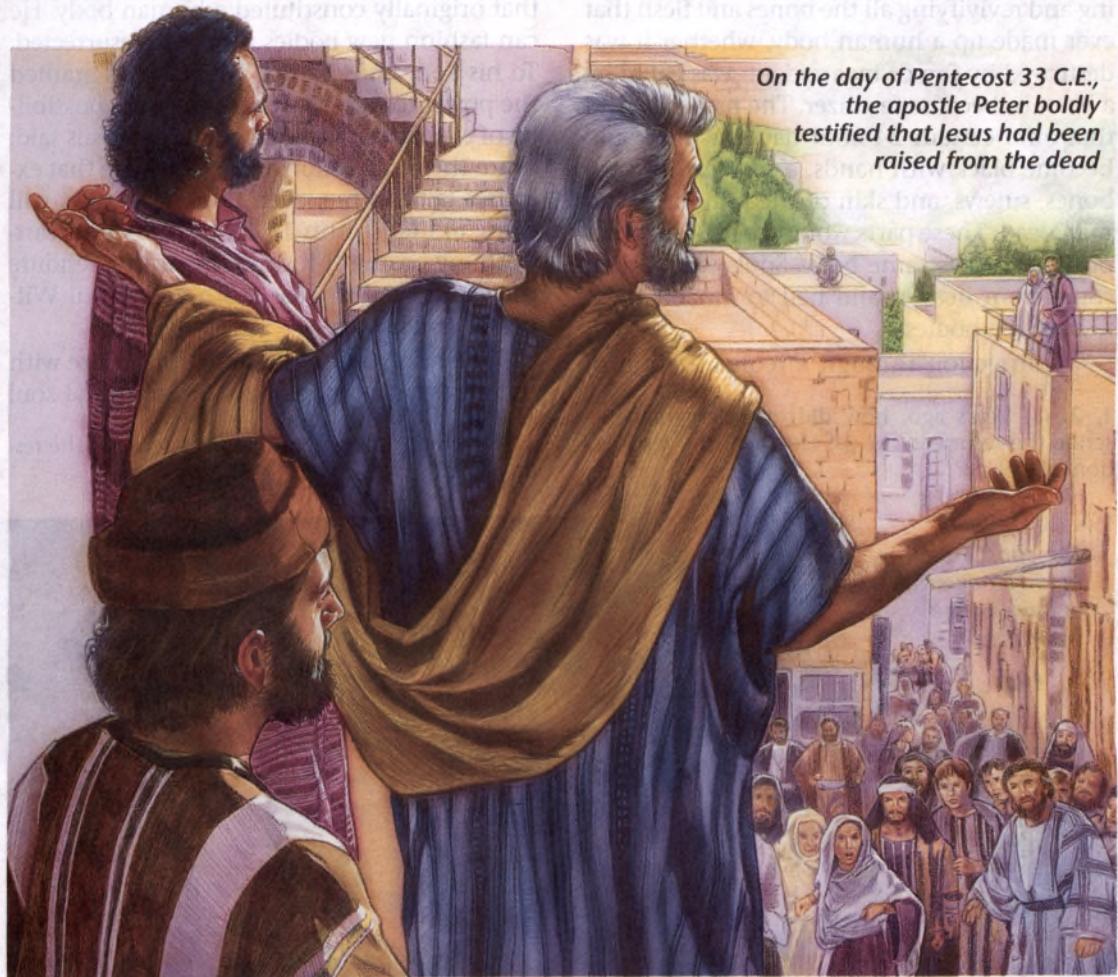
21, 22. What hope did Job express, as recorded at Job 14:13-15, and how can this comfort bereaved ones today?

you will have a yearning." (Job 14:13-15) God 'will yearn for the work of his hands,' keenly desiring to resurrect Job. What hope that gives us!

²² A God-fearing family member may become seriously ill, as Job was, and may even succumb to the enemy death. The bereaved may shed tears of grief, even as Jesus wept over the death of Lazarus. (John 11:35) But how comforting it is to know that God will call and those in his memory will answer! It will be as though they had returned from a journey—not ill or impaired, but in sound health.

²³ The death of a faithful elderly Christian moved fellow believers to write: "Please accept our deepest sympathy on the loss of your mother. It will be only a short time till we welcome her back—beautiful and vital!" Parents who lost their son said: "How we look forward to the day when Jason does wake up! He will look around him and see the Paradise he so longed for. . . . What an incentive for those of us who loved him to be there too." Yes, and how thankful we can be that the resurrection hope is sure!

23. How have some expressed their confidence in the resurrection hope?



THE RESURRECTION HOPE HAS POWER

"I have taken the loss of all things . . . so as to know [Jesus Christ] and the power of his resurrection."—PHILIPPIANS 3:8-10.

IN THE early 1890's, the public press reported on a unique sermon given by a clergyman in Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A. He said that the resurrection will consist of regathering and revivifying all the bones and flesh that ever made up a human body, whether it was destroyed by fire or by accident, was eaten by a beast or became fertilizer. The preacher held that on a certain 24-hour day, the air would become black with hands, arms, feet, fingers, bones, sinews, and skin of the billions of human dead. These parts would be seeking other portions of the same body. Souls would then come from heaven and hell to inhabit these resurrected bodies.

² Resurrection through a reorganization of

1, 2. (a) Years ago, how did one clergyman describe the resurrection? (b) How will the resurrection take place?

original atoms is illogical, and humans do not have an immortal soul. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4) Jehovah, the God of resurrection, does not need to reassemble atoms of matter that originally constituted a human body. He can fashion new bodies for those resurrected. To his Son, Jesus Christ, Jehovah has granted the power to raise the dead, with the possibility of everlasting life. (John 5:26) So Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life." (John 11:25, 26) What a heart-warming promise! It strengthens us to endure trials and even to face death as faithful Witnesses of Jehovah.

³ The resurrection does not harmonize with the idea that humans have an immortal soul

3. Why did Paul need to make a defense of the resurrection?

The apostle Paul made a powerful defense of the resurrection



—a view held by the Greek philosopher Plato. So, what happened when the apostle Paul witnessed to prominent Greeks on the Areopagus in Athens, alluded to Jesus, and said that God resurrected him? “Well,” says the account, “when they heard of a resurrection of the dead, some began to mock.” (Acts 17:29-34) Many who had seen the resurrected Jesus Christ were still alive and, despite ridicule, testified that he had been raised from the dead. But false teachers linked with the congregation in Corinth denied the resurrection. Paul therefore made a powerful defense of this Christian teaching in 1 Corinthians chapter 15. Careful study of his arguments proves beyond doubt the sureness and power of the resurrection hope.

Solid Proof of Jesus’ Resurrection

⁴ Note how Paul opened his defense. (1 Corinthians 15:1-11) Unless the Corinthians became believers to no purpose, they will hold fast the good news of salvation. Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised up. In fact, the resurrected Jesus appeared to Cephas (Peter), “then to the twelve.” (John 20:19-23) He was seen by some 500, perhaps when he commanded: ‘Go, make disciples.’ (Matthew 28:19, 20) James saw him, as did all the faithful apostles. (Acts 1:6-11) Near Damascus, Jesus appeared to Saul “as if to one born prematurely”—as though he had already been raised to spirit life. (Acts 9:1-9) The Corinthians became believers because Paul preached to them, and they accepted the good news.

⁵ Observe Paul’s line of reasoning. (1 Corinthians 15:12-19) Since eyewitnesses preach that Christ was resurrected, how can it be said that there is no resurrection? If Jesus was not raised from the dead, our preaching and our faith are in vain, and we are liars who bear wit-

4. What eyewitness proof of Jesus’ resurrection did Paul give?

5. What was Paul’s line of reasoning as recorded at 1 Corinthians 15:12-19?

ness against God by saying that he resurrected Christ. If the dead are not raised up, ‘we are still in our sins,’ and those dead in union with Christ have perished. Moreover, “if in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.”

⁶ Paul affirms Jesus’ resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28) Inasmuch as Christ is “the firstfruits” of those asleep in death, others too would be resurrected. As death resulted from the disobedience of the man Adam, resurrection is through a man—Jesus. Those belonging to him were to be raised during his presence. Christ brings “to nothing all government and all authority and power” in opposition to God’s sovereignty and rules as King until Jehovah puts all enemies under his feet. Even “the last enemy”—death inherited from Adam—will be brought to nothing through the merit of Jesus’ sacrifice. Then Christ will hand the Kingdom over to his God and Father, subjecting himself to “the One who subjected all things to him, that God may be all things to everyone.”

Baptized for the Dead?

⁷ Opponents of the resurrection are asked: “What will they do who are being baptized for the purpose of being dead ones?” (1 Corinthians 15:29) Paul did not mean that the living are to be baptized in behalf of the dead, for Jesus’ disciples must personally learn, believe, and get baptized. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 2:41) Anointed Christians are “baptized for the purpose of being dead ones” by being immersed into a life course that leads to death and resurrection. This type of baptism begins when God’s spirit engenders the heavenly hope in them and ends when they are raised from death to immortal spirit life in heaven.
—Romans 6:3-5; 8:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 6:14.

6. (a) What did Paul say in affirmation of Jesus’ resurrection? (b) What is “the last enemy,” and how will it be brought to nothing?

7. Who are “baptized for the purpose of being dead ones,” and what does this mean for them?

⁸ As Paul's words indicate, the resurrection hope enables Christians to stand in jeopardy hourly and to face death daily for doing the Kingdom-preaching work. (1 Corinthians 15:30, 31) They know that Jehovah can resurrect them if he permits Satan and his servants to kill them. Only God can do away with their soul, or life, in Gehenna, symbolizing eternal destruction.—Luke 12:5.

A Need to Be Alert

⁹ The resurrection hope sustained Paul. While he was in Ephesus, his foes may have thrown him into the arena to fight wild beasts. (1 Corinthians 15:32) If that occurred, he was delivered, even as Daniel was rescued from the lions. (Daniel 6:16-22; Hebrews 11:32, 33) Since he hoped in the resurrection, Paul did not have the attitude of Judah's apostates in Isaiah's day. They said: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." (Isaiah 22:13, *Septuagint*) If the resurrection hope is to have sustaining power in our life as it did in Paul's, we must avoid those having such an unhealthy spirit. "Do not be misled," warned Paul. "Bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) Of course, this principle applies to various aspects of life.

¹⁰ To those doubting the resurrection, Paul said: "Wake up to soberness in a righteous way and do not practice sin, for some are without knowledge of God. I am speaking to move you to shame." (1 Corinthians 15:34) In this "time of the end," we need to act in harmony with accurate knowledge of God and Christ. (Daniel 12:4; John 17:3) This will keep alive our resurrection hope.

Resurrected With What Body?

¹¹ Paul next dealt with certain questions.

8. Of what can Christians be sure even if Satan and his servants should kill them?
9. If the resurrection hope is to have sustaining power in our life, what must we avoid?
10. How can our resurrection hope be kept alive?
11. How did Paul illustrate the resurrection of anointed Christians?

(1 Corinthians 15:35-41) Perhaps in an effort to cast doubt on the resurrection, an inquirer might ask: "How are the dead to be raised up? Yes, with what sort of body are they coming?" As Paul showed, a seed planted in the soil in effect dies as it changes to become a seedling. Similarly, a spirit-begotten human must die. Just as a plant rises from a seed as a new body, so the resurrected body of the anointed Christian is different from human flesh. Though he has the same life pattern that he had before dying, he is raised up as a new creature with a spirit body able to live in heaven. Naturally, those resurrected on earth will be raised in human bodies.

¹² As Paul said, human flesh differs from that of animals. Even animal flesh varies from one kind to another. (Genesis 1:20-25) The "heavenly bodies" of spirit creatures differ in glory from "earthly bodies" of flesh. There are also differences in the glory of the sun, moon, and stars. But resurrected anointed ones have far greater glory.

¹³ Having mentioned differences, Paul added: "So also is the resurrection of the dead." (1 Corinthians 15:42-44) He said: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised up in incorruption." Here Paul may mean the anointed as a group. Sown in corruption at death, it is raised up in incorruption, free from sin. Though dishonored by the world, it is raised to heavenly life and made manifest with Christ in glory. (Acts 5:41; Colossians 3:4) At death it is sown "a physical body" and raised "a spiritual body." Since this is possible in the case of spirit-begotten Christians, we can be sure that others can be raised to life on earth.

¹⁴ Paul next contrasted Christ with Adam. (1 Corinthians 15:45-49) Adam, the first man, "became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) "The last

12. What is meant by the expressions "heavenly bodies" and "earthly bodies"?

13. According to 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, what is sown and what is raised up?

14. How did Paul contrast Christ with Adam?

Adam"—Jesus—"became a life-giving spirit." He gave his life as a ransom sacrifice, first in behalf of his anointed followers. (Mark 10:45) As humans, they 'bear the image of the one made of dust,' but when resurrected they become like the last Adam. Of course, Jesus' sacrifice will benefit all obedient mankind, including those resurrected on the earth.—1 John 2:1, 2.

¹⁵ When anointed Christians die, they are not raised in the flesh. (1 Corinthians 15:50-53) A corruptible body of flesh and blood cannot inherit incorruption and the heavenly Kingdom. Some anointed ones would not have to experience a long sleep in death. Finishing their earthly course in faithfulness during Jesus' presence, they would "be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." They would be raised instantaneously to spirit life in incorruption and glory. Eventually, Christ's heavenly "bride" will number 144,000.—Revelation 14:1; 19:7-9; 21:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.

Victory Over Death!

¹⁶ Paul triumphantly declared that death would be swallowed up forever. (1 Corinthians 15:54-57) When the corruptible and mortal put on incorruption and immortality, these words will be fulfilled: "Death is swallowed up forever." "Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?" (Isaiah 25:8; Hosea 13:14) The sting producing death is sin, and sin's strength was the Law, which condemned sinners to death. But because of Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, death inherited from sinful Adam will no longer be victorious.

—Romans 5:12; 6:23.

¹⁷ "Consequently, my beloved brothers,"

15. Why are anointed Christians not resurrected in the flesh, and how are they raised during Jesus' presence?

16. According to Paul and earlier prophets, what will happen to death inherited from sinful Adam?

17. How do the words of 1 Corinthians 15:58 apply today?

said Paul, "become steadfast, unmovable, always having plenty to do in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in connection with the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58) Those words apply to today's anointed remnant and to Jesus' "other sheep" even if they die in these last days. (John 10:16) Their labors as Kingdom proclaimers are not in vain, for a resurrection awaits them. As Jehovah's servants, then, let us keep busy in the Lord's work while awaiting the day when we can joyously cry out: "Death, where is your victory?"

The Resurrection Hope Fulfilled!

¹⁸ Paul's words recorded in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 make it evident that the resurrection hope had power in his life. He was absolutely certain that Jesus was raised from the dead and that others would also be released from mankind's common grave. Do you have such strong conviction? Paul considered selfish advantages "a lot of refuse" and 'took the loss of all things' so that he might 'know Christ and the power of his resurrection.' The apostle was willing to submit to a death like that of Christ in the hope of receiving "the earlier resurrection." Also called "the first resurrection," it is experienced by Jesus' 144,000 anointed followers. Yes, they are raised to

18. How strong was Paul's hope in the resurrection?

What Is Your Answer?

- What eyewitness proof of Jesus' resurrection did Paul give?
- What is "the last enemy," and how is it to be brought to nothing?
- In the case of anointed Christians, what is sown and what is raised up?
- What individuals of Bible record would you like to meet when they are raised to life on earth?

spirit life in heaven, whereas "the rest of the dead" will be resurrected on the earth.—Philippians 3:8-11; Revelation 7:4; 20:5, 6.

²⁰ The resurrection hope has become a glorious reality for anointed ones who have been faithful unto death. (Romans 8:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Revelation 2:10) Survivors of "the great tribulation" will see the resurrection hope realized on earth as 'the sea gives up those dead in it, and death and Hades give up those dead in them.' (Revelation 7:9, 13, 14; 20:13) Among those raised to life on earth will be Job, who suffered the loss of seven sons and three daughters. Imagine his joy in welcoming them back—and how delighted they will be that they have seven more brothers and three other beautiful sisters!—Job 1:1, 2, 18, 19; 42:12-15.

²¹ What a blessing it will be when Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah—yes and so many others, including "all the prophets"—are raised to life on earth! (Luke 13:28) One of those prophets was Daniel, who was promised a resurrection under Messianic rule. For some 2,500 years, Daniel has rested in the grave, but by the power of the resurrection, he will soon 'stand up for his lot' as one of the "princes in all the earth." (Daniel 12:13; Psalm 45:16) What a thrill it will be to welcome back not only faithful ones of old but also

19, 20. (a) What individuals of Bible record will be raised to life on earth? (b) To whose resurrection do you look forward?

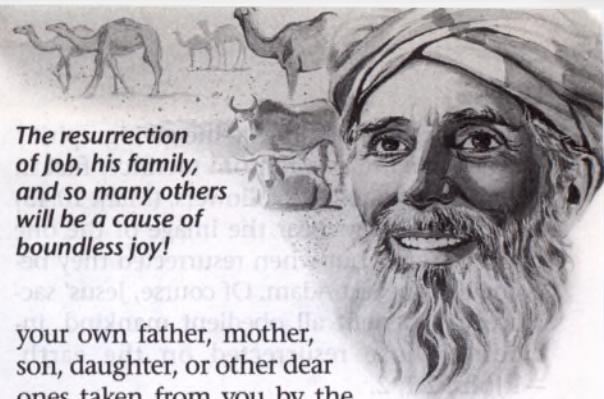
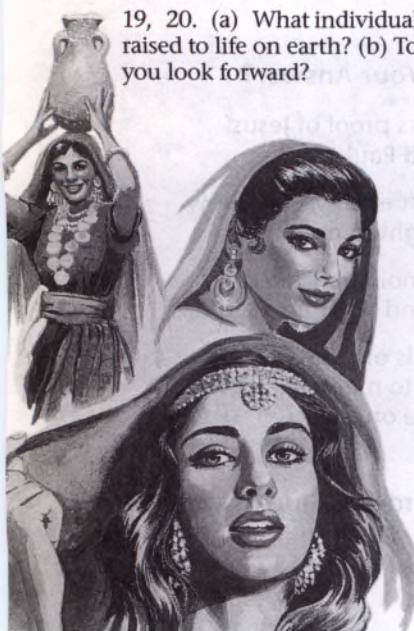
*The resurrection
of Job, his family,
and so many others
will be a cause of
boundless joy!*

your own father, mother, son, daughter, or other dear ones taken from you by the enemy death!

²² Some of our friends and loved ones may have served God for decades and are well along in years. Advanced age may make it difficult for them to meet the challenges of life. How loving it is to give them whatever help we can right now! Then we will have no regrets about having failed them in some way if death should claim them as its victims. (Ecclesiastes 9:11; 12:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:3, 8) We can be certain that Jehovah will not forget the good things we do for others, regardless of their age or circumstances. "As long as we have time favorable for it," wrote Paul, "let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith."—Galatians 6:10; Hebrews 6:10.

²³ Jehovah is "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4) His Word comforts us and helps us to comfort others with the powerful resurrection hope. Until we witness the fulfillment of that hope by the raising of the dead to life on earth, let us be like Paul, who had faith in the resurrection. May we especially imitate Jesus, whose hope in God's power to resurrect him was realized. Those in the memorial tombs will soon hear Christ's voice and come out. May this bring us comfort and joy. But above all, may we be thankful to Jehovah, who has made victory over death possible through our Lord Jesus Christ!

21. Why should we not delay in doing good things for others?
22. Until the fulfillment of the resurrection hope, what should we be determined to do?



Have You Been INFLUENCED BY CYNICS?

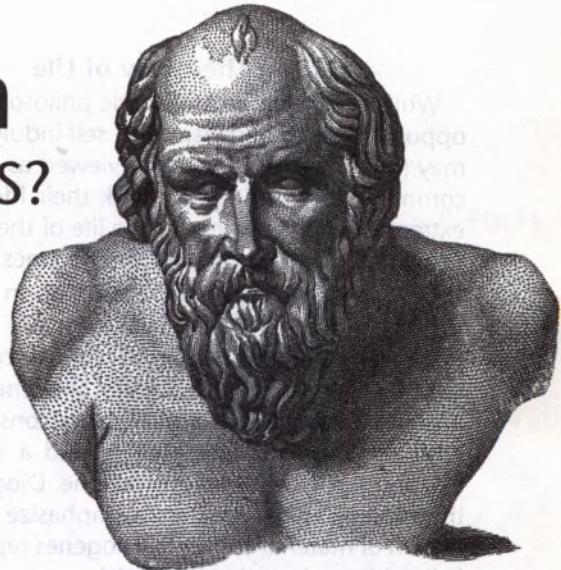
"THE cynic is one who never sees a good quality in a man, and never fails to see a bad one. He is a human owl, vigilant in darkness, and blind to light, mousing for vermin, and never seeing noble game." This statement has been attributed to the 19th-century American clergyman Henry Ward Beecher. Many may think that it accurately portrays the spirit of a modern-day cynic. But the word "cynic" originated in ancient Greece, where it did not simply denote someone displaying such an attitude. For centuries, it referred to a school of philosophers.

How did the philosophy of the Cynics develop? What did they teach? Would the traits of a Cynic be desirable in a Christian?

Ancient Cynics—Their Origins and Beliefs

Ancient Greece was a hotbed of discussion and debate. Over the centuries leading up to our Common Era, men such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle propounded the philosophies that made them famous. Their teachings had a profound effect on people, and such ideas are still found in Western culture.

Socrates (470-399 B.C.E.) argued that lasting happiness is not to be found in the pursuit of material things or the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. He asserted that true happiness results from a life devoted to the quest for virtue. Socrates considered virtue to be the ultimate good. To attain this goal, he rejected material luxuries and unnecessary endeavors because he felt that these would distract him. He espoused moderation and self-denial, leading a simple, frugal life.



The best-known Cynic, Diogenes

From the book *Great Men and Famous Women*

Socrates developed a mode of teaching known as the Socratic method. While most thinkers presented an idea and provided supporting arguments, Socrates did the opposite. He listened to the theories of other philosophers and sought to expose flaws in their ideas. This approach encouraged a critical and contemptuous attitude toward others.

Among the followers of Socrates was a philosopher named Antisthenes (about 445-365 B.C.E.). He and a number of others took the basic teaching of Socrates a step further by saying that virtue was the *only* good. To them the pursuit of pleasure was not merely a distraction but a form of evil. Becoming extremely antisocial, they displayed great contempt for fellow humans. They became known as Cynics. The name Cynic may have been derived from a Greek word (*ky-ni-kos'*) that described their morose and surly behavior. It means "dog-like."*

* Another possibility is that the name Cynic comes from *Ky-no'sar-ges*, a gymnasium in Athens where Antisthenes taught.

Effect on Their Way of Life

While such elements of Cynic philosophy as opposition to materialism and self-indulgence may in themselves have been viewed as being commendable, the Cynics took their ideas to extremes. This is evident in the life of the best-known Cynic—the philosopher Diogenes.

Diogenes was born in 412 B.C.E. in Sinope, a city on the Black Sea. With his father he moved to Athens, where he came in contact with the teachings of the Cynics. Diogenes was taught by Antisthenes and became consumed with Cynic philosophy. Socrates led a simple life, and Antisthenes an austere one. Diogenes, though, led an ascetic life. To emphasize his rejection of material comforts, Diogenes reputedly lived for a short time in a tub!

In searching for the ultimate good, Diogenes is said to have walked through Athens in broad daylight with a lighted lamp looking for a virtuous person! Such behavior attracted attention and was a means by which Diogenes and the other Cynics taught. It is said that Alexander the Great once asked Diogenes what he wanted most. Diogenes reportedly said that he simply wanted Alexander to step aside so as not to block the sunshine!

Diogenes and the other Cynics lived as beggars. They had no time for normal human relationships, and they rejected civic duties. Perhaps influenced by the Socratic method of argument, they became very disrespectful of others. Diogenes became known for his biting sarcasm. The Cynics earned the reputation of being "doglike," but Diogenes himself was nicknamed The Dog. He died about 320 B.C.E. when he was some 90 years of age. A marble monument incorporating the shape of a dog was erected over his tomb.

Some aspects of the Cynic philosophy were absorbed into other schools of thought. In time, however, the eccentricities associated with Diogenes and later followers brought the Cynic school into disrepute. Eventually, it disappeared altogether.

Today's Cynics—Should You Display Their Traits?

The Oxford English Dictionary describes a present-day cynic as "a person disposed to rail or find fault. . . . One who shows a disposition to disbelieve in the sincerity or goodness of human motives and actions, and is wont to express this by sneers and sarcasms; a sneering fault-finder." These traits are manifested in the world around us, but, of course, they are not compatible with the Christian personality. Consider the following teachings and principles of the Bible.

"*Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness. He will not for all time keep finding fault, neither will he to time indefinite keep resentful.*" (Psalm 103: 8, 9) Christians are told to "become imitators of God." (Ephesians 5:1) If Almighty God chooses to exhibit mercy and an abundance of loving-kindness rather than be "disposed to rail or find fault," surely Christians should try to do the same.

Jesus Christ, the exact representation of Jehovah, 'left a model for us to follow his steps closely.' (1 Peter 2:21; Hebrews 1:3) At times, Jesus exposed religious falsehoods and testified concerning the world's wicked works. (John 7:7) Yet, he said complimentary things about sincere people. For instance, he said regarding Nathanael: "See, an Israelite for a certainty, in whom there is no deceit." (John 1:47) When Jesus performed a miracle, he might focus on the recipient's faith. (Matthew 9:22) And when some thought that a woman's gift of appreciation was extravagant, Jesus was not cynical about her motives but said: "Wherever this good news is preached in all the world, what this woman did shall also be told as a remembrance of her." (Matthew 26:6-13) Jesus was a trusting friend and an affectionate companion to his followers, 'loving them to the end.'—John 13:1.

Since Jesus was perfect, he could easily have found fault with imperfect people. Instead of manifesting an unbelieving and faultfinding spirit, however, he sought to refresh people.
—Matthew 11:29, 30.

[Love] believes all things. (1 Corinthians 13:7) That statement is in direct contrast with the disposition of the cynic, who questions the motives and actions of others. Of course, the world is full of people with ulterior motives; so there is a need for caution. (Proverbs 14:15) Nevertheless, love is ready to believe because it is trusting, not unduly suspicious.

God loves and trusts his servants. He knows their limitations even better than they do. However, Jehovah never treats his people with suspicion, and he does not expect more of them than they can reasonably do. (Psalm 103:13, 14) Moreover, God looks for the good in humans, and in a trusting way, he grants privileges and authority to his loyal, though imperfect, servants.—1 Kings 14:13; Psalm 82:6.

I, Jehovah, am searching the heart, examining the kidneys, even to give to each one according to his ways, according to the fruitage of his dealings. (Jeremiah 17:10) Jehovah can accurately read a person's heart. We cannot. Therefore, we need to be careful about attributing certain motives to others.

Allowing a cynical spirit to take root in us and eventually dominate our thinking has the potential for creating divisions between us and fellow believers. It can disrupt the peace of the Christian congregation. Let us therefore follow the example of Jesus, who was realistic yet positive in his dealings with his disciples. He became their trusted friend.—John 15:11-15.

Just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them. (Luke 6:31) There are many ways to apply this counsel of Jesus Christ. For instance, all of us prefer to be spoken to with kindness and respect. Surely, then, we should express ourselves to others in a kind and respectful way. Even when Jesus forcefully ex-

posed the false teachings of the religious leaders, he never did this in a cynical manner.
—Matthew 23:13-36.

Ways to Combat Cynicism

If we have experienced disappointments, it may be easy to allow ourselves to be influenced by cynicism. We can combat this tendency by appreciating that Jehovah deals trustingly with his imperfect people. This can help us to accept other worshipers of God for what they are—imperfect humans trying to do what is right.

Painful experiences may lead some to distrust people. True, it is unwise to put all our trust in imperfect humans. (Psalm 146:3, 4) In the Christian congregation, however, many sincerely want to be a source of encouragement. Just think of the thousands who are like mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and children to those who have lost their own families. (Mark 10:30) Think of how many prove to be true friends in times of distress.*—Proverbs 18:24.

It is not cynicism but brotherly love that identifies Jesus' followers, for he said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) So let us show love, and let us focus on the good qualities of fellow Christians. Doing so will help us to avoid the traits of a Cynic.

* See the article entitled "The Christian Congregation—A Source of Strengthening Aid" in *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1999.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Presumptuousness Leads to Dishonor

Why Do They Have No Children?

From Building Weapons
to Saving Lives

Persecution Sparks Growth in Antioch

WHEN persecution flared after Stephen's martyrdom, many of Jesus' disciples fled Jerusalem. One of the places where they sought refuge was Antioch, Syria, some 350 miles to the north. (Acts 11:19) Ensuing events there were to affect the whole course of Christian history. To understand what happened, it will be useful to know a little about Antioch.

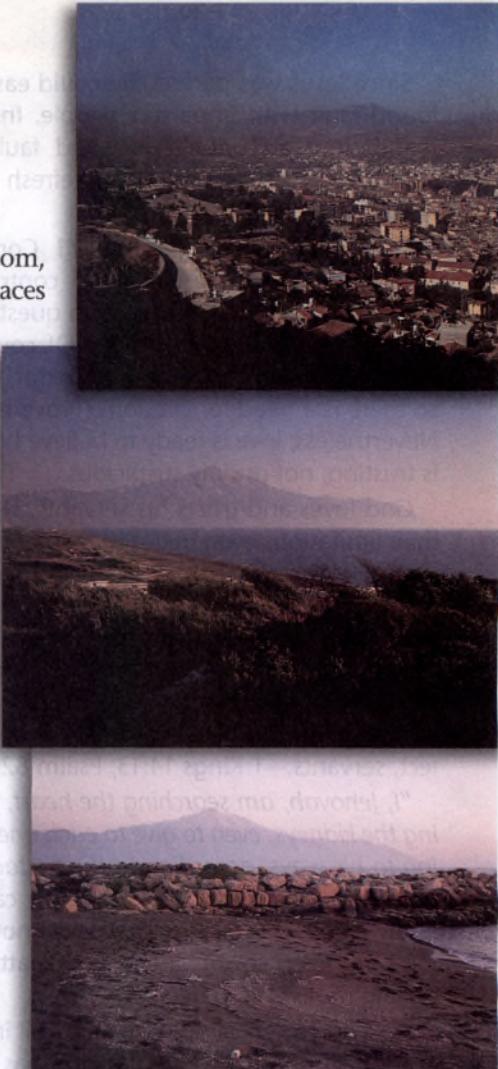
As far as cities of the Roman Empire were concerned, in size, prosperity, and importance Antioch was surpassed only by Rome and Alexandria. This metropolis of Syria dominated the northeast corner of the Mediterranean basin. Antioch (modern-day Antakya, Turkey) stood on the navigable Orontes River, which connected it to its seaport, Seleucia Pieria, 20 miles away. It commanded one of the most important trade routes between Rome and the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. As a center of commerce, it did business with the whole empire and saw the comings and goings of all sorts of people, who brought news of religious movements everywhere in the Roman world.

Hellenic religion and philosophy had flourished in Antioch. But "in the time of Christ," says historian Glanville Downey, "the old religious cults and the philosophies were tending to become matters of individual belief, as people independently sought religious satisfaction for their own problems and aspirations." (*A History of Antioch in Syria*) Many found satisfaction in the monotheism, ceremonies, and ethics of Judaism.

A strong Jewish contingent had resided in Antioch since the city's foundation in 300 B.C.E. It is estimated to have numbered from 20,000 to 60,000, constituting more than 10 percent of the population. The historian Josephus says that the Seleucid dynasty of kings encouraged Jews to settle in the city, giving them full citizenship rights. By that time, the Hebrew Scriptures were available in Greek. This stimulated the interest of sympathizers in Jewish Messianic aspirations. Hence, many proselytes had been made among the Greeks. All these factors made Antioch a fertile field for Christian disciple making.

Witnessing to Gentiles

Most of Jesus' persecuted followers who scattered from Jerusalem shared their faith with Jews only. In Antioch, however, some disciples from Cyprus and Cyrene spoke to "Greek-



Top: Modern-day Antioch

Middle: Southern view of Seleucia

Bottom: Harbor wall of Seleucia

speaking people." (Acts 11:20) While preaching to Greek-speaking Jews and proselytes had been going on since Pentecost of 33 C.E., the preaching in Antioch seems to have been something new. It was not directed to Jews only. True, the Gentile Cornelius and his family had already become disciples. But it took a vision from Jehovah to convince the apostle Peter of the propriety of preaching to Gentiles, or people of the nations.—Acts 10:1-48.

In a city hosting a large and ancient Jewish community and with no great hostility between Jews and Gentiles, non-Jews were receiving a witness and were responding favorably to the good news. Antioch evidently offered the right atmosphere for such a development, and 'a great number became believers.' (Acts 11:21) And when proselytes, who formerly worshiped pagan gods, became Christians, they were uniquely equipped to witness to other Gentiles who still did so.

On hearing of developments in Antioch, the congregation in Jerusalem sent Barnabas there to investigate. That choice was wise and loving. He was a Cypriot, like some of those who had begun preaching to non-Jews. Barnabas would have been comfortable among the Gentiles of Antioch. In turn, they would have looked upon him as a member of a community familiar to them.* He could sympathize with the work being done. So "when he arrived and saw the undeserved kindness of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all to continue in the Lord with hearty purpose," and "a considerable crowd was added to the Lord."—Acts 11:22-24.

* On a clear day, the island of Cyprus is visible from Mount Casius, southwest of Antioch.



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"Practical reasons for the success of the early mission at Antioch," suggests historian Downey, "may have been that in this city the missionaries had not to fear Jewish fanatics such as they encountered in Jerusalem; also that the city, as the capital of Syria, was governed by a legate, and so enjoyed a greater degree of

public order, with less opportunity for mob violence such as had occurred in Jerusalem, where the procurators of Judaea seem (at this period at least) not to have been able to restrain the Jewish fanatics."

In such favorable circumstances and with much to do, Barnabas probably realized that he needed help, and he thought of his friend Saul. Why Saul, or Paul? Apparently because Paul, though not one of the 12 apostles, had received an apostleship to the nations. (Acts 9:15, 27; Romans 1:5; Revelation 21:14) Hence, Paul was well suited as an associate in proclaiming the good news in the Gentile city of Antioch. (Galatians 1:16) So Barnabas went to Tarsus, found Saul, and brought him to Antioch.—Acts 11:25, 26; see box on pages 26-7.

Called Christians by Divine Providence

For a whole year, Barnabas and Saul "taught quite a crowd, and it was first in Antioch that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians." It is unlikely that the Jews were the first to call Jesus' followers Christians (Greek) or Messianists (Hebrew), for they rejected Jesus as the Messiah, or Christ, and therefore would not tacitly recognize him as such by calling his followers Christians. Some think that the heathen population may have nicknamed them Christians in jest or out of scorn. The Bible, however, shows that the name Christians was God-given.—Acts 11:26.



Saul's "Silent Years"

THE last mention of Saul in the book of Acts prior to his move to Antioch in about 45 C.E. is when a plot to kill him in Jerusalem was foiled and fellow believers sent him to Tarsus. (Acts 9:28-30; 11:25) But that was nine years earlier, in about 36 C.E. What did he do in the meantime—a period dubbed Saul's silent years?

From Jerusalem, Saul went into the regions of Syria and of Cilicia, and the congregations of Judea heard: "The man that formerly persecuted us is now declaring the good news about the faith which he formerly devastated." (Galatians 1:21-23) That report may have referred to activity in Antioch with Barnabas, but even before that Saul undoubtedly was not idle. By 49 C.E., a number of congregations existed in Syria and Cilicia. One was in Antioch, but some think that others may have been the result of Saul's activity during his so-called silent years.—Acts 11:26; 15:23, 41.

Some scholars believe that dramatic events in Saul's life should be dated to the same period. Many hardships suffered as a 'minister of Christ' are otherwise hard to place in his missionary career. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27) When did Saul five times receive 39 strokes from the Jews? Where was he three times beaten with rods? Where did he undergo 'plentiful' imprisonments? His detention in Rome came later. We have an account about *one* time that he was beaten and jailed—in Philippi. But what of the others? (Acts 16:22, 23) One writer suggests that Saul during this period

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the verb used in connection with the new name, generally translated "were called," is always associated with something supernatural, oracular, or divine. Scholars thus render it "to utter an oracle," "divinely intimate," or "to give a divine command or admonition, to teach from heaven." Since Jesus' followers were called Christians "by divine providence," it is possible that Jehovah directed Saul and Barnabas to give the name.

The new name stuck. Jesus' disciples could no longer be mistaken for a sect of Judaism, from which they were quite distinct. By about 58 C.E., Roman officials knew very well who the Christians were. (Acts 26:28) According to the historian Tacitus, by 64 C.E., the name was current among the masses in Rome too.

Jehovah Uses His Faithful Ones

The good news made great progress in Antioch. With Jehovah's blessing and the resolve of Jesus' followers to keep on preaching, An-

tioch became a center of first-century Christianity. God used the congregation there as a springboard to spread the good news to distant lands. For instance, Antioch was the departure point for each of the apostle Paul's ground-breaking missionary journeys.

In modern times zeal and determination in the face of opposition have likewise favored the spread of true Christianity, enabling many to hear the good news and show appreciation for it.* So if you face opposition because you support pure worship, bear in mind that Jehovah has his reasons for permitting it. As in the first century, people today must be given the opportunity to hear about God's Kingdom and to take their stand on its side. Your determination to continue serving Jehovah faithfully may be just what is required to help someone come to an accurate knowledge of truth.

* See *The Watchtower*, August 1, 1999, page 9; *Awake!*, April 22, 1999, pages 21-2; 1999 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, pages 250-2.

was "witnessing about Christ within the synagogues of the Diaspora in such a manner as to bring about persecution from both the religious and the civil authorities."

Saul suffered four shipwrecks, but the Scriptures provide details about only one, which took place after he listed his hardships when writing to the Corinthians. (Acts 27:27-44) So the other three likely befell him during voyages we know nothing about. Any or all of these events may belong to the "silent years."

Another event that seems to date to this period is described at 2 Corinthians 12:2-5. Saul said: 'I know a man in union with Christ who, fourteen years ago was caught away to the third heaven, into paradise, and heard unutterable words which it is not lawful for a man to speak.' Apparently, Saul was talking about himself. Since he wrote this in about 55 C.E., 14 years earlier would take us back to 41 C.E., in the middle of the "silent years."

That vision doubtless gave Saul unique insight. Was it to equip him as "an apostle to the nations"? (Romans 11:13) Did it affect the way he later thought, wrote, and spoke? Did the years between Saul's conversion and his call to Antioch serve to train and mature him for future responsibilities? Whatever are the answers to such questions, we can be sure that when Barnabas invited him to help spearhead the preaching work in Antioch, zealous Saul was fully qualified to fulfill the assignment.—Acts 11:19-26.



ANNUAL MEETING OCTOBER 7, 2000

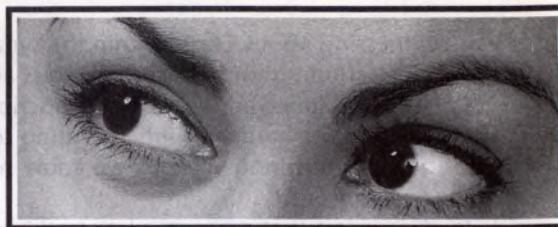
THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 7, 2000, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:15 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The members of the corporation should inform the Secretary's Office now of any change in their mailing addresses during the past year so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them during July.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual meeting, are to be returned so as to reach the Of-

fice of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 1. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and reports will be concluded by 1:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. Because of limited space, admission will be by ticket only. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone lines to other auditoriums.



YOU CAN REMAIN CHASTE IN AN IMMORAL WORLD

HE WAS dark and handsome. She was talented and beautiful. They worked for the same company. She showered him with personal attention. He gave her admiration. They bought gifts for each other. Soon they were lovers. He left his wife for her. She, in the end, decided to stay with her husband and to call the affair off. Halfheartedly he tried to return to his wife. Lacking true remorse, however, he did not succeed. Everyone involved continued on with life, though not unscathed.

Sexual morality is no longer thought of as a virtue in this world. The pursuit of pleasure and satisfaction without restraint appears to be the order of the day. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* states: "Adultery seems to be as universal and, in some instances, as common as marriage."

Yet, Jehovah God desires marriage to be "honorable among all" and the marriage bed to be "without defilement." (Hebrews 13:4) The Scriptures declare: "Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men . . . will inherit God's kingdom." (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) To enjoy divine favor, therefore, we need to maintain moral cleanliness in this immoral world.

How can we protect ourselves from the corrupting influences that surround us? In the 5th chapter of the Bible book of Proverbs,

King Solomon of ancient Israel provides answers. Let us examine what he has to say.

Thinking Ability to Protect You

"*My son, to my wisdom O do pay attention,*" begins the king of Israel. He adds: "*To my discernment incline your ears, so as to guard thinking abilities; and may your own lips safeguard knowledge itself.*"—Proverbs 5:1, 2.

To resist temptations toward immorality, we need wisdom—the ability to put Scriptural knowledge to use—and discernment, or the power to distinguish right from wrong and to choose the correct course. We are urged to pay attention to wisdom and discernment so as to guard our thinking ability. How may we do so? When we study God's Word, the Bible, we need to take note of the way Jehovah does things and incline our ear to his will and purposes. By doing this, we will be directing our thought processes into right channels. Thinking ability thus acquired is harmonious with godly wisdom and knowledge. When properly exercised, this ability protects us from being ensnared by immoral enticements.

Beware of a Smooth Palate

The reason why thinking ability is essential in maintaining moral purity in an unclean world is that the ways of an immoral person are seductive. Solomon warns: "*As a honeycomb the lips of a strange woman keep dripping, and her*

palate is smoother than oil. But the aftereffect from her is as bitter as wormwood; it is as sharp as a two-edged sword.”—Proverbs 5:3, 4.

In this proverb, the wayward person is portrayed as “a strange woman”—a prostitute.* The words with which she seduces her victim are as sweet as comb honey and smoother than olive oil. Do not most immoral sexual advances begin this way? For example, consider the experience of an attractive 27-year-old secretary named Amy. She relates: “This man at work gives me a lot of attention and praises me at every opportunity. It feels nice to be noticed. But I can clearly see that his interest in me is strictly sexual. I am not going to be taken in by his advances.” The flattering words of a seducer or a seductress are usually attractive unless we recognize their true nature. For this we need to exercise our thinking ability.

The aftereffects of immorality are as bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a two-edged sword—painful and death dealing. A troubled conscience, an unwanted pregnancy, or a sexually transmitted disease are often the bitter consequences of such conduct. And think of the enormous emotional pain experienced by the marriage partner of an unfaithful individual. One act of infidelity can inflict wounds deep enough to last a lifetime. Yes, immorality hurts.

Commenting on the life-style of a wayward woman, the wise king continues: “*Her feet are descending to death. Her very steps take hold on Sheol itself. The path of life she does not contemplate. Her tracks have wandered she does not know where.*” (Proverbs 5:5, 6) The immoral woman’s ways lead her to death—her steps to Sheol, the common grave of mankind. With sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS, running rampant, how true these words are! Her outcome is the same as that of those who accompany her in her crooked tracks.

* The word “stranger” was applied to those who turned aside from what was in harmony with the Law and thus alienated themselves from Jehovah. Hence, a prostitute is referred to as “a strange woman.”

With heartfelt concern, the king urges: “So now, O sons, listen to me and do not turn away from the sayings of my mouth. Keep your way far off from alongside her, and do not get near to the entrance of her house.”—Proverbs 5:7, 8.

We need to stay as far away as possible from the influence of immoral people. Why should we open ourselves to their ways by listening to debasing music, watching corrupting entertainment, or exposing ourselves to pornographic material? (Proverbs 6:27; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Ephesians 5:3-5) And how foolish to invite their attention by flirting or by being immodest in dress and grooming!—1 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

Too High a Price

For what other reason should we keep our way far off from that of a wayward person? Solomon answers: “*That you may not give to others your dignity, nor your years to what is cruel; that strangers may not satisfy themselves with your power, nor the things you got by pain be in the house of a foreigner, nor you have to groan in your future when your flesh and your organism come to an end.*”—Proverbs 5:9-11.

Solomon thus emphasizes the high price of succumbing to immorality. Adultery and loss of dignity, or self-respect, go hand in hand. Is it not truly humiliating to serve merely as a means of satisfying our own immoral passion or that of someone else? Does it not show a lack of self-respect to indulge in sexual intimacy with someone who is not our marriage mate?

What, though, is included in the ‘giving of our years, our power, and the fruit of our labor to strangers, or foreigners’? One reference work states: “The point of these verses is clear: The price of infidelity may be high; for everything one works for—position, power, prosperity—could be lost either through the avaricious demands of the woman or the outcry for restitution by the community.” Immoral relations can cost plenty!

Having forfeited his dignity and exhausted his resources, a foolish person would groan, saying: "How I have hated discipline and my heart has disrespected even reproof! And I have not listened to the voice of my instructors, and to my teachers I have not inclined my ear. Easily I have come to be in every sort of badness in the midst of the congregation and of the assembly."—Proverbs 5:12-14.

In time, the sinner lets out what one scholar calls "a long litany of 'if only's': if only I had listened to my father; if only I hadn't gone my own way; if only I had taken others' advice." However, this realization comes too late. The now unchaste individual's life has already been ruined and his reputation soiled. How vital for us to consider the high price of engaging in immorality before we are engulfed by it!

"Drink Water out of Your Own Cistern"

Is the Bible prudish about sexual relations? Not at all. The emotion of romantic love and the ecstasy enjoyed between a man and a woman are gifts from God. However, this intimacy is to be enjoyed only by marriage partners. So to a married man, Solomon gives this exhortation: "Drink water out of your own cistern, and tricklings out of the midst of your own well. Should your springs be scattered out of

doors, your streams of water in the public squares themselves? Let them prove to be for you alone, and not for strangers with you."—Proverbs 5:15-17.

"Your own cistern" and "your own well" are poetic expressions for a beloved wife. Experiencing sexual enjoyment with her is likened to drinking refreshing water. Unlike the water supply in public places, a cistern or a well is considered private property. And the man is counseled to father children at home with his wife rather than scatter his seed in public squares, that is, among other women. Clearly, the advice to a man is to be faithful to his wife.

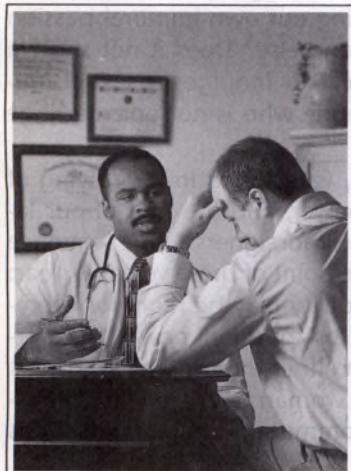
The wise man continues: "Let your water source prove to be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth, a lovable hind and a charming mountain goat. Let her own breasts intoxicate you at all times. With her love may you be in an ecstasy constantly."—Proverbs 5:18, 19.

"Water source," or fountain, has reference to the source of sexual satisfaction. Sexual pleasure with one's marriage mate is "blessed"—God-given. Hence, a man is exhorted to rejoice with the wife of his youth. To him, she is as lovable and beautiful as a female deer, and as charming and graceful as a mountain goat.

Solomon next poses two rhetorical questions: "So why should you, my son, be in an ecstasy with a strange woman or embrace the bosom of a foreign woman?" (Proverbs 5:20) Yes, why should a married person be lured into sexual intimacy outside of marriage through contacts at a place of work, at school, or elsewhere?

To married Christians, the apostle Paul gives this counsel: "This I say, brothers, the time

The aftereffects of immorality are as bitter as wormwood



left is reduced. Henceforth let those who have wives be as though they had none." (1 Corinthians 7:29) What does this entail? Well, the followers of Jesus Christ are to 'keep on seeking first the kingdom.' (Matthew 6:33) Therefore, married couples are not to be so absorbed in one another that they give Kingdom interests a secondary place in their lives.

Need for Self-Control

Sexual desires can be controlled. They must be by those desiring Jehovah's approval. "This is what God wills, the sanctifying of you, that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you should know how to get possession of his own vessel [his own body] in sanctification and honor," admonished the apostle Paul.—1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4.

Young people, then, should not rush into marriage when they first experience an awakening of sexual impulses. Marriage requires a commitment, and living up to such a responsibility calls for maturity. (Genesis 2:24) Better it is to wait until one is "past the bloom of youth"—the period when sexual feelings run strong and can distort one's judgment. (1 Corinthians 7:36) And how unwise and sinful it is for an adult desiring to marry to get involved in immoral relations simply because a prospective marriage partner is not available!

"His Own Errors Will Catch the Wicked"

The fundamental reason why sexual immorality is wrong is that Jehovah—the Giver of life and Bestower of sexual capacity in humans—disapproves of it. So giving the strongest incentive for moral chasteness, King Solomon states: "For the ways of man are in front of the eyes of Jehovah, and he is contemplating all his tracks." (Proverbs 5:21) Yes, nothing



"Rejoice with the wife of your youth"

is hidden from the eyes of God, "with whom we have an accounting." (Hebrews 4:13) Any act of sexual uncleanness, regardless of how secret and whatever its physical

and social consequences may be, is bound to damage our relationship with Jehovah. How foolish to forfeit peace with God for a few moments of illicit pleasure!

Some who shamelessly indulge in immoral ways may seem to do so with impunity—but not for long. Solomon declares: "His own errors will catch the wicked one, and in the ropes of his own sin he will be taken hold of. He will be the one to die because there is no discipline, and because in the abundance of his foolishness he goes astray."—Proverbs 5:22, 23.

Why should any of us ever go astray? After all, the book of Proverbs forewarns us of the seductive ways of the world. And it sets before us the price that sexual immorality usually demands—our health, our material assets, our strength, and our dignity. With such clear foresight, we need never be in a position of uttering a long litany of "if onlys." Yes, by applying the counsel Jehovah has given in his inspired Word, we can remain morally chaste in an immoral world.

Fine Works Bring Glory to God

THOSE who love God endeavor to reflect spiritual light from his Word, the Bible. In this way, they follow Jesus' command: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens." (Matthew 5:16) The spoken word as well as upright conduct can bring glory to God.

Jehovah's Witnesses seek to please God by acting in harmony with the Bible and by endeavoring to help others spiritually. They do so even in lands where their public ministry is not yet legally registered. In the capital city of one of these countries, the Witnesses have been holding annual conventions attended by anywhere from 6,000 to 9,000 people. For such gatherings, they have rented halls in a complex where exhibitions take place. As they had in previous years, before their convention in 1999, hundreds of Witnesses worked hard to clean the facilities and set up a sound system and thousands of chairs.

All this preparation did not go unnoticed. The management staff of the complex observed these activities. They also saw that, although there was a peak attendance of 15,666, everything went smoothly and the Witnesses were very orderly. The staff was also impressed by the very thorough cleanup afterward.

The management showed appreciation for all of this by putting the Witnesses on the

priority list so that they would have the first opportunity to rent the building the following year. But the management did even more. On July 15, 1999, they presented the convention committee with an award of appreciation. Engraved on the plaque were the words "the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses"—something unexpected in a country where their Bible educational work is under restrictions.

Throughout the world in 2000/2001, millions are expected to attend the hundreds of "Doers of God's Word" District Conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses. By being present, you can personally observe how those who earnestly do what is said in the Bible engage in fine works that bring glory to God.

