

The

WATCHTOWER

MIDEASTERN EVENTS

—Do
They Fulfill
Prophecy?



Also In This Issue:
Coming to the Hearer of Prayer

JULY 1, 1975

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

July 1, 1975
Vol. 96, Number 13

A watchtower enables a person to see far into the distance and announce to others what is coming. Can a magazine serve similarly in our day? Yes, from its first issue (July 1879) onward, *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's witnesses, has done just that.

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We know that many sincere persons would appreciate a discussion of these things in their own home with a qualified person. A minister of Jehovah's witnesses will be glad to call on you free of charge. To arrange for this, simply write the publishers of this magazine or contact Jehovah's witnesses locally.

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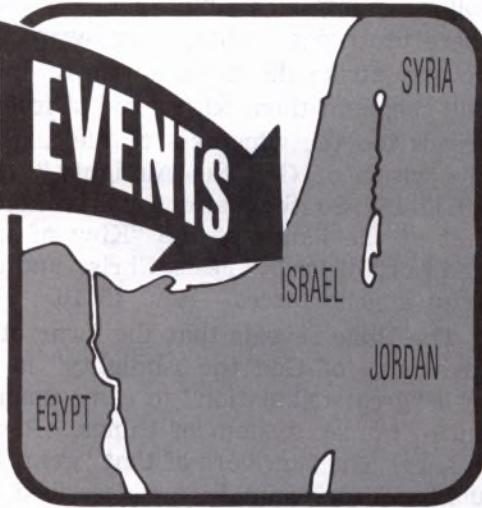
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MIDEASTERN EVENTS

-DO THEY FULFILL PROPHECY?



IN RECENT months, the Middle East has figured prominently in the news. Many persons have therefore expressed the fear that the problems between Arabs and Jews might lead to a world conflict.

Writing in the November 30, 1974, issue of *Le Monde*, André Fontaine states: "Swift action must be taken to prevent the tragedy in which Jew and Arab have been embroiled for the last quarter of a century from touching off the apocalypse. What a weight of shame would the world's rich and 'civilized' nations have to bear if they had to stand by powerlessly until perhaps the flames engulfed them, too."—Reprinted in *Atlas World Press Review*, January 1975.

Could it be that events in the Middle East are shaping up for what the Bible calls "Har-Magedon" or "Armageddon"? (Rev. 16:14, 16) Many people might be led to reach such a conclusion because the name "Har-Magedon," meaning "Mountain of Megiddo," can be linked to the Middle East. Some nineteen miles southeast of modern Haifa in the state of Israel lie the ruins of ancient Megiddo. That city occupied a strategic spot overlooking and dominating the plain of Esdraelon. Over a period spanning more than three millennia the area around Megiddo has been

the scene of many decisive battles. As noted in M. R. Vincent's *Word Studies in the New Testament*, 'Jews, Saracens, crusaders, Egyptians, Persians, Druses, Turks and Arabs have all pitched their tents on the plain of Esdraelon.'

However, while the name Megiddo is attached both to a city and to the adjacent plain, no known geographical site in the Middle East or elsewhere is called "Mountain of Megiddo." Observes *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*: "As no Mount Megiddo is known to either ancient or modern geographers, it appears the more likely that in a book [Revelation] abounding in symbolical language this term also should be meant to carry a symbolical meaning."

The war foretold to be waged at this symbolic "Har-Magedon" is not a conflict between nations. It is designated in the Scriptures as the "war of the great day of God the Almighty." (Rev. 16:14) The apostle John symbolically described the forces that the nations will be confronting: "I saw the heaven opened, and, look! a white horse. And the one seated upon it is called Faithful and True, and he judges and carries on war in righteousness. . . . Also, the armies that were in heaven were

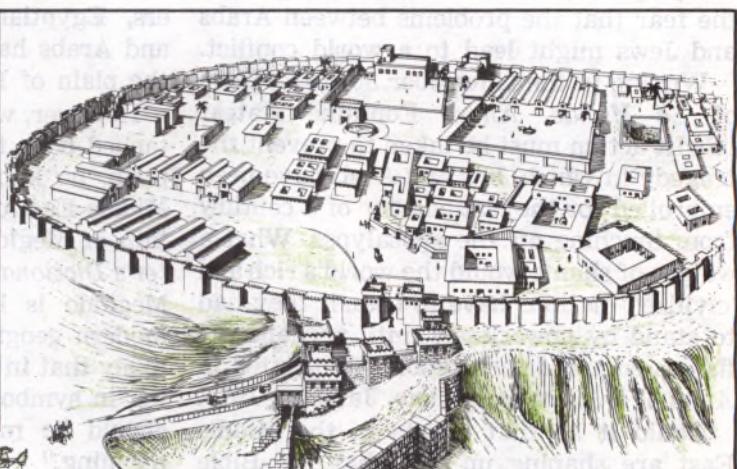
following him . . . And out of his mouth there protrudes a sharp long sword, that he may strike the nations with it, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. He treads too the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty." (Rev. 19:11-15) So the nations will suffer defeat at the hands of the "King of kings and Lord of lords," Jesus Christ, and powerful angelic forces.—Rev. 19:16.

The Bible reveals that the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" is part of a "great tribulation" to come upon the entire human system of things. (Rev. 7:1-3, 14) The survivors of that "great tribulation," for example, are described as a numberless "great crowd," "out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." (Rev. 7:9) Accordingly, the "great tribulation" spoken of in the Bible must embrace much more than just the Middle East. It will encircle the globe.

But might an upheaval in the Middle East furnish the "spark" for the "great tribulation" to begin? The Bible does not refer to any specific location in the Middle East or elsewhere as the place for that event to start. The details of how matters will work out remain to be seen.

'the sign of his presence and the conclusion of the system of things,' Jesus said: "You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars; see that you are not terrified. For these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." (Matt. 24:3, 6, 7) Note, though, that Jesus Christ did not say that such wars would be confined to or begin in the Middle East. Just as the famines and earthquakes have not been limited to one geographical area, neither have the wars.

Similarly, the climate of fear and anxiety existing in the world today cannot be attributed entirely to developments in the Middle East. Jesus Christ's words have



The area around Megiddo is not the symbolic Har-Magedon where God's great war will be fought

FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY IS INVOLVED

Does this mean, then, that recent troubles in the Middle East have no prophetic significance? No, for Jesus Christ did point to conflicts and other calamities in various parts of the earth as part of a composite "sign" marking the nearness of his coming to execute his Father's judgment. In answer to his disciples' question about

proved to be true that the things happening, not just in the Middle East, but throughout the earth, would give rise to great fear. He said: "On the earth [there will be] anguish of nations, not knowing the way out . . . while men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth."—Luke 21:25, 26.

Accordingly, recent events in the Middle East are merely one part of a mountain of evidence that Jesus' words about conditions marking the "last days" of the present system are undergoing fulfillment. But no one among mankind really knows what role affairs in the Middle East may play in developments leading to the "great tribulation."

REMAIN AWAKE TO PROPHECY

Of course, devoted servants of God are rightly concerned with what is happening in fulfillment of Bible prophecy. They are like the Hebrew prophets of ancient times who were keenly interested in the fulfillment of their spirit-inspired utterances about the Messiah or Christ. At 1 Peter 1:10, 11, we read: "A diligent inquiry and a careful search were made by the prophets who prophesied about the undeserved kindness meant for you. They kept on investigating what particular season or what sort of season the spirit in them was indicating concerning Christ when it was bearing witness beforehand about the sufferings for Christ and about the glories to follow these."

However, we should not go beyond what a particular prophecy actually says. Bible prophecies cannot be understood *in full detail* until the events to which they point take place. So we do well not to speculate as to what certain happenings in the Middle East or elsewhere may or may not mean.

Such speculation can lead to one's becoming off balance and deeply involved with matters that actually have little or nothing to do with the building up of faith. A person might also spend much time that could otherwise be used far more profitably in gaining spiritual strength.

Furthermore, if an individual did not see things take place as he imagined they should, he might lose sight of the impor-

tance of maintaining a fine relationship with God by walking in a divinely approved way. He might begin to think that God's day for executing judgment is far off. This could result in his being tempted to 'get all he can' from the world. He could deceive himself into thinking that he will be able to discern from the trend in world events just when he should make the needed changes to gain God's approval and survive the execution of his judgment. Such reasoning could cost a person his life when the "great tribulation" strikes, at an unexpected time, catching him in a disapproved condition before God.

Surely it is far wiser to live daily in expectation of God's great day. This is the only course that will result in survival. Jesus Christ admonished his followers to remain awake to the certain fulfillment of his prophetic words. He urged: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth [not merely the Middle East]. Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:34-36.

If you are interested in standing before the Son of man, Jesus Christ, as an approved servant of God, take time to consider what the Bible really has to say. Exercise care not to draw unwarranted conclusions from the changeable trends in world affairs, whether they relate to the Middle East or not. Concentrate on the truly important things—living in harmony with the prophetic word, applying the Bible's counsel in your life. If you do, you will find that your life will be richer even now and you will be able to look with confidence to the future.

Insight on the News

- Twelve years ago New Zealand introduced laws whereby victims of crimes are to be compensated. Since then other countries have taken similar steps. This kind of legislation calls to mind provisions found in God's law given through Moses. In that law, sanctions for offenses

Modern and Ancient Laws

were designed to give relief and compensation to the victim of a thief or of a damager of property. If the offender could not pay the amount of compensation assessed, he could be sold into bondage and then pay off his debt by work. (Ex. 22:1-6) A major difference, however, exists between such Biblical legislation and modern laws.

As sociologist Stephen Schafer points out in "Psychology Today" magazine, modern legislation puts the burden on the state to compensate victims; the criminal, though jailed, is not required to share in this. Schafer views this as a major weakness. He reasons that having the offender work to compensate the victim, and thus do something positive, would contribute greatly to his rehabilitation. It would help him to see his act as an injury to a fellow human and not just as an offense against 'an abstraction such as "society" or "the law." ' These same principles are found within the Mosaic law—a law reaching back some three thousand years, but the product of eternal wisdom.

- About six months ago, on Christmas Eve of 1974, the pope opened and passed through

Holy Year Half Past

a special doorway, the "Holy Door" of St. Peter's Basilica, and announced the "Holy Year's" commencement. Since then hundreds of thousands of "pilgrims" have visited Rome. A recent report from Vatican City describes them as showing a "sense of sadness, grief and sorrow," in contrast to the "enthusiasm and generosity" of pilgrims in the previous Holy Year, 1950.

The reference to the pilgrims' diminished generosity recalls the prediction made last year by the Italian newspaper "Corriere della Sera" that pilgrims would bring from 600 to

700 billion lire to Roman hotels, shops and the Church. It also calls to mind a report in "Newsweek" magazine that the Vatican had "drawn fire for selling 'Pilgrim's Packets'" consisting of a map of Rome, a "Holy Year" bumper sticker and a 'pilgrim's insurance policy,' along with tickets for free admissions to public museums and galleries. Alleged "competition" on the part of the Church had, in fact, been protested by Roman shopkeepers and hotels even before the Holy Year got under way. On the other side, at the start of the Holy Year, the pope had found it necessary to urge Romans not to fleece the pilgrims flocking there. But a dispatch to the New York "Times" relates that thousands of fake bricks—falsely represented as having been used to block off the "Holy Door" before the Holy Year's start—have been sold to pilgrims at prices from \$40 to \$80 each. So, whatever financial gain the celebration may bring, it does not seem to offer any genuine hope of spiritual uplift for troubled mankind.

- Illegitimate births among teen-agers rose 50 percent during a ten-year period in the United States. At last count,

Rock Music and Unwed Mothers

out of every 1,000 teen-age mothers, 339 were unwed. This compares with only 76 unwed mothers out of every 1,000 women past the teen-age period. Why the great difference?

One organization, Population Institute, would place a considerable share of the blame on the lyrics of rock music, so popular among teen-agers. The Institute points out that these lyrics often glorify sex relations and childbearing out of wedlock. Popular rock songs with titles such as "I Don't Like to Sleep Alone" and "Having My Baby" illustrate the point. Can anyone harmonize such musical material with the Bible's urging at Philippians 4:8 to keep our minds fixed on things that are 'true, of serious concern, righteous, chaste and praiseworthy'? For those who heed that counsel, the next verse promises, "the God of peace will be with you."

CHRISTIAN GROWTH *in the Philippines*

TEEMING over its 7,000 islands are the 40 million friendly people of the Philippines. Their warm, tropical land is said to be among the most fertile areas on earth.

Fertile their land is, too, for the spread of those who desire to live as genuine Christians. There are in the Philippines today over 78,000 persons who have chosen to make this their way of life. During the past service year alone, more than 15,000 of these have newly joined in Christian preaching activity as dedicated, baptized witnesses of Jehovah. That is about one every thirty-five minutes!

These Christian witnesses of Jehovah come from all walks of life. Many are farmers, fishermen and housewives; others are doctors, lawyers, teachers and businessmen.

They come from a variety of religious backgrounds too. Most were formerly Catholic, but one elderly man in Las Navas, Northern Samar, had been a Protestant for forty-three years before he was baptized by Jehovah's witnesses in December 1973. Another man was an Adventist for twenty-five years, while a young woman had been a Mormon for eight years.



Many were deeply involved in their former religion. A university professor in Quezon City had eight years of Roman Catholic seminary training in his background. Another person had been president of the Catholic Women's League in Bogo, Cebu, for ten years.

WHAT MADE THEM CHANGE?

A woman who had been a member of the Legion of Mary and Heart of Jesus in the province of Cebu relates in this way what contributed to her making a change: "My close association with the priests and the pious

led me to notice them. Yes, they are devoted and pious, but there is much quarreling, gossiping and use of unbecoming words among them. One officer of the Legion of Mary adulterously took the husband of a fellow Catholic but still she kept her position as an official."

"I had my first inkling of the mile-wide difference between theory and practice in religion when I entered the religious life after graduating from high school," says a young woman from General Santos City in southern Mindanao. "There in the Dominican convent I observed firsthand how religious superiors and members coming from wealthy families are given preferential treatment. Their patronizing and condescending attitude toward new members illustrates well the hypocritical love they practice as against the Christian love they preach so well."

After leaving the convent to teach in public schools, she became disillusioned by unethical practices among public officials who were also prominent Catholic lay leaders. But, "in May 1974," she continues, "I was given a free tract entitled 'Has Religion Betrayed God and Man?' distributed by Jehovah's witnesses. Two days after reading it, I approached a Witness neighbor whose warm Christian family relationship I had secretly longed for in our own family." This person was so enthusiastic about the ensuing Bible study that she requested that it continue for three hours every day. She now visits others to help them to see how the Bible changes the lives of those who truly follow its teachings.

Yes, the contrast between the Bible's truth and traditional religious practice attracts many sincere people. But is that the only thing?

ATTRACTED BY LOVE AND KINDNESS

What appeals to many are the warmth and happiness that Jehovah's witnesses display. One man used to organize town fiestas in Cebu. But he saw how, although they were supposed to be religious in nature, they became an excuse for raucous merrymaking, drunkenness and dancing, and often in the end—fighting. However, his visit to a circuit assembly of Jehovah's witnesses prompted him to note the contrast, saying: "Peace and happiness were all I could see. No fighting, no smoking, no drinking and dancing, yet they were truly happy."

Walking on his hands and knees is the only way one badly crippled man from Mountain Province can get around. He was in Dagupan City to receive schooling for the handicapped when one of Jehovah's witnesses offered him a lift in his car and invited him to visit their local Kingdom Hall. His crippled appearance

did not hinder the warm, loving spirit they displayed toward him. He so appreciated what he had enjoyed among them that, upon returning to his home province, he searched up and down the mountains until he found the local Kingdom Hall. He is now a baptized Christian Witness, actively preaching to others despite his disability.

Thus people looking for love and warm human kindness, so lacking in the world, often find among Jehovah's witnesses this appealing quality that marks true Christianity.—John 13:35.

CHRISTIANITY CHANGES LIVES

It is to be expected that true Christianity would also change people's lives for the better when they begin to practice it. It helps them spiritually and morally, and often physically as well.

The case of a ninety-five-year-old man in Basilan City who used to chew *buyo* leaves mixed with tobacco, lime and betel nut illustrates this point. He gave up his debilitating habit immediately upon learning that Bible principles show it to be unclean. (2 Cor. 7:1) He also went to a judge and had his marriage legalized so as to be morally clean in God's sight. Certainly no one is too old to make changes!

"I was not ashamed to fight publicly," admits a woman in Ilocos Sur of her former way of life. "When I disagreed with my husband I shouted and destroyed everything I could lay my hands on, including the radio, just to satisfy my anger." After she learned the truth from God's Word, a radical change took place. Although her husband opposed her study of the Bible, she no longer fought with him as before but showed submissiveness. This impressed him so much that he too is showing an interest in the Bible.

Feeling what she considered to be a lack of parental love, a youth in Iloilo ran

away from home when she was twelve. In Manila she began a jaded career that came to include excessive smoking, drinking, the use of drugs and knives and guns. An interlude back at home, when she also studied at a Catholic school, only added to her vices, now expanded to include lesbianism. During her high-school years, she began to have a guilty conscience and to wonder what was wrong with her. Approaches for advice to her mother, her teachers and her priest only brought the opinion that she was "normal."

Finally, she asked one of Jehovah's witnesses, who did not hesitate to tell her God's view of such matters, noting that God had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for similar immoral conduct. On hearing this, she said: "I was stabbed to the heart and awakened as from a deep sleep." A study of the Bible and sincere effort produced gradual changes in her conduct until she qualified for Christian baptism on July 7, 1974. Truly the "word of God is alive and exerts power."—Heb. 4:12.

MARVELOUS GROWTH

Thus from all parts of the fertile Philippines people are flocking to serve God. The Del Monte Congregation in Quezon City started with 20 persons in 1949, and now it has grown and subdivided into four congregations having a total of 758 Witnesses. Seventy persons from the Aurora Hill Congregation in Baguio City were baptized in the past year alone. Bright prospects for Christian growth throughout the nation are reflected by an attendance of over 167,000 for the March 1975 celebration of the Lord's death—more than double the number of Witnesses in this land!

Of course, this has meant tremendous increases in attendance at their five weekly meetings. The Aurora Hill Congregation, mentioned before, has had to expand its Kingdom Hall three times since 1967

and, at the time of this writing, is enlarging it again. When the dean of a private college in Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro, first attended a meeting at the Kingdom Hall, he commented: "In almost all churches I have attended they have more pews than people, but in your Kingdom Hall, even though you are just a minority, there are just not enough seats to care for all who want to attend!"

EVERYONE AN EVANGELIZER

Each one of Jehovah's witnesses feels the urgency of helping others. They know from their study of the Bible that we are living in the critical period just before God will bring an end to all wickedness. This makes their work urgent, since it involves life.—2 Pet. 3:3-9.

With over 78,000 actively preaching to a population of about 40 million, this means that each one, on the average, has only to reach about 513 persons, including children, with their message. And when you consider that an average of over 9,000 of these Christians have been spending from 75 to 150 hours a month in this work, it is not hard to see how widespread and effective it can be. Thus, even though their nationwide total is less than that of one of the larger Catholic parishes in Greater Manila (one parish is reported to have 100,000 members with only one priest), they are literally able to cover the nation with their preaching.

The foregoing is just a sampling of the many thousands responding to the good news about God's kingdom in the Philippines. If you find this report of dedicated activity and personal interest in others displayed by these Filipino Christians to be appealing, why not get in touch with Jehovah's witnesses in your own locality? Christianity is thriving among these same Christians, not only in the fertile Philippines, but throughout the inhabited earth.

WHAT THINGS

DO
You Desire Most?

WHEN you think of things that you would most desire, do you think first of money? of riches? of power? Or do you think first of good, loyal friends, of peace and security for yourself and your family?

As you reflect on these questions, money may seem very attractive because it can buy many desirable things. But very likely you consider peace, security and happiness as the really more important things. Of these, money can buy very little. And are not these good things much more likely to be gained by association with loyal friends who honestly love you and do what they can for your good?

Just as you doubtless put good, upright people above material things, so God counts such people of far greater value. They actually make his own heart happy, and they bring happiness to others. (Prov. 23:15; 27:11; Hos. 6:6) God once had his own magnificent material temple in Jerusalem, but because the people gave him only lip service and did not worship him from the heart he let that temple be destroyed. (Isa. 29:13, 14) Later, when he restored the Jews to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, God could have had an even more elaborate temple built. To impress them with this fact, he said to the builders: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine." (Hag.

2:8) But an imposing temple would not necessarily exalt his name in the earth. What would?

It would be something coming from the nations that was much more valuable to him than gold and silver. He declared: "I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill

this house with glory."—Hag. 2:7.

INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY 'ROCKING' OF THE NATIONS

The rocking of the nations by the notification that Jehovah God the Almighty took over his universal sovereignty in the war-marked year of 1914 brought wrath against the Kingdom announcers. The hostility of the political nations of earth will be shown to its fullest in a final expression, and, accordingly, Jehovah will literally rock all those nations until they crumble in ruin and are removed forever. Hence, any religious tolerance of the nations toward the Kingdom ambassadors at the present is merely temporary. Let no one be deceived by it.

How, then, before the final outburst of wrath on the part of all the nations and then their violent removal, do 'the desirable things of all the nations come in'? Well, what do the historic facts show regarding the fulfillment of this prophecy up until now? They do not show that all the political nations as whole nations, as political establishments, have come into Jehovah's true temple of worship and have brought with them as voluntary gifts the desirable things of their nations.

Yet, what about individual citizens in all the nations? Well, down till now there have been tens of thousands of individ-

uals who have reacted to the Kingdom-preaching in a way different from that of their political governments and from that of religious organizations mixed up in politics. They have come to see that there is no happy, peaceful, prosperous future for themselves under such man-made political governments. They have come to see that the only hope of being saved from destruction with the political nations of this system of things is the Messianic kingdom of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. They keenly feel that Satan the Devil is the "god of this system of things," and they do not want to worship that false god by worshiping the political nations. (2 Cor. 4:4) They recognize that all sovereignty rightfully belongs to the Most High God. Hence, they have dedicated themselves wholly to the Sovereign Lord Jehovah to worship him at his true house of worship. They have associated themselves with his ambassadors.

GOD'S GREAT SPIRITUAL TEMPLE

In beholding such modern-day advocates of Jehovah's universal sovereignty and worship, we are beholding a thrilling fulfillment of that often-quoted prophecy of Isaiah 2:2-4: "It must occur in the final part of the days that the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, and it will certainly be lifted up above the hills; and to it all the nations must stream. And many peoples will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.' . . . And they will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."

In ancient Jerusalem the temple of Jehovah was located on Mount Zion. It was

the center of worship. That temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 607 B.C.E., and the second temple, built after the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile and rebuilt and enlarged by Herod, was destroyed by the Roman armies in 70 C.E. Therefore, this temple spoken of by Isaiah as existing in the final part of the days, and to which people gather, is not a material temple made by human hands, but is the one about which the writer of the Bible book called "To the Hebrews" said: "For Christ entered, not into a holy place made with hands, which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us."—Heb. 9:24.

This is what Haggai's prophecy really pointed to—the great spiritual temple, in the Most Holy of which, in heaven itself, Jehovah God sits as Judge. (Heb. 12:22, 23) Christ as High Priest and King is God's chief agent for 'rocking' the nations. (Psalm 110) He is gathering out those who are "sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done," especially in the realm of Christendom, which claims to serve God and Christ. (Ezek. 9:4) The main reason for the "sighing" of these people is, not that world conditions affect them adversely, but the corruption they see practiced among so-called Christians—the reproach these practices bring on the good name of Jehovah God the universal Sovereign, and upon his Son, his king and high priest. They prove themselves to be truly lovers of righteousness.

In this final part of the last days there is no question about the identity of these people who are in the earthly courtyards of Jehovah's spiritual temple. They have come from every situation—all races, nations and backgrounds. They have cleaned up their lives and are changing their personalities according to the pattern set forth in the Scriptures. (Eph. 4:22-24) The Bi-

ble hope to which they hold is the prospect of everlasting life on earth. They are well described in the prophetic book of Revelation. With regard to the time when God's 'rocking' of the nations is coming near to a conclusion, the Revelation vision first depicts the final gathering of those who will be resurrected to be heavenly kings and priests with Jesus Christ, then, as recorded by the apostle John:

"After these things I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues . . . And they keep on crying with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"

John then asked who these people were, and the elder inquired of answered:

"These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation [when this system of things is shaken completely to pieces], and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. That is why they are before the throne of God; and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple . . . They will hunger no more nor thirst anymore, . . . because the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and will guide them to fountains of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes."—Rev. 7:9-17.

GREATER GLORY BROUGHT TO GOD'S HOUSE

These persons, then, are truly desirable to God. And do you not appreciate per-

sons who clean themselves up, physically and morally? Do not those who are not belligerent, 'not learning war anymore,' but who work for peace and the best interests of their neighbors, seem more desirable to you than those who exercise no control over their desires or their personalities? And, in fact, are these persons not much more valuable than gold and silver? If all people would become like this, selfishness, the basic cause of crime, fraud, extortion, stealing and war, would be removed. There would not even be fear of starvation and pollution, because each one would have an interest in his neighbor as in himself.—Luke 10:27.

So God, as he foretold by his prophet Haggai, has 'brought peace in this place,' that is, in the earthly courtyards of his great spiritual temple, where the "great crowd," the "desirable things of all the nations," have gathered. (Hag. 2:9) These people who come willingly to him, the Creator, and who conform their lives to his principles, and glorify him, are the "desirable things" of the nations in his eyes. By them, Jehovah has, indeed, brought greater glory to his own name and to this spiritual temple than to the earthly one, as he said he would.

Also, those who have come together in unity to serve at Jehovah's great spiritual temple, and who have begun to make over their lives, experience the fulfillment of Jesus' words: "No one has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not get a hundredfold now in this period of time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and fields, with persecutions, and in the coming system of things everlasting life." (Mark 10:29, 30) By following Jehovah's commands, they have made themselves "desirable things," and they find their own heart's desires satisfied.—Ps. 145:16.

IN COMING ISSUES

- Where Will You Put Your Trust?
- Why Such a Costly Ransom Price?
- Applying God's Word in Our Own Families

The “Holy Year”

“HOLY years” have been a feature of Roman Catholic tradition since the year 1300. They are filled with pious prayers and pilgrimages to Rome. Is God pleased with these special religious activities? If so, surely there would be some evidence of his divine pleasure.

However, when Pope Paul VI announced the 1975 holy year back in May 1973, few persons could then have imagined the ensuing incredible turn of secular events. The coincidence is remarkable because at this time Pope Paul reversed the traditional order of things so that local (or diocesan) holy-year observances began in 1973 *before* the 1975 celebrations in Rome. Formerly, extension of holy-year “benefits” to the local dioceses always came *after* the Roman holy year.

Thus during the very time period of the holy-year observances, one world-shaking crisis after another has erupted, beginning with the October 1973 Mid-East war. The energy crisis, a world at the brink of economic collapse, heads of governments toppling like dominoes, famine looming more menacing than ever—all these events have occurred during this amazingly critical holy-year period.

Now the year 1975 itself with its own calamities threatens to cap the climax. Events in southeast Asia tear at world heartstrings. The Mid-East situation remains critical.

‘What a sad coincidence,’ you may say, ‘that a period set aside for noble religious

-IS IT PLEASING GOD?

purposes should be plagued with such disastrous events!’ But more remarkable still is the fact that this is *not the first time* that such a coincidence has occurred. In fact, a Rome correspondent for *The Sun of Melbourne*, Australia, asserts that “Romans say they have a terror of Holy Years. Some disaster is reputed to arrive in its wake.”

But, of course, such a superstitious fear of holy years merely because of coincidental events would be foolish. Rather, the fact that such events occur even during these periods may tell honest observers something about how God views this kind of worship. Do all those pilgrimages and prayers influence God to bless holy-year celebrations? Here is a partial record.

THE 1933 HOLY YEAR

The 1933 holy year, said Pope Pius XI upon opening the traditional “Holy Door” at St. Peter’s Basilica, “will remain the greatest of all Holy Years.” It was declared a special “Holy Jubilee” to mark the nineteenth centenary of Christ’s crucifixion in 33 C.E. Expectations were not confined to internal affairs of the church. The hope was also expressed that a ‘tide of religion will arise and sweep the nations into peace and prosperity.’

Yet shortly after Pius XI’s December 24 announcement, 1933 events began oc-

curing that were to ruin world 'peace and prosperity' for years to come:

January 30—Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany; receives dictatorial power March 23.

February—First concentration camps improvised in old barracks, castles and other places. March 27—Japan withdraws from the League of Nations, "the first serious blow at the League structure and . . . a stimulus to aggression elsewhere."—*An Encyclopedia of World History*, pp. 1126, 1127.

July 27—Failure of World Economic Conference in London.

October 14—Germany withdraws from world disarmament conference.

October 21—Germany resigns from the League of Nations.

Thus, instead of 'peace and prosperity,' this "greatest of all Holy Years" saw groundwork laid for a coming global holocaust the like of which this generation had not experienced. But were not the nominal "Vicar of Christ" and his Church acting as a spiritual bulwark during this special year in honor of Christ? Note some "religious" events during the holy year:

"(March 24), the Center party and the Bavarian People's party, whom German Catholics rightly considered representatives of their interests, had approved the enabling act that gave Hitler unlimited powers."—*New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967), Vol. 11, p. 415.

"The German bishops had declared unequivocally (March 28) that Catholics could cooperate with the new State."—Ibid.

"Colonel von Papen [Hitler's Vice Chancellor] and Captain Goering ["Hitler's right-hand man"] were received by Pope Pius with the pomp and ceremony appertaining to their rank. The Vice Chancellor . . . wore the insignia of a secret chamberlain of the Pope . . . von Papen and Captain Goering will receive communion at the Pope's hand tomorrow."—*New York Times*, April 13, 1933, p. 1.

"Late in June von Papen visited the Pope seeking a new concordat for the whole of Germany and bespeaking the influence of the Pope to have the German Catholics abandon their political organizations and place themselves in line with the new Germany."—1934 *Americana Annual* (Events of 1933), p. 272.

"Soon after the concordat (June 5, 1933) with

Austria . . . another was concluded (July 20) with the German Republic."—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, p. 415.

"This handshake [German concordat] with the Papacy, the greatest moral power in the history of the world," glowed Bavaria's Cardinal von Faulhaber in his handwritten letter of congratulations to Hitler, "is a feat of immeasurable blessing."—*Kirche und Nationalsozialismus: Dokumente 1930-1935*, Hans Müller, 1963, doc. 77, p. 170.

Thus the reputed "greatest moral power in the history of the world" became involved in political dealings with one of the basest, most immoral powers in the history of the world. Can you imagine Christ making such political agreements? On the very day of his crucifixion, Christ said: "My kingdom does not belong to this world . . . my kingdom is not here." Yet in a year specially set aside to honor Christ's crucifixion, the "Vicar of Christ" himself brought dishonor on Christ by political involvement in the name of Christ!

—John 18:36, Catholic *New American Bible* (NAB).

But any misrepresentation of Christ that arose from Christendom's ensuing brother-against-brother slaughter during World War II was quickly shrugged off. By the next holy year, Christ-dishonoring political meddling by the church was again making headlines.

THE 1950 HOLY YEAR

Among the aims of the 1950 holy year, said Pius XII, was the hope that there might "rise during the Holy Year a new era—a more just Holy Year, happier for the whole great human family." There were special prayers for world peace.

Just the month before opening the 1950 holy year, Pope Pius himself revealed where he put his real trust for peace: "Pope Supports U.S. in West Arms Plan," flashed a *New York Times* headline. "His remarks," noted the November 17 Rome

dispatch, "assumed special significance today because they were addressed to members of the United States Senate Military Appropriations Subcommittee."—November 18, 1949, p. 1.

"Advocating rearmament," says the *Times*, Pope Pius told the weapons officials that (Western) law "can hardly hope to prevail . . . unless it has the backing of a reasonable force." As if to add emphasis, the Vatican reaffirmed its confidence in force of arms during the holy year itself. Another Rome dispatch, headlined "Vatican Approves Decision on Bomb," reports:

"The Vatican, through its official newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, assured the United States Government and people today that it fully understood the reasons why President Truman had decided to approve the construction of a hydrogen superbomb."—*New York Times*, February 3, 1950.

How unlike Christ's view of arms! He said that "those who use the sword are sooner or later destroyed by it." Is whatever the world does about arming itself the business of Christians? Should followers of Christ be meddling with the world's military machine when Jesus said that true disciples of his "are not of the world, any more than I belong to the world"?—Matt. 26:52; John 17:16, NAB.

How could God answer the prayers of those who directly violate these Christian principles? He says to people whose actions belie their prayers: "Though you

pray the more, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood!" Thus holy-year prayers for peace from those who actually trusted in armaments must have rung hollow in the heavens.—Isa. 1:15, NAB.

Rather than peace, "the event for which the year 1950 was likely to be most vividly remembered was the outbreak of war in Korea on June 25," observes the 1951 *Britannica Book of the Year*. Violent disorders in sixteen countries, six different acute border disputes, as well as the Chinese invasion of Tibet, also marred the holy year.

Surely the Church had learned from these bad experiences by the time she entered her extended 1975 holy year in late 1973. But had she? Judge for yourself from the record.

THE 1975 HOLY YEAR

The theme of the present holy year is "reconciliation and renewal." But more notable than any spiritual "renewal" has been the renewal of political ties. Stepped-up efforts continued "to bring the Church toward a closer relationship with the world's Communist nations, in a complete about-face from cold-war years," observes *U.S. News & World Report*. In early 1974 this political "about-face" brought about the embarrassing Communist-demanded removal of a bitter Cardinal Mindszenty from his post in Hungary. And now the Vatican can appoint only Communist-

New York Times, October 15, 1955

GERMANY QUILTS LEAGUE AND ARMS PARLEY; HITLER SCORES TREATY, DEMANDS EQUALITY; CALLS ELECTION NOV. 12 TO OBTAIN APPROVAL

REICH CONCORDAT SIGNED AT VATICAN

Papal and Cardinal Pacelli Put Signatures on Accord and Text Will Be Issued Today

GERMAN HAILS AGREEMENT

New York Times, July 21, 1953

Note to Parley POST-WAR ERA DEBUT

Hilfer Asking Sec. State Secretaries for It

Pope Expresses Pain Over Vote on Divorce

DISCUSS

TRUMAN ORDERS HYDROGEN BOMB BUILT FOR SECURITY PENDING AN ATOMIC PACT; CONGRESS HAILS STEP; BOARD BEGINS JOB

VATICAN APPROVES DECISION ON BOMB

Holds It Means No Other War

HISTORIC DECISION

President Says He Must Defend Nation Against Possible Aggressor

SOVIET 'EXPLOSION' CITED

New York Times, February 1, 1950

Pope Paul VI has expressed "astonishment and pain" over the Italian referendum upholding the divorce law.

We know how a large majority of the beloved Italian people want to pack a law

He rebuked some priests for failing to do their duty.

The Miami Herald, May 23, 1974

Public opinion is reported to be in favor of this divorce law.

New York Times, February 5, 1950

approved "peace" clergy there. Can you imagine Christ checking with Caesar for approval on his choice of apostles?

Also reflecting this trend is the first inclusion of Communist North Vietnam and East Germany in the Holy See's official delegate listing for Rome's 1974 Synod of Bishops. Hanoi's Archbishop Trinh Van Can told the Synod bishops that his country's "Catholic faithful give an admirable example of their attachment to the Church."

But as Pope Paul officially opened the 1975 holy year, the startling headline also appeared: "North Vietnam Honors Loyal Catholics." To quote Agence France-Presse news service's 1974 Christmas dispatch from Tonkin's Phat Diem Diocese, over the years "greater and greater numbers of young Catholics enlisted in the armed forces," even becoming "heroes of the People's Armed Forces."

Thus, once again there is the spectacle of Catholic killing Catholic in political warfare—even during a holy year! But have not most churches always displayed a similar willingness to befriend political nations in order to preserve themselves? But how does God view those who befriend the world at the sacrifice of Christian principles?

Well, what do you call women who outwardly attach themselves to husbands but then give themselves to anyone else who comes along? The Bible says that God requires exclusive devotion, so it describes such people "as unfaithful as adulterous wives." The Bible continues:

"Don't you realize that making the world your friend is making God your enemy? Anyone who chooses the world for his friend turns himself into God's enemy."—Jas. 4:4, Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*.

Is it any wonder, then, that God has not answered holy-year prayers for spiritual "reconciliation and renewal"? Instead, 1974 also saw Italian Catholics hand the Church a stunning defeat in the referendum

on divorce—a referendum that the Church itself had urged! And London's *Economist* reports that last year an estimated 65,000 West German Catholics ended their obligation to pay church tax by canceling their membership. That is 20 percent more than 1973's loss, and "this year the figures are going up sharply."

Meanwhile, 1975 has already brought a public Vatican reprimand to the famous Swiss theologian Hans Kung, who remains defiant. The Vatican also ordered the Conference of International Catholic Organizations to destroy a recent book they sponsored on population problems.

Does this sound like spiritual "reconciliation and renewal"? Or is the mood better described by an editorial on the holy year as published in Catholic *Commonweal* magazine: "Paul VI seems to feel that he must continually warn his people in public addresses about unnamed dissidents . . . and thus he inevitably projects himself as a harried worrier rather than a source of strength and hope."—January 3, 1975, p. 283.

But should our source of strength and hope lie with any man or church-declared "holy" events? Let these words from the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible* answer:

"Now that God has acknowledged you —how can you want to go back to elemental things like these, that can do nothing? . . . You and your special days and months and seasons and years! You make me feel I have wasted my time with you."—Gal. 4:8-11.

No year of outward piety can truly be called holy in the eyes of God as long as this wicked world exists. Only He can bring a time of holiness for all mankind when, as the Bible promises, "the former world has passed away." Then, on the promised "new earth," not just one year, but eternity, will be holy or sacred because "God who is always with them . . . shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain."—Rev. 21:1, 3, 4, NAB.

Coming to the

Hearer of Prayer

TO WHAT extent do you use your power of speech? You certainly can be a fine blessing to others with the marvelous faculty of speech. But, in addition, the Designer of speech and voice extends a grand invitation to come to him in prayer. Appreciative ones, in turn, accept this invitation and lift up their voice in grateful praise and petition to the Maker of language.—Ps. 150:6.

² When praying to God, whose name is Jehovah, the atmosphere around you may be humming with other voices, with music or with noises of various sorts. Nevertheless, the one who made speech possible can decipher the prayers of those who accept his invitation to approach him with their petitions. His hearing does not depend on sound waves nor does it pose a problem when the air waves are choked with meaningless chatter of godless ones. Regarding God's ability to listen, we are assured: "The desire of the meek ones you will certainly hear, O Jehovah. . . . You will pay attention with your ear."—Ps. 10:17.

1, 2. (a) What invitation does everyone have? (b) Is it difficult for God to hear prayer, and whose prayer will he hear?

³ Prayer is a popular religious practice the world around, with a multitude of notions as to procedure. Perhaps you are among these many people who have prayed, and yet have wondered whether you are using the proper approach to the true God. Obviously, there is a reverential way to speak with him. As a communicative God having great love, he has provided ample information in his inspired Word for people of all national backgrounds on how they may come to know the

right and respectful way to "draw close to God" in prayer.—Jas. 4:8.

⁴ When praying, you are talking not to just anyone but to "the Majesty in the heavens." (Heb. 8:1) This alone emphasizes the need to acknowledge one's imperfect status. Sincerity and faith can be listed also among the requirements. Note, in Jesus' words, the close connection of faith and prayer: "This is why I tell you, All the things you pray and ask for have faith that you have practically received, and you will have them." (Mark 11:24) As you endeavor to explain in thought and word things of concern to you, do so with your "whole heart."—Ps. 119:145.

3. Is there a proper way to pray? How do you know?
4. What are some of the requirements for prayers to be heard by God?

THE WAY TO COME

⁵ "People of all flesh" and of all national origins may come to God as they see the need for spiritual help. Even when the nation of Israel was God's 'private property,' foreigners could also approach Jehovah. They could come and pray toward Jehovah's house at Jerusalem, assured that God would listen from the heavens. (2 Chron. 6:32, 33) At the home of Cornelius, the apostle Peter recognized that fact, saying: "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." —Acts 10:34, 35.

⁶ Cornelius was a man of the nations, "an army officer . . . a devout man and one fearing God," but a man who expressed his faith. Just imagine the joy that Cornelius experienced when an angel assured him that his prayers and gifts of mercy brought a favorable response from God! He welcomed the witness that Peter gave, and he and his household got baptized.—Acts 10:1-4.

⁷ Like Cornelius, those today who are starving spiritually should be similarly groping for God and earnestly seeking him. (Acts 17:27) They should be earnestly seeking to know his will and what God requires of one to be pleasing to him. In turn, God is gracious and merciful, granting such knowledge in answer to those who have a heart bent toward righteousness and who express sincere faith.

⁸ To communicate readily with the heavenly Father, one must accept Christ Jesus as Lord. Peace with God can come only through the appointed way, the ransom provision by the Lord Jesus. (Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6) He is the provision for approach to God in prayer and reconcilia-

tion with him. Jesus rightly declared: "No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) He is the "helper" that plays a vital role in our having access to the Hearer of prayer. (1 John 2:1, 2) The way, therefore, to come to God is on the basis of Christ's official services as high priest as well as the ransom he provided for mankind. Our asking in his name and coming to the Father is, therefore, in recognition of his office as God's "Chief Agent of life." No other intermediary is necessary in addressing our prayers to God.—Acts 3:15; John 14:13, 14; Heb. 10:19-22.

⁹ We must at all times feel free to bring our requests to God. This is fine, but it should be remembered that he is not required, and is under no obligation, to answer them all. Why should he listen to or answer prayers that are not in his interests or in the interests of his people, or, perhaps, even to the hurt of the one asking? He does not work against his own purposes or against those persons who worship him. For any request to be granted, it must please the Hearer of prayer. This shows the need for us to ask according to God's will if we expect him to lend an ear to our prayers, just as it is written: "This is the confidence that we have toward him, that, no matter what it is that we ask *according to his will*, he hears us." (1 John 5:14) A knowledge of his will should govern the contents of our petitions to him.

PRAY IN FAITH

¹⁰ The entire life course of a true Christian is controlled by faith, enabling him to overcome obstacles in his service to God. So too when it comes to prayer, believing that there is a real and living God who can and does hear prayers is conducive to our speaking freely with him. In

5, 6. (a) Whom did Jehovah previously allow to pray to him? (b) How did Cornelius have his prayers answered?

7. To whom does God grant knowledge?

8. (a) What provision has Jehovah made for us to come to him? (b) Why did Jesus ask for prayer to be made in his name?

9. If we expect God to hear our requests, how should we pray?

10. Why is faith necessary to speak freely to God?

fact, it is important to have full faith that 'God is and that he is a rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.' (Heb. 11:6) He who knows best and cares most is ever aware of our needs, even though they may vary widely for people living in different parts of the world. In a figurative sense 'Jehovah is near to all those calling upon him in faith,' and is swift to respond to their need of help.—Ps. 145:18.

¹¹ In calling upon the One whose ears are open to the prayers of righteous ones, we are reminded that he is fully aware of what we need even before we ask. Relative to food, drink and clothing, his own Son stated: "Your heavenly Father knows you need all these things." (Matt. 6:32) But even though God has all knowledge and awareness of these things, he desires us to ask him for our needs and wants. In view of his standing invitation to come to him, it would be showing a lack of appreciation to take the view that we should not bother him by asking for our daily needs. As man's caretaker, the "God of sight" has his eyes on the good ones as well as the bad ones in the earth, and he has not abandoned those loving him, so as to oblige them to work out all their problems alone. In fact, Jehovah God must enjoy listening to those who rely on him, as they tell him in their own words that they recognize him as their Father and refuge, and the source of their strength.—Gen. 16:13; Ps. 46:1; Prov. 15:3.

¹² Those with little faith may consider God as an absentee who has left mankind on its own. Or they may think that prayer is just a form of self-deception. Others may think it is a psychological aid or crutch, to keep one in a peaceful frame of mind, with one's thoughts running in spiritual channels. However, there is far more to it than an emotional experience.

11. (a) Does God know our needs? (b) Then why should we pray about them?

12. (a) How do some wrongly view prayer? (b) Why, though, is it beneficial to pray?

You are not talking to yourself but are addressing the living heavenly Father, who can "do more than superabundantly beyond all the things we ask or conceive." (Eph. 3:20) When decisions must be made, big or little, it is Jehovah's spirit and direction that can unlock the way to go. Although God is self-contained, lacking nothing, he has great empathy for the needs of his people, and they are welcome 'to unload all their anxieties of daily life on him, because he cares about them.' —1 Pet. 5:7.

PRAYER WORKS

¹³ It was by means of a prophet of Israel that the force and effectualness of prayer was illustrated. After announcing the approaching end of a long drought upon Israel, Elijah prayed atop Mount Carmel that it might rain again. From that location his attendant saw the prayer answered—first a small cloud, the precursor of the rain, and then the downpour that followed. The Bible writer James, in drawing attention to that event of history, comments on Jehovah's ability to answer the prayers of his servants who pray according to his purpose. We read: "A righteous man's supplication, when it is at work, has much force."—Jas. 5:16-18; 1 Kings, chapters 17, 18.

¹⁴ The Father of the human family has arranged that all keep in contact with him, day and night, as one truly interested in their welfare and happiness. Parents appreciate their children looking to them at all times for what they need; all the more so Jehovah knows how to provide for those persistent in their petitions to him. In making the same point, Jesus gave his disciples an illustration 'with regard to the need for them always to pray and not give up.' (Luke 18:1-8) Repeatedly requesting what you need shows your concern, and

13. How did prayer work for Elijah?

14. Why should one be persistent in praying for one's needs?

when your prayers are answered your persistence is rewarded.

¹⁵ Interference with the spreading of the good news invariably affects the bearers of it sooner or later. Suffering and persecution may be the result, even as such things were experienced by Christ Jesus. It is written: "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted." (2 Tim. 3:12) However, prayer and supplication to God, along with love for him and trust in him, aid Jehovah's Christian witnesses in their course of faithfulness, come what may. (Ps. 34:15) The counsel at Romans 12:12 is: "Endure under tribulation" and, at the same time, "persevere in prayer."

¹⁶ Bans are imposed occasionally to hamper the preaching of the good news, resulting in court cases, persecutions and sometimes prison terms for the preachers. When we hear of such things we feel deeply for our brothers who stand firm, not compromising even for the sake of temporary relief. We can be strengthened by their splendid stand for righteousness under pressure, and they, in turn, can be encouraged and assisted by our prayers. Yes, it is proper to pray for those in governmental positions so that Christians may go about their Christian life and activity without interference.—1 Tim. 2:1, 2.

¹⁷ When our brothers are in difficulty, such as in a notorious case in court, then our concern can be reflected in our persistence in prayers for them. It is apparent that God permits the petitioners to display the depth of their love, the genuineness of their motives, in requesting relief. Distance or prison walls do not render their supplication ineffective. No question about it, the Scriptures show that persistence in

15. Of what value is prayer during opposition?

16, 17. (a) How can we show concern for our brothers under persecution? (b) What, in turn, does this show on the part of the petitioner?

prayer can work for the relief of those in dire circumstances.—2 Cor. 1:8-11.

PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

¹⁸ But we always need to recognize the need to wait on Jehovah, for him to answer prayers relative to bans and persecution. The seeming delay at times on God's part should not be considered as inability to act on behalf of those he loves. Possibly it is not his time to bring a victory in judicial courts or relief in other ways, for an even greater witness may be given to God's kingdom if relief comes later. Never term God "slow" but acknowledge that he has his 'due time' for everything. In the meantime, he can provide angelic protection. Comfort can also be drawn from what the apostle Peter said: "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial . . . Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness." (2 Pet. 2:9; 3:9) Yes, indeed, the Hearer of prayer can strengthen those who are patient and who stick at doing his will.

¹⁹ The power of intercessory prayer for others should not be overlooked, whether it is offered individually or by many. Jehovah is not forced into acting by sheer weight of the numbers praying. The supplication of those who petition is that Jehovah's will be done, and their united interest and loving concern are for the help and protection of their fellow preachers of the good news. It may be that God's will is to bring relief in a way not foreseen by those involved. Confidently rely on this fact: Jehovah will back up those who maintain integrity under difficulties!

²⁰ So never should one feel that one's supplications are in vain or that perhaps one did not pray in just the right way to

18. Why is patience vital in praying?

19. (a) Should we pray that God prevent persecution?

(b) What can Jehovah always do if he so chooses?

20. Should we ever feel that our supplications for others are in vain?

help those being persecuted. What God does in reply will be what we should have asked for had we known to do so. (Rom. 8:26, 27) Each one should be confident that over the centuries Jehovah's power has not waned nor has he grown deaf, unable to hear the prayers of his worshipers.

FREEDOM IN PRAYER

²¹ The person in whom God's love reaches its full expression feels free to come to him in full confidence. Why would anyone hold back from offering a prayer of thanks, praise or petition to a God with so many wonderful qualities, including mercy, long-suffering and loving-kindness? (Ps. 36:7) Upon gaining insight into these qualities of his personality, imperfect people should muster up courage to come to Jehovah, the "God of glory," on any subject and ask for help in doing his divine will. (Acts 7:2) Living as we are in the midst of a cold, selfish world, how refreshing it is for us to come and pray to a father who is compassionate and has mercy upon us when we are in difficulty or at some disadvantage. As he himself declared to Moses: "Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth."—Ex. 34:6.

²² There is also added reason for us to approach such a God in freedom of speech in prayer since learning the part that Christ Jesus plays in this arrangement. The apostle Paul focuses our attention on him in these words at Hebrews 4:15, 16: "For we have as high priest, not one who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tested in all respects like ourselves, but without sin. Let us, therefore, approach with freedom of speech to the throne of undeserved kindness, that we may obtain mercy and find undeserved

21. (a) Why should one not hold back from prayer?
(b) What fine qualities attract one to Jehovah?
22. What is an added reason for freely coming to Jehovah?

kindness for help at the right time." Knowing that he underwent the very things we must face and endure, we appreciate how understanding he can be and how helpful to us as we sinful creatures endeavor to be reconciled to God through him as our redeemer and mediator.—Heb. 7:25.

²³ Jesus felt free to communicate with his Father in heaven when he was on earth. At that time when he was far removed from the presence of Jehovah, we can imagine how he enjoyed speaking with God by prayer. He had important matters to talk to God about, therefore he went to lonely places conducive to meditation. All the Gospel accounts reveal Jesus as a man of prayer—at his baptism he was praying; also when he fed multitudes; again before he chose his apostles; also at the Memorial supper, and on the torture stake. On these and other occasions Jesus was communicating with his heavenly Father. In all things he wanted to please his Father and do His will, not his own. (John 5:30) He kept going ahead with his assigned work, knowing that his supplications and petitions were favorably heard. (Heb. 5:7-10) He never compromised to avoid persecution but led a life course of integrity, upholding Jehovah's sovereignty. As a result, even heavenly creatures proclaimed him to be worthy of the honor and glory to which he attained.—Rev. 5:11, 12.

²⁴ What a fine example for all Christians to follow, this Leader and Master who made his way successful by prayer! All who want to be successful as he was should copy the example of this one who was so anxious to do each day what his Father wanted him to do. Speaking to God from the heart, asking for the strength and backing to do the divine will, assists the petitioner to walk and talk in a way pleasing to the Creator. Drawing near to God, imploring him in a spirit of depen-

23. (a) Why did Jesus feel free to talk with his Father? (b) On what occasions especially did he pray?
24. To make our way successful, what can we do?

dence, and seeking his direction can be a refreshing relief to us. We are encouraged to throw all our anxieties upon God. (1 Pet. 5:7) The counsel of Jesus, you remember, was to pray and not give up on asking God for anything we may need.—Luke 18:1-7.

CONTINUE TO PRAY

²⁵ Placing the proper evaluation on communicating with Jehovah will aid the suppliant to hold to a righteous course, while at the same time not expecting a spectacular answer to every request. In fact, one may need to exercise much patience when one is under trial or chastisement, in waiting for an answer. One should never underrate the power of prayer, but, rather, should show a "waiting attitude" with confident expectation, as expressed by the prophet Micah, that "my God will hear me."—Mic. 7:7.

²⁶ After you commit some badness, that is no time to stop imploring God's favor, as if you do not feel qualified to pray. One's transgressions must not be 'covered over.' (Prov. 28:13) If you want mercy, tell Jehovah your God how sorry you are for what you did, perhaps without thinking at the moment. After you have corrected the matter to the best of your ability, show that you have faith in the power of prayer and God's willingness to forgive, by apologizing to him. In this way you can demonstrate confidence that Jehovah hears your cries for help and understands what you really need.—Ps. 5:1, 2.

²⁷ Do you fully understand the import of the invitation to people of all flesh to come to the Hearer of prayer? If one feels to some extent a fear or dread of approaching God, is it not demonstrating a certain lack of love for him, even a lack of appre-

ciation for the ransom provision? Certainly one's imperfections should not be a deterrent to a ready approach to the loving Creator. In fact, one's love for God should move one to express oneself freely to one's merciful Creator.—1 John 4:16-18.

²⁸ However, a loss of confidence in calling on Jehovah for help can happen. Possibly a bad conscience or something that went wrong in your life gave you a negative feeling of unworthiness. In a situation like this there is grave danger if you neglect to ask God for help. Why compound the matter by ceasing to pray? For such ones who hold back from coming to God on their own and from speaking to him freely, the intercessory prayers of older men in the congregation can be a blessing. These qualified ones in the congregation are there to help you should you feel there is a "cloud mass" blocking your approach to God and hindering your prayers from passing through. (Lam. 3:44) It was in regard to praying for one another that James wrote: "A righteous man's supplication, when it is at work, has much force." (Jas. 5:16) This asking for help is a loving arrangement of counsel and prayer for those who hesitate to pour out their heart on their own to the God who is absolutely righteous, good and holy. On the other hand, the sinner who personally approaches God can be truly blessed in beseeching God for mercy. It worked for King Manasseh of Judah. He kept praying, and his request was finally heard.—2 Chron. 33:12, 13.

²⁹ It behooves one and all to be open and honest with Jehovah God if they want him to grant their requests. Why would anyone try to hide anything from him? He even 'knows the hearts of all.' So never try to deceive him. (Acts 1:24; Jer. 17:

25. How can you show a waiting attitude?

26, 27. (a) How can you show faith in the power of prayer? (b) What should your love of God move you to do?

28. (a) How can the older men be a blessing to you? (b) What example is there of one with gross sins asking God for mercy?

29. Why should all be honest in their prayers?

10) In your prayers be specific, straightforward, earnestly acknowledging your sins and errors against your heavenly Father. Have the deep appreciation that loyal David did and ask God to search you through and know your heart. Plead with him to give ear to your prayer and to pay attention to your entreaties. (Ps. 139:23; 86:6) Remember, the prayer of the upright is a pleasure to him. So think of the many reasons why you should keep pray-

ing freely, confidently expecting God to hear and help you.—Prov. 15:8.

³⁰ There is One you can come to without reservation. He is the "Hearer of prayer." So why not make him happy as you by "prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God"? (Phil. 4:6) By doing this you can go forward, experiencing the love that God has for those who come to him.

30. To whom should you come without reservation?

Be Steadfast in Prayer

IN THIS modern age the majority of persons seem to have little or no time for God. Many excuses are made as to why they do not consider him in their daily lives. However, if one claims to serve the living and true God, then one should loyally communicate with him, looking to him as the one whom to serve and obey in everything.

² Especially after one has committed oneself to serve Jehovah God one should take prayer seriously. Rather than view it as a duty, one should enjoy it as a privilege. With a preference to the doing of God's will and a theocratic submissiveness to it, one will pray: "Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths. Make me walk in your truth and

teach me, for you are my God of salvation."

—Ps. 25:4, 5.

SINCERITY IN PRAYER

³ Sincerity is involved in speaking with the Most High if you expect him to give attention to your requests. In all seriousness and in full possession of our senses, we must be honest in the appraisal of ourselves. To be loyal to God's righteous ways, we will not gloss over our wrong habits or questionable attitudes. It is not pos-

sible to deceive the One with whom we have an accounting. (Heb. 4:12) It would be folly for us to pray one way and to act out of harmony with the request.

⁴ Those who loyally observe his commandments have the assurance: "The eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their supplication; but the face of Jehovah is against those doing bad things." (1 Pet. 3:12) If we ask for forgiveness, then we must practice forgiving, from the heart. (Matt. 18:35) If we pray for God's kingdom, we ought

1, 2. (a) Why should one communicate with God? (b) How does one display a preference for God's will?

3. How can we be sincere in our requests to God? 4. What should we do to please the Hearer of prayer?

to seek it first in our lives. (Matt. 6:10, 33) If we are seeking more Scriptural knowledge from God, then besides praying for it we should set aside regular times to study his Word, the Bible. Being filled with accurate knowledge, we will be helped to focus attention on the more important things, and we will have these in mind when we pray.—Phil. 1:9, 10.

UPHOLDING GOD'S WAYS

⁶ We can be sure that God will always uphold his own good name and righteous ways. He will never lower his standards to the level of those who, by their words or works, show themselves to be disloyal or wicked. Why should God pay attention to the prayers made for a pretense from hearts not in tune with him? The prayer of those who practice wickedness can "become a sin." (Ps. 109:3-7) Those who hypocritically turn their back on God and yet pray cannot expect a favorable hearing, as shown in Proverbs 28:9: "He that is turning his ear away from hearing the law—even his prayer is something detestable." Long prayers by boastful and proud men are also not acceptable, as explained by that authority on prayer, Christ Jesus. (Matt. 6:5, 7; Luke 18:10-14) If we do not learn to do good and to be responsive to the Word of God, then, in effect, it amounts to rejecting God's own Word. This, in turn, would not be conducive to our having a favorable hearing of our prayers.

⁶ To cling to a fine relationship with our God and Father, we need to maintain his lofty moral standards. By one's words and/or course of action one can show approval or disapproval of deeds of immorality or, possibly, leanings in that way. "O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is

5. Describe the prayers that are not acceptable.
6. (a) How can one's words or actions affect one's prayers to God? (b) What should be kept honorable?

bad. He is guarding the souls of his loyal ones," is the counsel of Psalm 97:10. Those who come to be past all moral sense alienate themselves from God by their course of loose conduct. (Eph. 4:17-19) One's practice of immorality or even condoning it would render one's prayers ineffective. As an honorable person, appreciate the divine arrangement of sex and marriage and loyally uphold it so as not to block or hinder your prayers.—Heb. 13:4.

PRAYER CAN BE HINDERED

⁷ To keep the lines of communication open with God, it is vital for you to walk carefully in this wicked system of things. In this way you can have the confidence about which the apostle John wrote: "Whatever we ask we receive from him, because we are observing his commandments and are doing the things that are pleasing in his eyes." (1 John 3:22) Verbal expressions carry little weight with God if our actions are not in harmony with our entreaties. By being careless one may undercut the effectiveness of one's petitions to God. Hence, husbands are admonished: "You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with them [your wives] according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one, since you are also heirs with them of the undeserved favor of life, in order for your prayers not to be hindered." (1 Pet. 3:7) This shows that even in one's homelife one can do things that affect a favorable transmission of one's prayers to God. This fact should alert all of us to be most sensitive to walk in the right way in every aspect of life, never presuming upon God's mercy and compassion.

⁸ Maintaining a peaceful relationship with our Christian brothers in the con-

7. Describe some ways in which prayers can be hindered.
8. (a) Why must we get along well with our brothers? (b) What is it good to remember?

gregation is vital also, as we endeavor to keep strong ties with the God we serve. If we are quick to follow the advice of Jesus in Matthew 5:23, 24, then we will not let any problem, large or small, go unresolved with our brother. If we do not straighten matters out in a Scriptural way, we must realize that it can render our prayers and sacrifices unacceptable to God. It is well to stop and think that very often Jehovah has probably been merciful and patient with us ourselves, giving us an extended opportunity to correct a wrong course or untheocratic attitude. Copying our God in this respect, we can be most helpful to others, especially those who have come into close relationship with him as our spiritual brothers. As we become doers of God's ways, we will be happier and our prayers need not be impeded by any unthoughtful action on our part.—1 Thess. 4:1.

⁹ In the congregation, prayer should be approached in a pure way. There should be no feeling of animosity or anger toward others. Those who are wise and understanding will cultivate a meekness that belongs to wisdom and will follow the desire of the apostle Paul: "That in every place the men carry on prayer, lifting up loyal hands, apart from wrath and debates." —1 Tim. 2:8; Jas. 3:13, 17.

¹⁰ A humble brother will not fight with his Christian brothers in order to defend

or establish his supposed personal rights. Even though one has the freedom to do something, care should be exercised to do only that which is upbuilding. It requires love to keep the peace, and forgiveness can be unlimited on the part of each one. (Matt. 18:21, 22) It takes humility to admit a wrong and ask forgiveness. The result of such a humble course brings peace to the individual and to the congregation. It outweighs any feelings of humiliation. It develops and strengthens a person in the fine quality of humility, which God appreciates.

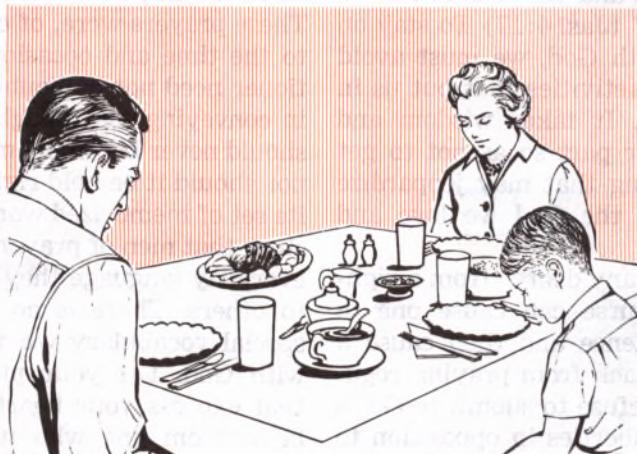
(1 Pet. 5:5) Feel free to seek Jehovah's rich blessing as you Christians "let all your affairs take place with love."—1 Cor. 16:14.

¹¹ Just as it takes effort for us to maintain a fine relationship with those in the congregation, so we want to do all we can

to allow no rupture in our treasured closeness to our Father in heaven. If we are going to please him, we need to be holy in all our conduct. (1 Pet. 1:14-16) Loyalty will motivate the Christian to avoid any tendencies to deviate from the way of the truth and become spotted with the world. When a person appreciates the all-powerfulness of God and that he is not to be trifled with and cannot be mocked, it makes him pray for Jehovah's direction to protect him from stumbling into wrong-doing of any sort. Failure to walk in the right way in any respect can raise obstacles to offering prayer freely.—Gal. 6:7.

9. What might hinder congregation prayer?
10. How do love and humility help to keep the peace in the congregation?

11. What is recommended to please God?



Does your family regularly pray together?

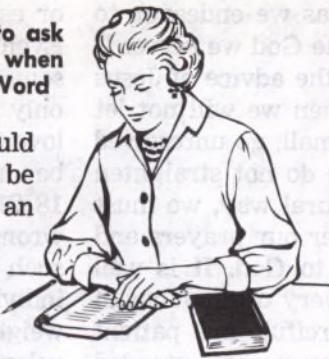
LOSS OF APPROACH

¹² If a person feels he is losing his approach to God, if he cannot pray anymore, then he should examine his life course. There may be one fault or a range of faults from an improper outlook on life, bad standards of conduct or, possibly, something deeper, like the qualities of the heart. There may be a failing to do what one knows to be right, for God's Word says: "If one knows how to do what is right and yet does not do it, it is a sin for him." (Jas. 4:17) To stay on speaking terms with God, we must avoid using our lives in activities that put us in opposition to him. It takes wisdom and discernment on our part so as not to get involved in anything that may jeopardize our standing with the God we love and worship.

¹³ A deviation to any degree from a righteous and true course can cause one to have a bad conscience and then cause a person to shrink back from praying regularly. Those who refuse to submit to God's will or who take liberties in opposition to it are not guided by godly wisdom and hence are bound to err. When we awaken to any loss of friendship with Jehovah, it is good to examine ourselves and rectify the causes of lack of communication. One cannot be a lawgiver to oneself and also please God. Rather, those who are loyal to God can expect his

12. What may cause a loss of approach to God?
13. What will cause one to shrink back from prayer?

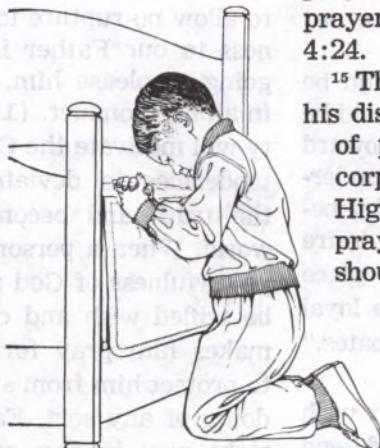
Do not forget to ask God's blessing when studying his Word



help. If we have his smile of approval in all our ways we can rest assured that he will listen to our requests and reward us in his own time and way.

EARNEST PRAYER

¹⁴ Actually prayer is more than just talking to God. This is emphasized in the many prayers recorded in his inspired Word for our guidance. These prayers were, of course, appropriate to the time and occasion. Today the petitioner need not be bound to some wording in conveying his thoughts to God. Prayer should never become a meaningless routine nor should it be held rigidly to some favorite set of memorized words. Bible examples show that men of prayer spoke in the same everyday language they used when talking to others. There is no need to use some special vocabulary when we are speaking with God. Let your prayer be in words that express your heartfelt thoughts. Far be it from one who worships God with spirit and truth to pay someone else to pray for him or to use someone else's prayers that are written in a book.—John 4:24.



It is good to thank God each day for his many kindnesses

¹⁵ The Model Prayer that Jesus furnished his disciples helps us to appreciate things of primary importance for us to incorporate in our prayers to the Most High. (Matt. 6:9-13) This sample prayer is marked by simplicity and so should our prayers be as we come to the One who can solve any problem we may have. Turn to him for help whenever you sense any weakening of your faith or any

14. (a) How can one convey one's thoughts in prayer? (b) How can you make a prayer your own?
15. When can we pray, and how should our requests be made?

tendency to drift from pure worship. Throughout the day or night, in all situations or undertakings, in danger, temptation, business, travel, pleasure or sickness, be anxious to come to the listening God, the Hearer of prayer. Take full advantage of this source of strength as you carry on "every form of prayer and supplication." (Eph. 6:18) Call out to him for favor, assistance; lift up your voice in gratitude. Remember that the author of language is not impressed by big words; just pour out your heart to him.

—Ps. 62:8.

¹⁶ It is profitable to meditate prior to approaching God, so that you will say what you mean to say. Having in mind fine thoughts will prevent you from rambling, or from just saying the same things over and over again in a monotonous fashion. You are not talking to a neighbor or anyone else but to the greatest one in the universe, Jehovah God himself. Acceptable prayer is addressed, not only to him, but also on right matters. Thus it is entirely appropriate to think before you pray, ponder over the more important things. In this way you can prevent your requests from degenerating into formalism or being dulled by repetition.—Matt. 6:7.

¹⁷ It may be well for you to seek out a quiet place to pray. Jesus tried to get away from people and distractions to spend time in prayer. (Mark 1:35; Luke 9:18) In quietness you can mentally review things needed, matters beneficial for your-

16, 17. (a) Is it good to meditate before praying? Why? (b) How can you present a coherent prayer?

self and those you love. Thinking before relaying your thoughts to God will aid you to present a coherent prayer.

PERSONAL PRAYER

¹⁸ In your own personal prayers, come to God in a humble way, not trying to impress him or, in effect, to try telling him what to do. You should remember your littleness and humble yourself in the eyes of Jehovah. (Jas. 4:10) Whether your prayer is expressed audibly or uttered voicelessly in your heart, your feelings may be just as David's: "Let the sayings of my mouth and the meditation of my heart become pleasurable before you, O Jehovah." (Ps. 19:14) Not only should we present acceptable prayers but we should derive joy and refreshment from presenting our innermost thoughts to our heavenly Father. Realizing that we belong to him, we do well to acknowledge his provisions for us as well as for all



When under pressure, do you ask God for help to keep calm?

other members of the human family. Wherever you turn, you see evidence of a most generous and thoughtful Creator. As recipients of God's love and goodness, we should each one say, 'Thank you' loyally and regularly to him. We are encouraged to do so, in these words: "Always be rejoicing. Pray incessantly. In connection with everything give thanks."—1 Thess. 5:16-18.

¹⁹ Your private prayer may embrace any facet of life. Sometimes it may be that God's own inspired Word will best convey your thoughts as you reflect on certain

18. (a) What quality should mark our personal prayers? (b) How can we express appreciation? 19. What should govern the contents of prayers? Give examples.

Scripture texts. It is the accurate knowledge of God's will that should govern the contents of prayer, for Jehovah cannot work against his own purposes, despite your requests. If you are loyal to Jehovah's sovereignty, then his name should have a place in your petitions as well as in your life. Other related fundamental matters of importance are incorporated in the prayer that Jesus lovingly gave his disciples: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." The other items mentioned in the prayer relate to the petitioner's desire to live in God's favor.—Matt. 6:9-13.

²⁰ Among the things you can appropriately ask for is God's spirit. This active force motivates one to go in the right way, God's way. (Luke 11:13) If it is your aim to be most useful to your God and his Son Jesus Christ, then you will continue to ask for divine direction to accomplish the most good in the expenditure of your resources. Truly living a dedicated life means buying out the opportune time for ourselves. (Eph. 5:15, 16) One dedicated Christian expressed herself in this way: "I ask Jehovah to let me realize whenever I am wrong or out of line as a Christian." He who knows the secrets of the heart will discern if we keenly recognize the need for complete dependence on him so that we, like Christ Jesus, can make our way successful.—Ps. 44:21; compare Joshua 1:8.

²¹ Your thinking of all the reasons why you must keep praying and also your considering all the necessary things to pray about will move you to do so. "Be persevering in prayer, remaining awake in it with thanksgiving." (Col. 4:2) Continue to pray about your mistakes, problems, needs for the day, a crisis that may arise

in your life, your feelings, your joys and disappointments and frustrations. Pray that you might have added strength to keep on as a loyal and devoted worshiper of the true God despite the pressures of daily living. With the emphasis on our getting the Kingdom good news preached, keep it before you as a matter of petition and ask that you too might brace up your mind for zealous activity. (Matt. 24:14; 1 Pet. 1:13) By your focusing your thoughts on God's interests, as well as your own, it will keep you alert to praise and magnify his name and faithfully recommend his worship to others. Do not forget what you can do for others, and ask that Jehovah may bless them as they also endeavor to worship and serve him.—Heb. 13:15, 16.

PRAYING TOGETHER

²² It is beautiful to see a family praying together at mealtimes and at other times, such as when they are enjoying spiritual food. Family prayer can be a wonderful blessing to a home, promoting obedience, order and decency in family life. The family is God's arrangement, and his guidance should be sought on it. All members of a family can learn to pray. No doubt Jesus, when very young, was taught to kneel and pray in his home. When he grew up, he thoroughly appreciated prayer; in fact, he was instrumental in teaching others how to pray properly. (Matt. 21:13; Luke 11:1) In their childlike simplicity children can be taught how to speak reverently to their Father in heaven, expressing gratefulness for the life they enjoy and for having ahead the hope of a paradise earth under the kingdom of God. Young and old people alike can form the prayer habit, which they can carry with them anywhere and everywhere, under whatever circumstances they are.

20. Why is it good to ask for God's spirit?

21. Name some of God's interests and your own interests for which to pray.

22. Describe the benefits of family prayer.

²³ Christian meetings are usually opened and closed with prayer, for all those assembled look to their Grand Instructor as the source of their teaching. Here again it is proper for the one representing the congregation before God to think carefully before he prays in behalf of those present. There can be a request for divine blessing at the opening of the meeting and, at the close, a note of thanksgiving for what has been learned and enjoyed. Appropriate words should be expressed by the one praying, keeping in mind the purpose of the prayer and the occasion at hand.

²⁴ Much can be said in a few words, as demonstrated in the Model Prayer at Matthew 6:9-13. When praying, think! What does this congregation need? Request can be made about the witness work in the area, in substance that the brothers may present the message effectively and become adept at teaching Bible truth. As in personal prayer, variety can be employed as to the content of the united public petition, with a wide range of applicable thoughts. For the congregation to prosper and for love to abound, prayer is a divine provision, just as is regular association with those of like precious faith. All assembled should hear the prayer clearly so that they may say "Amen" at the conclusion.—1 Cor. 14:16.

²⁵ It is wonderful to observe people of all races accepting the invitation to come to the Hearer of prayer. As a generous

Father, he takes delight in rewarding those who loyally serve him. "Jehovah himself will not hold back anything good from those walking in faultlessness." (Ps. 84:11) All who express faith with a hope of everlasting life can address him as Father and expect his smile of approval as they ask according to his will.

²⁶ With full expectation that God will lend a sympathetic ear to our thoughts in prayer, we must likewise be fond of what he has communicated to us in writing, his Holy Bible. As we absorb more and more of Jehovah's thoughts and ways, we will have a deeper insight into the One to serve and obey, and we will appreciate to the full the fine relationship possible with him and his Son, our channel of communication. No matter what progress you have already made in molding your life into conformity to God's will, keep on asking for the help and guidance that come from above. Whether you kneel by your bedside or pray along the way, whether you ask for help early in the morning or late at night, rest assured that the Maker of the ear can hear your prayer.—Ps. 119:62, 147.

²⁷ What greater joy could there be than to have an answer to a prayer? Whether you get an instant answer or wait until God's due time, never lose faith in the power of prayer. Every loyal one will be steadfast in prayer, daily enjoying rich blessings in gratitude and looking forward to everlasting friendship with the Hearer of prayer.

23, 24. (a) How is prayer used at meeting times? (b) What are some things that might be prayed for on these occasions?

25. In what does Jehovah delight?

26. What should all of us be fond of if we expect our prayers to be heard?

27. What joy can there be, and for whom?

Prayer That Led to Finding God's Truth

◆ In Colombia a contractor prayed that God might use him in some way. When one of Jehovah's witnesses, a missionary, and his ten-year-old companion called, the contractor listened attentively. Impressed by the boy's Scriptural knowledge, the man agreed to study the Bible with the missionary. Soon thereafter he got rid of his books on spiritism, stopped smoking and then, after explaining to his wife what the Bible had to say on the matter of idolatry, threw out the images. Ten months after starting to study the Scriptures the man was baptized at a district assembly of Jehovah's witnesses.

Is My Bible COMPLETE?

IO BE complete, a Bible should correspond as closely as possible to the original manuscripts and thus contain everything that is "inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3: 16) But you may wonder, How can I be sure that my Bible meets these requirements?

As you may have noticed, a number of Bible versions contain such "deuterocanonical" or "apocryphal" books as Tobit (Tobias), Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and 1 and 2 Maccabees. Does this mean that such Bible versions are complete, whereas translations from which deuterocanonical books have been left out are incomplete? If such books were indeed part of the inspired Scriptures, their omission would make a Bible incomplete. But are they?

There is clear evidence that these apocryphal books were not recognized as part of the inspired Scriptures when the Christian congregation was established. At that time the Hebrew Scripture canon had already been fixed and did not include any apocryphal books. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus wrote: "There are not with us myriads of books, discordant and discrepant, but only two and twenty [the equivalent of the thirty-nine books of the Hebrew Scriptures according to modern division], comprising the history of all time, which are justly accredited." Expressing an awareness regarding the existence of apocryphal books, he continues: "From the time of Artaxerxes up to our own everything has been recorded, but the records have not been accounted equally worthy of credit with those written before them, because the exact succession of prophets ceased."—*Against Apion*, Book I, par. 8 (according to the translation in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 163).

Noteworthy, too, is the observation of the learned Jerome, translator of the Latin *Vulgate*. In his *Prologus Galeatus* to the *Vulgate*, he lists the inspired books of the Hebrew

Scriptures in harmony with the Hebrew canon (in which the thirty-nine books are grouped as twenty-two) and then says: "Thus there are twenty-two books . . . This prologue of the Scriptures can serve as a fortified approach to all the books which we translate from the Hebrew into Latin; so that we may know that whatever is beyond these must be put in the apocrypha." Writing to a lady named Leota on the education of her daughter, Jerome advised: "All apocryphal books should be avoided; but if she ever wishes to read them, not to establish the truth of doctrines, but with a reverential feeling for the truths they signify, she should be told that they are not the works of the authors by whose names they are distinguished, that they contain much that is faulty, and that it is a task requiring great prudence to find gold in the midst of clay."

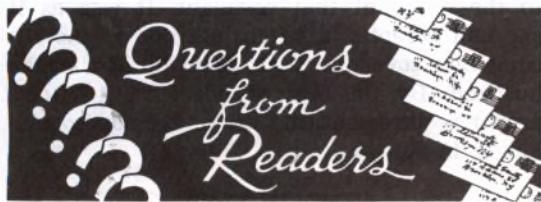
The apocryphal books manifestly were no part of the inspired Scriptures and were clearly not recognized as such in the early centuries of our Common Era. Their omission from a translation of the Bible, therefore, does not make that version incomplete.

Another factor that might raise questions about the completeness of one's Bible is that certain words, phrases and even entire verses found in some older translations do not appear in many modern translations. For example, note the following quotations from the *Authorized* or *King James Version*: "For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost." (Matt. 18:11) "For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast." (Luke 23:17) "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." (1 John 5:7) If you were to look these passages up in such modern versions as *The New American Bible* (Catholic), *The New English Bible*, *An American Translation*, *The Jerusalem Bible* (Catholic) and the *New World Translation*, you would not be able to find the first two quotations and the italicized portion of the third. Why?

Biblical scholarship has brought to light that

these words were manifestly never a part of the original manuscripts. These statements are missing from ancient manuscripts dating back as far as the fourth century. Contrary to what might be expected, copyists were more prone to add than to leave things out. This is evident from the fact that the oldest and most reliable Bible manuscripts are the most condensed.

So if you cannot locate certain words or texts in a modern translation, you need not be alarmed. Such modern translation of the Bible may be closer to the original than an older version, the translators of which did not even have available to them such valuable fourth-century manuscripts as Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus.



● Do Jehovah's witnesses believe in doctors?

Yes, Jehovah's witnesses avail themselves of the various medical skills to assist them with their health problems. They love life and want to do whatever is reasonable and Scriptural to prolong it. Like Luke, the Christian in the first century who was a physician, some Witnesses today are doctors, in many fields of health. (Col. 4:14) However, they do not accept therapy that conflicts with Bible requirements, such as a blood transfusion. The Bible specifically forbids the taking of blood to nourish the body.—Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:1-14; Acts 15:28, 29.

Jesus and the apostles often miraculously cured the sick and infirm with the power of the holy spirit as a sample of what will be done in a complete sense in Jehovah's new system of things. After the death of the apostles near the close of the first century, the gifts of miraculous healing on the part of God's servants ceased, and thus Jehovah's witnesses today do not expect a miracle to restore them to health. They do, however, look to God to bless and direct their efforts to care for their health in a reasonable manner. Yet they know that, even as occurred with the apostles, God still allows death to take faithful ones whose bodies have reached the point where they cannot sustain themselves with good food and adequate rest or with the help of physicians.

There are, of course, various theories on the treatment of disease. The Watch Tower Society does not advocate one method over another;

individually each witness of Jehovah is left to choose whatever treatment he or she feels best. From time to time our publications discuss the different healing arts and methods employed, doing so as a matter of interest to our readers, but letting each one decide what may be beneficial.

We recognize that there are sometimes wide differences of opinion among those who deal with health matters. But there is no reason for one Christian having feelings in one direction to criticize those whose inclinations are toward other forms of treatment, as long as what is decided upon is not prohibited by God's Word. It is important to recognize, too, that, as the facts show, the treatment that results in good for one person may have no beneficial effect on another and may actually work to his harm.

Jehovah's witnesses, while being grateful for whatever relief from sickness and disease the medical profession can provide, appreciate that such relief is at most temporary and that we must look to God for permanent relief from sickness. In Jehovah's new system, now very near, human creatures will be cured of their sicknesses, and even death will be eliminated on the basis of the ransom of Christ Jesus.

● I find Exodus 4:24-26, about the circumcision of Moses' son, hard to understand. Whose life was in danger, and what occurred?

This passage appears in the account about Moses' return to Egypt, along with his wife Zipporah. Exodus 4:24-26 literally reads: "Now it came about on the road at the lodging place that Jehovah [that is, Jehovah's angel] got to meet him and kept looking for a way to put him to death. Finally Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and caused it to touch his feet and said: 'It is because you are a bridegroom of blood to me.' Consequently he let go of him. At that time she said: 'A bride-

groom of blood,' because of the circumcision."

This is an obscure passage and we cannot at this time be conclusive about its entire meaning. Other scriptures, though, do shed considerable light on it. So we offer the following suggestion:

The law earlier given to Abraham regarding circumcision stated: "An uncircumcised male who will not get the flesh of his foreskin circumcised, even that soul must be cut off from his people. He has broken my covenant." (Gen. 17:14) It being, not Moses, but his son who was uncircumcised, the boy's life was evidently the one threatened by Jehovah's angel. Then, too, Moses had received a divine commission from God through his angel to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. (Ex. 3:10) So it does not seem reasonable to conclude that Moses himself would be threatened with death by an angel of God while Moses was on his way to fulfill that commission.

It was the angel of Jehovah that had the power from God to kill Moses' son for not being in accord with the covenant of circumcision. Logically, therefore, Zipporah would have caused the foreskin (the evidence of having

complied with the covenant) to touch the angel's feet and thus show that there was now no reason for her son to die.

Zipporah's unusual expression, "You are a bridegroom of blood to me," was evidently made because circumcision involved a covenant. The author of that covenant was Jehovah God as here represented by His angel. Hence, in addressing Jehovah through his representative angel as a "bridegroom of blood," Zipporah appears to have been, not speaking critically, but acknowledging her own submission now to the terms of that covenant. It was as if she had accepted a wifely position in the circumcision covenant, with Jehovah God as the husband. By this act of obedience to God's proper requirement, the life of her son was no longer in danger.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

August 3: Coming to the Hearer of Prayer.

Page 401. Songs to Be Used: 5, 28.

August 10: Be Steadfast in Prayer. Page 407.

Songs to Be Used: 38, 81.

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It is the principal talk of the four-day district assembly of Jehovah's witnesses being held this summer in scores of cities in the United States, the British Isles and Canada. The assembly program also features helpful Bible discussions on practical matters of life, and four full-costume Bible dramas.

Contact the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses to find out where the nearest assembly will be held, or write the publishers of this magazine.