

# The **WATCHTOWER**

## *Sickness and Disease*

**-WILL THEY EVER END?**

*"Become  
Imitators of God"*

**MARCH 1, 1974**

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**ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM**

# The **WATCHTOWER**

March 1, 1974  
Vol. 95, Number 5

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.

How can it benefit you? Consider: Do you long for a better world, one of true justice and free from sorrow, hatred and war? Do you want to live at a time when genuine peace and love prevail among people of all races? Then this magazine can aid you. Using God's Word, the Bible, as its authority, it points out the clear evidence that the present wicked system of things will soon end, destroyed by God. But it also announces the coming in of a righteous new order. There, under the rule of God's kingdom, his heavenly government, people will enjoy life forever in true peace, health and happiness on a paradise earth.

Faithfulness to the Word of God lifts *The Watchtower* above the contradicting religious teachings and philosophies of men. It stays strictly neutral as regards political affairs. It wholeheartedly upholds the highest moral standard—that of man's Maker, Jehovah God. From this source, it shows solutions to the problems of daily life.

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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# Sickness and Disease

## -WILL THEY EVER END?

SICKNESS and disease have journeyed with mankind throughout history. Every civilization has attempted to alleviate or erase human suffering. But the successes have been limited.

Even today, where can you look and not see misery brought on by sickness and disease? Everyone is at least acquainted with some persons who suffer, if he himself does not do so. Men still ask, Will sickness and disease ever end?

Jesus Christ, hundreds of years ago, showed that we could expect disease to continue into a time period he called "the conclusion of the system of things." He said: "There will be . . . in one place after another pestilences and food shortages." (Matt. 24:3-7; Luke 21:10, 11) The word "pestilences" is translated "outbursts of disease" in *The New Testament in Basic English*, and "epidemics" in *The Living Bible*.

As has been shown many times in this journal, mankind entered "the conclusion of the system of things" in the year 1914. Much of the sickness we see, therefore, is in fulfillment of his words. Certain persons, nevertheless, question Jesus' prophecy and its modern fulfillment. In what way?

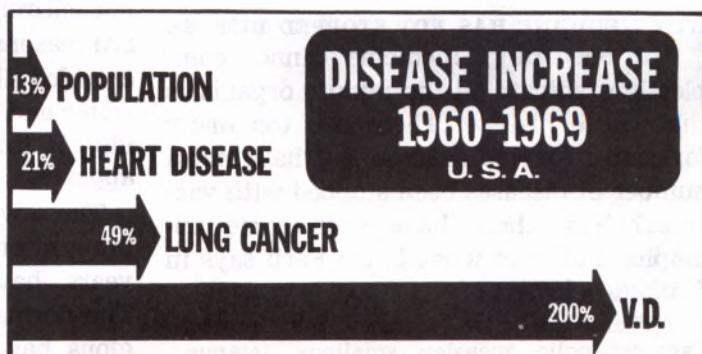
Some wonder: What is so unusual about that prediction? Has there not always been pestilence or disease? It is true that widespread disease and suffering are not new. But today, frustratingly, these persist even with the finest medical facilities, medi-

cal schools and hospitals available. Knowledge of health and medicine is disseminated to remote parts of the earth. Yet disease flourishes. That fact helps to mark this as a peculiar time in history.

On the other hand, some ask, Has not medical science conquered most diseases? If so, Jesus' words have not come true. So, to appreciate clearly his accuracy, let us examine the facts and see if science is ending disease.

### ANCIENT DISEASES STILL WITH US

Consider cholera, an age-old disease. Is it gone? By no means. In the early 1960's what some have called a "pandemic"—a worldwide epidemic—of cholera started in Indonesia and spread through much of Asia. In 1971 fourteen nations (one third of those nations with cases of cholera) reported the disease for the first time.



Cholera is relatively new in Africa. Yet during 1971 and 1972 some 80,000 cases were officially noted from that continent, 20,000 of which ended in death. As late as last summer a cholera epidemic hit Italy, and one case was reported in the United States. Efforts to contain cholera earth wide have had only limited success.

Malaria is another ancient affliction. Is it still active? Periodically, some doctor or organization envisions a malaria-free world. For instance, in 1961 the World Health Organization (WHO) boasted of "a complete series of effective drugs in the treatment of all stages" of malaria. How effective were these "effective drugs"? That same year there was a dramatic rise in malaria! That ended what one medical professor called a "period of smug satisfaction" toward the disease.

In a four-month period starting in late 1971, the number of cases more than doubled, to 20,000, in Sri Lanka. Malaria is indeed active. Malaria, trachoma and schistosomiasis (snail fever) now afflict eight hundred million people in the world's impoverished lands. Then there are smallpox, tuberculosis, diphtheria, rheumatic fever, polio and influenza—all still killers. Man has not ended disease!

But why is it, in spite of medical advances, that sickness persists? There are a number of reasons.

#### WHY MEDICINE HAS NOT STOPPED DISEASE

For one thing, medicine cannot completely eradicate all the minute organisms that cause disease. There are too many for man to try to control. But have not a number of diseases been stopped with vaccines? Yes, there have been some triumphs. But note what Peter Farb says in *Ecology* (1970):

"There are now vaccines that protect against polio, measles, smallpox, tetanus,

cholera and numerous other dreaded diseases. However, these victories are largely illusions. They do not take into account the fact that the microbial organisms themselves are capable of extraordinarily rapid . . . changes, resulting in new strains resistant to man's most potent drugs."

Germs develop new drug-resistant strains. For instance, stronger varieties of gonorrhea, malaria, tuberculosis and shigellosis can withstand well-known antibiotics.

Mexico has been vigorously fighting what may be "the largest outbreak of typhoid fever to occur anywhere in the world for several decades." Though there are drugs to deal with typhoid, this particular strain has not responded to treatment.

#### OTHER REASONS WHY DISEASE CONTINUES

It should be remembered that sickness and disease are not just "medical" problems. There are such matters as good nutrition. Persons who do not eat properly are more likely to contract serious illnesses. A billion persons earth wide may suffer from malnutrition or hunger. Over 20 percent of the children born to these people die before they are five years old. Their life, by current medical averages, will be twenty years shorter than that of a child born in one of the more affluent countries.

Sickness also has social and environmental roots. Disease, it has been said, is not entirely erratic. In other words, there are reasons for its appearance. Squalid and crowded living conditions, with unclean water and little privacy, breed disease rapidly. It thrives in such conditions once it appears.

These wretched circumstances are often brought on by war. Wars, in the last sixty years, have been international in scope. The normal patterns of living in huge regions have been upset. Disease then ap-

pears, scatters and intensifies, canceling the hard work of many doctors. These are just a few of the reasons why men have not stopped disease.

#### MODERN "IMPROVEMENTS" BRING SICKNESS

Surprisingly, however, some of the advances that man has made have actually aggravated sickness and disease. They further show the correctness of Jesus' prophecy about "outbursts of disease" in our time.

There are areas where infectious diseases such as malaria and cholera appear to be under control, at least for now. Freedom from shooting wars and a sufficiency of nutritious food exist. But there are still sickness and disease. Why?

Along with these seemingly good things comes modern industrial society with its pressures, strains and stresses. Heart attacks and digestive problems take huge tolls. Smog fills the air, contributing to respiratory ailments and cancer. And what about obesity? One out of five men and one out of four women in America are overweight and a prime target for certain killer diseases, including diabetes.

Another thing: Science's seeming successes have created a complacency in thousands of persons. An aura of overconfidence in medicine has appeared. Dr. John J. Witte of the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia (U.S.), cites an example: "I'm sure there are many young parents who are much less terrified of the ravages of polio than parents of a decade ago because they haven't lived through epidemics or seen cases of polio." As a result, he says, "polio could spread significantly if introduced into certain areas."

The potential for massive epidemics, not just of polio, but of other seemingly conquered diseases in the "advanced countries" is very real. So we read: "One catastrophic change in American living standards would once more make tuberculosis a threat to millions of people across the nation."—*Health and Disease*, Time, Inc. (1965).

#### WILL SICKNESS AND DISEASE END?

No matter how the question is examined, we can see that Jesus' words have come true. Disease persists in spite of—sometimes because of—all the dedicated and diligent medical work to the contrary. There is little reason for true optimism that men will completely solve man's health problems. But does this mean that they will never end?

Many persons have resigned themselves to that attitude, feeling as does René J. Dubos, who wrote in *Mirage of Health*:



Can you imagine how much more enjoyable life will be when sickness and disease are gone?

"Complete and lasting freedom from disease is but a dream." But it is not an impossible dream. We have sound basis for believing that sickness *will* end!

Is it not reasonable to look to God, man's Maker, lastingly to solve our health problems? Who better knows man's makeup? He promises in the Bible that by Jesus Christ the existing worldwide wicked system of things will be destroyed, and soon. After that Jesus' kingdom must rule "until God has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing." (1 Cor. 15:25, 26) If death is to disappear, would not the conditions that lead to death, like sickness and aging, also terminate? Obviously.

That God cares enough to end sickness and disease and that he can do so is illustrated by the Law that he gave to his people Israel in times past. When they obeyed the Law, their lives were prolonged and they were preserved from many of the diseases and afflictions of neighboring nations. (Ex. 15:22-26; 23:25; Lev. 26:14, 16, 25; Deut. 28:15, 20) But disobeying or sinning against that Law led to unnecessary sickness.

Breaking God's law (sinning) and sickness are thus linked. The prophecy at Isaiah 33:24, which found a fulfillment on ancient Israel, emphasizes this connection. It says: "No resident will say: 'I am sick.' "

## IN COMING ISSUES

- **Bible Timetables Pinpoint Our Day.**
- **Is It Gluttony?**
- **Are You Truly a Spiritual Person?**

How could anyone back then make that claim? The verse answers: "The people that are dwelling in the land will be those *pardoned for their error*." When they were again obedient to God, what might be called 'spiritual health' resulted. And that brought the physical health benefits that Jehovah promised. (Compare also Psalm 103:1-5.) This is equally true today.

Those that follow godly laws forbidding sexual immorality, for example, are not plagued with venereal disease. Persons who keep their bodies clean from cigarettes do not purposely expose themselves to hideous forms of cancer, do they? Obedience to God means real health benefits right now.—Matt. 5:27, 28; 2 Cor. 7:1.

But even if someone tries to lead an upright life he eventually dies. Why? Because men are by birth imperfect; they inherit sin. (Rom. 5:12) And over this form of sin they have virtually no control. When Jesus was on earth he showed his authority over all sin by miraculously giving or restoring health. We read of his healing a paralytic: "'Child, your sins are forgiven . . . I say to you, Get up, pick up your cot, and go to your home.' At that he did get up, and immediately picked up his cot."—Mark 2:5-12; Matt. 9:1-5.

Surely, if Jesus, when living in one small part of the earth, could forgive sin and restore literal health, he can do even more when ruling from heaven. All sin will be eradicated. World wide, healing will take place.

For now, the wise person will obey the laws of God. He will attempt to maintain his health. But he knows that in the last analysis the sure end of ailments will come from God in his new system of things. Why not study with Jehovah's witnesses and find out how you too can be alive when "no resident will say: 'I am sick.' "— Isa. 33:24; Rev. 21:1-4.

# Insight on the News

● Where are the world's religious leaders directing humanity to put their hope? In God's kingdom? The answer came on the 25th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A joint church communiqué declared: "The World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic

**'Chief Hope for Peace'** Church have often stated that the United Nations Organization is the chief temporal hope for world peace."—"L'Osservatore Romano."

Obviously they had not learned from past mistakes. On December 12, 1918, the U.N.'s predecessor, the League of Nations, received a similar religious endorsement. At that time the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America called it "the political expression of the Kingdom of God on earth." But did the League really prove to be God's provision for safeguarding peace?

To those who did not know the answer earlier, World War II made the facts clear. God had nothing to do with the League; neither is the United Nations his.

Catholic and Protestant churches claim to teach God's Word, do they not? Then, instead of "playing politics," should they not advocate as 'the chief hope for peace' the kingdom for which God's Son Jesus Christ taught his followers to pray? (Matt. 6:9, 10) Is it not their responsibility to show people from the Bible that God's kingdom "will not be passed on to any other people," including the membership of the U.N.? (Dan. 2:44) In all honesty, is it not time for all mankind to face up to the fact that human rulers can never bring lasting peace? Only mankind's Creator can do that.

● Hailing gambling as the way to drive criminals out of the business, New York state

legalized and took over off-track gambling on horse races. Did it work? Illegal gambling and criminal involvement skyrocketed by nearly two thirds in one year! Why? Says a police official:

"A climate has been created to gamble. . . . thousands of people who never in the world would have thought of betting on [other sports events] are now betting [illegally] with the bookies."

**'Climate to Gamble'**

Who is involved? The study reveals that students are betting allowances and housewives are using their grocery money. Some become prostitutes to cover losses. Businessmen raise prices, embezzle or steal securities for gambling money. Others promote their own gambling enterprises to support "charity" or their churches and synagogues. "The compulsive gambler is found," says "Physician's World" magazine, in "virtually every occupation and profession, including the clergy."

This 'climate to gamble' has produced a harvest of self-indulgence, corruption and ruined lives. But "don't delude yourself," the Bible warns. If anyone "sows in the field of self-indulgence he will get a harvest of corruption out of it." Furthermore, those serving "the god of Good Luck" will eventually lose everything, for to such ones Jehovah says, "I will destine you men to the sword."—Gal. 6:7, 8, JB; Isa. 65:11, 12.

● What place does homosexuality have in Judaism? To find out, Temple Beth Chayim Chadashim ("The House of New Life") in Los Angeles, California, has petitioned the Union of American Hebrew Congregations for membership.

**Homosexual Synagogue** Formed in March of 1972 as the United States' first homosexual synagogue, it now hopes to join the Union. The Union has already provided some assistance to the Los Angeles synagogue. And Rabbi Erwin Herman, director of the Union's Pacific Southwest office, urged a year ago:

"I believe it is incumbent on our liberal movement to admit this congregation" when it applies. Now Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president of the Union, agrees: "I don't think the homosexual group should be read out of the body Jewish."

However, the "body Jewish" has in "The Torah" a command given by God to Moses that says: "If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death."—Lev. 20:13, Jewish Pub. Society.

What will the Union of American Hebrew Congregations do? Will they hold to the righteous law of God transmitted through their forefathers? Or will they repudiate it so that in this, too, they can be like the rest of the world?

# What Is the Quality OF YOUR PRAYERS?

**H**OW often do you pray? Do you feel that your prayers are being heard? Do you feel at a loss as to how to pray or for what to pray?

Prayer is a most valuable provision of the Creator, a real gift to be highly prized. One should therefore give careful attention that one makes use of this gift and that one's prayers are such that God will answer them.

The primary requirement for prayers that please God and receive his attention is very simple—an honest heart. The apostle Paul writes: "Let us approach with true hearts in the full assurance of faith." (Heb. 10:22) The language one uses may be highly refined or it may be unpolished, the expression clearly made or poorly worded. But Jehovah bypasses these external things and looks on the heart. "He is aware of the secrets of the heart." It is not the appearance or the wording that counts with him, because "as for Jehovah, he sees what the heart is."—Ps. 44:21; 1 Sam. 16:7.

In fact, the prayer may not be audible at all; it may be merely a strong appeal to Jehovah from the heart, as in the case of faithful Hannah. "She was speaking in her heart; only her lips were quivering, and her voice was not heard." But Jehovah answered her prayer.—1 Sam. 1:13, 20.

#### FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE ESSENTIAL

Along with an honest heart there are other important requisites. The person

praying must have faith in God.

This faith is more than a belief that God exists, that he is the Creator and is Almighty. God says in his inspired Word: "He that approaches God must believe that he is and that *he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.*"

—Heb. 11:6.

In order to have this faith the person must have knowledge of God—knowledge of his qualities, his dealings, his purposes. The apostle writes: "How will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? . . . How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach?" If a person has not studied God's Word, then he should get help from those understanding it, for them to teach him knowledge of God.

—Rom. 10:14.

Having some knowledge of God's purpose, we will pray in harmony with that purpose. Reasonably, we could not expect God to answer a prayer for things contrary to his will. That would be asking God to contradict himself. Furthermore, anything contrary to God's will would not be good for us. As Jesus said to the people: "If you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those asking him?"—Matt. 7:9-11.



When we pray we must realize that Jehovah is a *person*. Jehovah has feelings, even stronger than ours, of affection, concern, mercy and willingness to listen and to help us. He deeply appreciates a right attitude on our part. Therefore we should really *talk* to him—respectfully but pouring out our heart.

#### CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF PRAYER

Jesus Christ was a man of prayer. He gave a model prayer, recorded at Matthew 6:9-13, outlining the primary things to pray for, and his prayer shortly after instituting the Lord's Evening Meal helps us to know for what he personally prayed. (John chapter 17) Before he appointed his twelve apostles he prayed all night. (Luke 6:12, 13) How did he, a perfect man, with no sinful inclinations or defects, have so much to pray about?

Well, Jesus realized that the apostles would be foundation stones of the Christian congregation, which would be a "pillar and support of the truth" in the earth. (1 Tim. 3:15) They had to be men of the highest caliber. Logically, Jesus would discuss with his heavenly Father the men associated with him—each one's qualities, his weaknesses, his needs, whether he would fit into one of the twelve places. Jesus undoubtedly sought wisdom from Jehovah, for he knew that it was actually God who was responsible for choosing them. (1 Cor. 12:18) Also, he may have discussed the further training of those selected.

Additionally, the work ahead must have been a subject of Jesus' prayer. He could have spoken about the later expansion of the evangelistic campaign, the appointment of the seventy, the places that Jesus himself would visit and finally his coming trial and sacrificial death.—Luke 10:1; compare Luke 9:31.

#### PROPER MATTERS FOR PRAYER

What are matters we could talk about to Jehovah in our personal, private prayers? Aside from the primary things—the sanctification of Jehovah's name, the coming of his Messianic kingdom and the destruction of wickedness—we very much need *personal* help ourselves. We could discuss the problems we have faced during the day. Our mistakes could be acknowledged—just how we erred.

Perhaps we have been disappointed at the way we carried out a certain task. It may have been with regard to conducting a Bible study, delivering a talk, giving counsel or making some congregational arrangement. It may have been a matter of exercising family headship, or respecting it. Whatever it was, we will be favorably heard if we frankly acknowledge our failure and seek help to do better next time.—Heb. 4:15, 16.

Then, with a view to prayer, we might ask ourselves questions such as: What fruits of the spirit are lacking in our lives? Do we manifest real love and concern for others? In fact, do we *pray* for the spiritual welfare and prosperity of others? Do we have joy in serving God? Do we exercise self-control, or are we prone to 'let all our spirit out,' to the injury of ourselves and others?—Prov. 25:28; 29:11; Gal. 5:22, 23; 2 Thess. 1:11; Luke 6:27, 28.

What about material physical needs? God is pleased when we acknowledge him as the Giver of all good things. Then, is it proper to pray for recovery from physical sickness if it be God's will? Yes. The apostle Paul credited God for the recovery of his faithful friend Epaphroditus. He wrote: "Yes, indeed, [Epaphroditus] fell sick nearly to the point of death; but God had mercy on him." (Phil. 2:27) We, too, may ask that, if God sees fit, we may live

and continue to serve him. If he does not give us recovery, it is not that he rejected our prayer. Rather, we know that both his and our interests are best served in another way. In sickness we may pray, in full confidence, that we be given strength to maintain our spiritual balance, for during a time of physical weakness we may be more prone to give in to despair and loss of faith. Likewise one can pray in behalf of fellow Christians who are stricken with illness, physical or spiritual.—1 John 5:16.

In time of trial, or when our brothers are having difficulties, we need special wisdom as to the course to pursue, or how to counsel and assist others. Jesus' half brother James wrote: "Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, . . . if any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him."—Jas. 1:2-5.

We might feel that our request will be viewed by God as unworthy of his notice, since he is so great, all-wise, and we are often weak. Doubtless you have asked someone to do something for you, and he responded in a reluctant way, or in a way that made you feel very small and unworthy, or foolish. But God will not reproach us for "stupidity" or weakness. No, he gives *generously*, wholeheartedly, in a way that makes us happy that we asked.

It may be that we ourselves have sinned seriously. Then we need prayer most urgently. If we are repentant and want to be restored to God's favor, we should *immediately* resort to prayer, confessing our sin, acknowledging exactly what our sin was, at the same time doing anything that can be done to rectify matters. (Prov. 28:13) If we should feel that our approach is blocked, we should *without delay* call on the elders of the congregation for help,

as outlined at James 5:13-15. Their prayer is *effective*.—Jas. 5:16.

#### FINE EXAMPLES OF PRAYER

To improve the quality of our prayers, it is profitable to read some of the prayers in the Psalms.\* You will notice that often there is a superscription naming the occasion, and also that the prayer is fitting for that occasion.

As an example, note David's heartfelt prayer, after he had been reproved by God because of his sin with Bath-sheba. (Psalm 51) He threw himself wholly on God's mercy. He was primarily concerned over the reproach on Jehovah's name. (Vss. 1-4) He appealed on the basis of his own inherited sinfulness. (Vs. 5) He asked for cleansing, and a new and steadfast spirit. (Vss. 7-10) He was fearful lest God should remove His holy spirit. (Vs. 11) He confessed his bloodguiltiness. (Vs. 14) He promised to continue serving Jehovah. (Vss. 14, 15) Finally, he expressed his concern for Zion and primarily for the pure worship conducted there.—Vss. 18, 19.

In other Biblical prayers we find expressions of praise or thanks, quoting of scriptures and reciting of God's fine qualities and principles as a basis on which to expect Jehovah to answer favorably. These things are apparent in Psalm 86.

Therefore, if you are one who is discouraged, troubled, without a real hope, what can you do? Seek Jehovah God. Learn about him from those who serve him. Humble yourself to call on him through Jesus Christ. He will reward you by directing you to a real hope of life under Christ's Kingdom rule, when "the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isa. 11:9.

\* For examples, see Psalms 17, 31, 35, 69 and 72.

# How TAX COLLECTORS



Were Viewed  
in  
*The First Century*

**T**HE tax collector has never been a popular man. Especially in the first century C.E. was this the case among the Jews residing in Galilee and Judea.

The Jews resented taxation by the Roman authority to such an extent that the possibility of additional taxes was enough to give rise to rebellion. One of these uprisings is mentioned at Acts 5:37: "Judas the Galilean rose in the days of the registration, and he drew off people after him."

A registration of this nature raised greater issues than just the expense of the tax: 'Who was now master in the land? Did not each new requirement add to the yoke that Rome was imposing? Although to keep the peace the Jews were given a measure of control, was it not time to fight against further infringements of their rights?' Thus thought men like Judas the Galilean. And, according to the historian Josephus, they urged their countrymen to resist, saying that 'they would be cowards if they submitted to paying taxes to the Romans.'

But, besides the acknowledgment of subjection to a foreign power, there was yet another reason for Jewish hatred of taxation. This becomes apparent when considering the manner in which taxes were collected and the abuses that resulted.

#### ROMAN SYSTEM FOR COLLECTING TAXES

Poll and land taxes were collected by imperial officers. But the authority to collect taxes on exports, imports and goods taken through a country by merchants was purchased at public auction. The right to collect such taxes went to the highest bidders. When they collected taxes, they made

a profit from tax receipts that exceeded the amount of their bid. These men, known as *publicani*, farmed out to subcontractors the right to collect taxes in certain portions of their territory. The subcontractors, in turn, were in charge of other men who personally collected the taxes.

Zacchaeus, for example, appears to have been the chief over the tax collectors in and around Jericho. (Luke 19:1, 2) And Matthew, whom Jesus called to be an apostle, was one who did the actual work of collecting taxes. Matthew, also known as Levi, apparently had his tax office in or near Capernaum.—Matt. 10:3; Mark 2:1, 14.

A tariff decree of Palmyra dating from 137 C.E. illustrates some of the abuses to which the tax system was subject. Its preamble states that in earlier (first century) times the rate of tax was not fixed. Charges were made by custom, often according to the whim of the tax collector. This frequently gave rise to disputes.

#### DISHONESTY OF TAX COLLECTORS

In the time of Jesus' earthly ministry tax collectors often were speculators and men of dubious moral qualities. Many were extortioners, putting fictitious tax values on goods and then offering to lend the money—with high interest rates—to those not able to pay. With stick in hand, and brass plate displayed prominently on their chest, they would stop caravans and demand that everything be tumbled out upon the ground for inspection. Thereafter they would take whatever suited them, frequently leading away the well-fed beasts of burden and substituting inferior ones.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Jewish tax collectors were held in low esteem. They being in the service of a foreign power, Rome, and in close contact with "unclean" Gentiles, their very presence was resented. The other Jews generally avoided voluntary association with them. (Matt. 18:17) Tax collectors were classified with persons known to be sinners, including harlots. (Matt. 9:11; 11:19; 21:32; Mark 2:15; Luke 5:30; 7:34) To cheat a tax collector was not considered a sin among the Jews. The Talmud classified tax collectors with murderers and robbers, and their gains as acquired by deceit and violence, unfit even to be accepted for charity.

#### JESUS' VIEW OF PAYING TAXES

Hence, strong and bitter feelings centered around the matter of paying taxes. Knowing this, Jesus' enemies tried to trap him in connection with the payment of taxes. On one occasion certain party followers of Herod and disciples of the Pharisees asked Jesus: "Is it lawful to pay head tax to Caesar or not?"—Matt. 22:17.

As the "head tax" was collected by imperial officers, Jesus' giving a negative answer would have been sedition against Rome. On the other hand, the Jews generally resented having to acknowledge subjection to Rome by paying this tax. A positive answer would therefore have resulted in Jesus' being looked on with disfavor among the Jews generally. Discerning the motive of the questioners, Jesus said to them: "Why do you put me to the test, hypocrites? Show me the head tax coin." The account continues: "They brought him a denarius. And he said to them: 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said: 'Caesar's.' Then he said to them: 'Pay back, therefore, Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God.'"—Matt. 22:18-21.

Thus Jesus stated a principle that his listeners had to apply themselves. If they chose to recognize that the money *belonged to "Caesar"* because of its being issued and having a particular value assigned by him, they could see the propriety of paying taxes. Then, too, they knew that the Roman state provided numerous services for its subject peoples. Taxes had to be paid to support these beneficial services.

#### JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD TAX COLLECTORS

Of course, Jesus Christ did not condone the corruption prevalent among tax collectors. But he was ever willing to help them spiritually. For this reason his enemies labeled him "a friend of tax collectors and sinners."—Matt. 11:19.

Nevertheless, no tax collector became a real "friend" of Jesus until such time as the man changed his course of life. Thus, in one of his illustrations, Jesus showed that the tax collector who humbly recognized himself as a sinner and repented was more righteous than the Pharisee who proudly viewed himself as righteous. (Luke 18:9-14) Among such repentant tax collectors were Matthew and Zacchaeus, both of whom came in line for membership in the kingdom of the heavens. —Compare Matthew 21:31, 32.

Jesus' attitude toward tax collectors should be a source of encouragement to all who feel that their course of life has been despicable in the eyes of Jehovah God. They can rest assured that, upon repenting and conforming their lives to the divine requirements set forth in the Bible, they will gain God's forgiveness and a clean conscience. The fact that men such as the wealthy tax collector Zacchaeus changed their ways illustrates that those who desire to take a like course of action can do so.—Isa. 55:7.

# Preaching the "Good News" IN THE FROZEN NORTH

"TODAY it is 30 degrees below zero with 10-mile-per-hour winds. With those winds the effect on human flesh is equivalent to 45 degrees below zero," reported one of Jehovah's witnesses in the far north, and he added: "Preaching from house to house this morning was a challenge."

This minister of Jehovah's witnesses and hundreds of thousands of others like him regularly bring the Bible's message to others—even in the frozen north. The Witnesses have put forth special efforts to reach people everywhere, including the inhabitants of isolated places.

In 1971 a group of Jehovah's witnesses went to remote Indian villages of Canada's Manitoba Province. As to the conditions they encountered, Donald Anders, a member of this group, remarks:

"The temperature often drops to 40 degrees below zero. The wind can really bite into a person and freeze parts of his face before he knows it. At times it would get so cold that the air would actually crystallize, becoming thick, preventing aircraft from landing due to the resulting poor visibility. Frost often forms on eyelids, nose and mouth.

"In such severe cold one must dress properly. We had to wear clothing that would prevent the wind from penetrating. Often the only thing visible about us were our eyes and mouth. A person could not survive otherwise."

#### "EVERY HOUSE HAS TO BE VISITED"

One of Jehovah's witnesses in Alaska observes: "Perhaps the greatest challenge

to getting the 'good news' preached here is not so much the sub-zero temperatures as the distance between settlements." Many settlements can be reached only by boat or aircraft. Nevertheless, Jehovah's witnesses have exerted themselves to contact people living in these distant areas. The minister quoted above mentions a technique employed to reach people in lone cabins of "bush" areas:

"When a lone cabin is sighted, Witnesses in the airplane 'buzz' the cabin by circling above it until the resident appears. On the next pass over the house, a small parcel containing samples of Bible literature and a letter explaining basic Bible truths is dropped for the householder. So, even in these secluded spots the Witnesses can 'drop in' with the 'good news.'"

An elder who visits congregations in the north of Norway describes efforts that have been made to reach isolated people there. "The congregation in Alta [over 200 miles above the Arctic Circle] has found some interest in five houses in Garkolbold, which is in the open country. To get there, they first have to go by car 53 miles [85 kilometers] to where the road ends, and then by snow scooter 22 miles [35 kilometers]. We often stay longer with those living far away, studying several chapters and discussing different questions."

Mattie Tiainen, a traveling minister of Jehovah's witnesses in the far north of Finland, tells of efforts by local Witnesses to reach isolated people in that area: "Some would take a bicycle and skis with them on a bus and travel more than 100 kilometers [62 miles] to distant villages, doing their preaching on the way back. The skis were necessary to work side roads, for they were not plowed."

Some houses were inaccessible in winter, but a careful record of them would be kept in order to return in the summer. It was at such a house located across a river that was impassable in the winter that Jehovah's witnesses found Kustaa Nurmela and his family. This quiet farmer readily accepted a Bible study. He became one of Jehovah's witnesses and trained his family to serve Jehovah too. How happy Brother Nurmela is that Jehovah's witnesses did not overlook his isolated house!

Brother Tiainen also tells of Kaisa Aho, a woman who learned of the Bible's promises when a witness of Jehovah called at their isolated house:

"Sister Aho had called at every house in the area. Sometimes her husband Veikko allowed her to make preaching trips to other villages, some of them quite far away. Journeys were made on foot in summer and on skis in winter. At times this sister skied 20 to 30 kilometers [12 to 18 miles] a day. A trip of several days might add up to 100 kilometers [62 miles]."

Why did she put forth such efforts to reach people? She explains: "Every house has to be visited, as that is the way that my husband and I were found."

#### EAGER TO LEARN BIBLE TRUTH

Many natives of the frozen north are humble and eager to learn the truth about God. They respond favorably to the idea of paradise being restored to earth. But simple speech, illustrations and pictures are often necessary to reach these humble people.

During the summers of 1972 and 1973 Morris Charland and Bryce Smith, two full-time ministers from Sept Iles, Quebec, set out to visit twenty-seven villages in the northeastern part of that province. Did they find residents of these places eager to hear the "good news" of God's kingdom? They report:

"Many villagers were not content with hearing the message only once. They followed us from door to door until a large procession developed. In one house it became so crowded that I had trouble bending down to get literature from my briefcase. There must have been at least thirty gathered in that house to hear the Kingdom message."

In the little village of Shaktolik, Alaska, one of Jehovah's witnesses approached an elderly Eskimo who was about to leave on his snow machine to get his wife and grandchildren who were fishing a few miles away. But when he learned the purpose of the visit, the man sent his son instead, saying: "This is too important for me to go. Please come in and tell me all about it." Soon his wife arrived and she, too, was overjoyed to hear the Bible's comforting promises. As the brother got up to leave, they ran to the door, saying: "No, please do not go. We want to hear all of it!"

Sometimes it takes only one visit of Jehovah's witnesses to spark the interest of a lover of truth. In 1972 the book "*Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie*" was placed with a young pop band leader in the north of Norway. After reading the book this man called the local office of the Watch Tower Society for more information. Given the address of an elder in Bodø, he traveled half a day to meet him and get more questions answered, using a tape recorder so as to be able to play back the conversation, which lasted several hours. Soon he broke up his band, resigned from the church and discontinued his membership in a political party. In June 1972, a few months after first hearing the truth, this young man was baptized as one of Jehovah's witnesses.

#### SOME DIFFICULTIES

Most natives of the frozen north are friendly and receptive to Bible truth. But

preaching the "good news" in these areas presents some difficulties too. For one thing the natives are often very shy, making it difficult to detect real interest. As a result, they are frequently reluctant to make changes in their lives that would cause them to appear different from their neighbors.

Religious prejudice can also cause difficulties. A clergyman in northern Finland wrote in a newspaper: "Jehovahites a pest in Pudasjärvi." He also falsely accused them of Communist teachings. Because of this opposition two of Jehovah's witnesses in that area had to search for more than a year to find permanent lodging. In another case a businessman was given three public warnings and was finally expelled from his church because he "allows Jehovah's witnesses to hold meetings in business premises that he owns." But in spite of some opposition, "all the people in those areas have heard the 'good news' of God's kingdom," according to a recent letter from the Watch Tower Society's Finland branch.

#### FROM OPPONENTS TO ZEALOUS SERVANTS OF GOD

But even where opposition is shown, the "good news" is reaching responsive hearts. In fact, some former opposers are now zealous witnesses of Jehovah. For example, in eastern Quebec one of Jehovah's witnesses called on a young married man who was hostile at first, accusing the Witness of trying to 'sell his religion.' When it was explained that Jesus himself preached from "village to village," the man accepted a copy of the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. (Luke 8:1; 13:22) He read it in one night and then

suggested having a meeting with the local Catholic priest. Here is how it turned out:

"The priest was very polite. I directed the conversation to subjects that I knew interested this young man, including the Trinity. The priest continually agreed with the Bible, asking many questions. Unable to contain himself any longer, the man insisted that the priest defend himself. 'Defend myself?' he replied. 'I am looking for the truth just as much as you are!'

"The next morning at Mass this priest announced that if anyone wanted to learn the Bible, he should talk to Jehovah's witnesses. A few months later I was surprised to learn that the young man had heartily embraced Bible truth, even going from house to house on his own to tell his neighbors about it. I do not know what happened to the priest, as he was transferred to another district shortly after our conversation."

In another experience Jehovah's witnesses met a man who had left his home in southern Canada to move north seeking true brotherhood and happiness among the Indians. This man was opposed at first. But later he read an article in *The Watchtower* entitled "How the Good News Unites Mankind." This information impressed him so much that he requested a home Bible study. A few months later he was baptized and shortly thereafter this formerly opposed man became a full-time preacher of the "good news." How did he feel about learning Bible truth? He expressed himself this way: "All that I was looking for—unity, peace, true Christian love among all races, and a hope of seeing a world without injustices—I have found in Jehovah's Word and earthly organization."

As Jesus foretold, the good news is being preached in all the inhabited earth—even in sparsely inhabited areas of the frozen north.



# *Become* IMITATORS OF GOD"

"Become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love."—Eph. 5:1, 2.

WELL has it been observed that "man is an imitative creature," and that "it is by imitation, far more than by precept, that we learn everything." The Greek philosopher Aristotle said: "To imitate is instinctive in man from his infancy."

<sup>2</sup> It is true. We all start out in life imitating. A child learns to walk, to feed himself, to talk, and so forth, not by reading books, not so much even by explicit instruction. Rather, it is by imitating his parents or his older brothers and sisters. And we continue through life imitating others, often unconsciously. In view of the importance of the imitative instinct in humankind, how vital it is to look to the right example! In this regard, there is no better example than God himself. "Become imitators of God," urges the inspired Christian apostle.—Eph. 5:1.

<sup>3</sup> Yet obviously the majority of mankind are imitating bad examples, for look at all the crime, immorality and war in which people seemingly everywhere engage. But, at the same time, most people say they are worshiping God and give evidence of this by

- 1, 2. (a) What can be said as to the instinct of imitation?
- (b) Due to the imitative instinct in humans, what example is needed?
3. What apparent contradiction exists, giving rise to what questions?

performing various religious acts. What accounts for this apparent contradiction? How is it that people do so many bad things, and yet claim to worship God? Can a person really worship God, and yet fail to imitate him?

#### GODS WHO ARE IMITATED

<sup>4</sup> Man was created not only with the instinct to imitate but also with the instinct to worship. Has mankind strongly manifested this inclination? *The World Book Encyclopedia*\* tells us: "There has never been a people that did not have some form of religion." However, a key point to keep in mind is that peoples have worshiped many different gods besides the true God, just as the Bible says: "There are many 'gods' and many 'lords.'" (1 Cor. 8:5) And yet whatever their religion, people have imitated, or reflected, in their lives the qualities of the god they worship. A person simply cannot worship a god without, to a great extent, imitating that god.

<sup>5</sup> For example, archaeologists tell us of the bloodthirsty and immoral gods that the ancient Canaanites worshiped. And so, as we would expect, history reveals that the Canaanite peoples were extremely cruel and immoral, carrying on horrible religious rites that included even human sacrifices. The Bible also notes that the Judean kings Ahaz and Manasseh began to worship the gods of the Canaanites, even going so far as to offer their own children in fiery sacrifice to them! (2 Ki. 16:1-3; 21:1-6) Obviously, the inspired Bible admonition

\* Volume 16, page 207 (1970 edition).

4. (a) What can be said as to the human instinct to worship? (b) What effect does the worship of a god have upon the worshipers?
5. The worship of Canaanite gods had what effect, and why?

to "become imitators of God" did not mean that we should imitate the gods of these peoples!

\* Well, what is the situation in the lands of Christendom? What god is worshiped by the peoples there? Is it the God of the Bible, as is commonly believed? Although the religions of Christendom have the Bible, this does not mean that they believe it, follow it, or even are worshiping the God whose word the Bible is. The Israelites of old also had God's law, which, among other things, says: "There should not be found in you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire." (Deut. 18:9-12) And yet, as we have seen, even some of their kings did not heed this law. Similarly, Christendom has disregarded God and his Word.

\* Regarding Christendom's belief in a god that consigns millions of mankind to a fiery hell, *The Encyclopedia Americana* says: "Hell as generally understood is the abode of evil spirits; the infernal regions, . . . whither lost or condemned souls go after death to suffer indescribable torments and eternal punishment."\* Since the peoples of Christendom have worshiped a god that approves such torture, this helps to explain why the history of Christendom has been one of religious wars, of cruel persecution and of diabolical tortures. The peoples have simply reflected the qualities of the god they worship.

\* Thus, when the Spanish scholar Michael Servetus was tried as a "heretic," he was sentenced to be burned alive at the instigation of religious leaders. This fiendish form of execution, according to *Institutes of Ecclesiastical History*,† "was then almost universally approved and practised," by both Catholics and Protestants.

\* Volume 14, page 81 (1959 edition).

† By John Lawrence Von Mosheim, Volume 3, page 258 (1832 edition).

6-8. (a) Why does simply having the Bible not mean that the God of the Bible is being worshiped? (b) What kind of god is worshiped in Christendom, and how are the qualities of this god reflected in worshipers?

Even in modern times it was in Christendom that the horrible world wars began, and the clergy on both sides of the battle lines prayed to their god for the victory and blessing of the armies of their nation.‡ Surely we do not want to be imitators of either this god of Christendom or its worshipers!

\* It should not be surprising that millions of disillusioned persons, particularly the youth, have quit worshiping in the churches of Christendom. Yet these persons still have the instinctive desire to worship. They often satisfy this desire by making idols of popular "rock" artists, as well as of motion-picture and sports stars. Describing a popular sports "god," the New York *Times* of July 26, 1973, noted that he seems certain "to take the foremost place in the pantheon of professional sports, America's secular religion." Youths often seek to imitate these entertainment and sports "gods," copying their hairstyles, clothes, language and morals. But in doing this, whom are they actually worshiping?

\* The Bible speaks very frankly about sacrifices or adoration given to idol-gods. In fact, what it says may come as a real shock to you. Writing under divine inspiration, the Christian apostle Paul explained: "What, then, am I to say? That what is sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No; but I say that the things which the nations sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God." (1 Cor. 10:19, 20) Yes, worshipful adoration, whether it be of an idol-god of wood and stone or of an entertainment or sports idol, actually goes to "the god of

‡ See *Awake!* of April 22, 1972, for documentation of the churches' support of the warring nations during the world wars.

9. What are some popular "gods" worshiped and imitated by many persons today?

10, 11. (a) To whom does the worshipful adoration given to modern-day idol-gods go, as indicated by 1 Corinthians 10:19, 20? (b) What evidence is there that the Devil and his demons receive the worship given to popular idol-gods?

this system of things," Satan the Devil, and his demons! (2 Cor. 4:4) But what evidence is there that, in reality, the demons receive this worshipful adoration?

<sup>11</sup> Well, what is the trend among the devotees of popular entertainment and sports idols? Is the trend today toward showing the admirable qualities of truth, purity and consideration for the welfare of others? No; rather, the trend is toward dishonesty, immorality, profanity and running roughshod over others. This is what devotees see their idols doing. A famous Big League baseball manager said recently: "You see how they [the players] carry on, the wild way they act. If the players do this, why not the fans?" (New York Times, October 13, 1973) Is it not clear, then, that imitating imperfect men as "idols" turns people from the worship of the true God? Thus worshipful adoration given them actually goes to the Devil and his demons, even as the Bible indicates. (John 8:44) We certainly do not want to imitate either human "gods" or the invisible demons, do we?

#### IMITATE THE TRUE GOD

<sup>12</sup> How vital, therefore, that we heed the apostolic admonition: "Become imitators of God, as beloved children." (Eph. 5:1) Doing so is a safeguard against becoming imitators of any false gods. But who is the true God that we are urged to imitate? The inspired Bible psalmist answers, addressing that One: "You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." (Ps. 83:18) It is because of his Creatorship of all things that Jehovah is indeed GOD, as the prophet Jeremiah explained: "Jehovah is in truth God. . . . He is the Maker of the earth by his power, the One firmly establishing the productive land by his wisdom, and the

12. Who is the true God we are urged to imitate, and why may the thought of imitating him stagger the imagination?

One who by his understanding stretched out the heavens." (Jer. 10:10-12) When we consider the vastness of the universe, with its billions of starry galaxies, truly how small and insignificant we are compared to the Great Creator, Jehovah! The very thought of imitating Him may seem staggering to our imagination. How is it possible?

<sup>13</sup> It is possible because of the way Jehovah God created us. The Bible explains: "God proceeded to create the man *in his image*, in God's image he created him; male and female he created them." (Gen. 1:27) Being made in God's image does not mean that humans were made so as to look like God, but, rather, that God put in the first humans the potential, the ability to exercise His own qualities. They became his children. And does not a son tend to act like his father, or a daughter like her mother? In fact, sometimes a son is so much like his father that he is called "a chip off the old block." And so it should be with us. For recall that we are urged to "become imitators of God, as *beloved children*." (Eph. 5:1) But how can we show that, as beloved children, we are imitating the true God Jehovah, and not any false gods?

<sup>14</sup> Looking again at the apostolic admonition, we find the principal way that we can show we are imitating God. It says: "Become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love." (Eph. 5:1, 2) Yes, Jehovah God is the very personification of love. (1 John 4:8) The inspired Bible psalmist writes: "Jehovah is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and great in loving-kindness. Jehovah is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works."—Ps. 145:8, 9.

<sup>15</sup> We prove that we are worshipers of

13. Why is it not only possible, but very reasonable that humans should imitate Jehovah?

14, 15. (a) What is the principal way that humans show they are imitating Jehovah God? (b) What urgings do we receive to imitate God's qualities?

Jehovah by imitating his loving, merciful qualities. We are urged to do this, even as God's Son Jesus Christ said: "Continue becoming merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Also, the apostle Peter wrote: "In accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct, because it is written: 'You must be holy, because I am holy.'" —Luke 6:36; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; Matt. 5:44, 45.

<sup>18</sup> Just imagine how desirable it would be if everyone on earth would imitate Jehovah God, "and go on walking in love"! There would be no unholy, wicked conduct—no stealing, no fighting, no immorality; in fact, no one would do anything to hurt others. Rather, all would treat their fellows with kindness, love and mercy, for that is the example set by God. Would you like to live when everyone does God's will and walks in love? You can, for it is Jehovah God's purpose that only such persons continue to live on earth. God's recorded promises are soon now to be fulfilled. This means an end to this world of wicked mankind, followed by a righteous new system of things for those doing his will.—1 John 2:17; 2 Pet. 3:5-7, 13.

<sup>19</sup> However, to qualify to live forever in Jehovah's new system it is vital that you *now* become an imitator of God. This requires a personal effort on your part to get to know Jehovah, for the vast majority of mankind are, whether they realize it or not, imitating "the ruler of this world," Satan the Devil. "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one," the Bible explains. And do not the characteristics of the nations reflect that their real god and ruler is indeed Satan the Devil?—John 12:31; 1 John 5:19; 2 Cor. 4:4.

16. What would it be like if everyone on earth imitated God, and what evidence do we have that everyone soon will?

17, 18. (a) Why is it vital to become an imitator of God now, and why does it require such effort to imitate God now? (b) What obligation does our being God's ambassadors or envoys place upon us?

<sup>18</sup> But true Christians are different. "They are no part of the world," Jesus said. (John 17:16) They keep separate from this world's politics and unrighteous ways, for they must serve as ambassadors or envoys of God's government, properly representing Jehovah God, even as we read: "We are therefore ambassadors substituting for Christ, as though *God* were making entreaty through us." Is it not true that only if we reflect God's personality it can be said that God himself is making entreaty through us?—2 Cor. 5:20.

#### AIDS TO IMITATING GOD

<sup>19</sup> Of course, in order to imitate anyone we must get to know him. And it is the same with imitating God. Contrary to what some may think, the fact that God is invisible is not an insurmountable obstacle to our really knowing and imitating him. For example, a famous architect may have been dead for some time. Yet by becoming acquainted with his works—the buildings, bridges and other edifices that he constructed—a person may be aided, to an extent, to imitate the methods he used in his work. Similarly, all of Jehovah's creations around us can serve as a marvelous aid for us to get to know and imitate him, as the apostle Paul indicated when he said: "His invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made."—Rom. 1:20.

<sup>20</sup> Yes, the so-called "Book of Creation" can tell us things that can aid us to imitate God. As for one example, consider the way God has clothed the earth with such beauty and pleasantness. There are gorgeous sunsets, multicolored flowers, lush green meadows, songs of birds, tangy air filled with the fragrances of the deep woods, and a great variety and abundance

19. Why is the fact that God is invisible not an insurmountable obstacle to our really knowing and imitating him?

20. How can the so-called "Book of Creation" aid us to imitate God?

of delicious fruits and nuts and other foods. Clearly, one can learn from creation that God is a wonderful Provider who is genuinely concerned with the happiness of his earthly children. Is not an appreciative person motivated to imitate that example? For instance, should not a parent be moved by God's example to provide what is good, pleasant and upbuilding for the benefit and happiness of his family, thus imitating his heavenly Father?—Isa. 64:8; Luke 6:35.

<sup>21</sup> However, the "Book of Creation" is limited in the aid it furnishes us to imitate God, even as buildings are of limited value in aiding a student to imitate the architect who designed them. Studying books written by and about the architect, for example, would be of much greater aid in becoming acquainted with him and imitating him. Similarly, the best aid to becoming acquainted with God and imitating him is the Book that God has had written to tell about himself. That book is the Holy Bible. However, merely possessing the Bible, or even simply reading it, will not necessarily help you to imitate Jehovah God. You need to *study* the Bible. You need, in effect, to "listen intently" to God. (Isa. 55:2, 3) How can you do this? By doing as Joshua of old was commanded to do: "This book of the law should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an undertone read in it day and night, in order that you may take care to do ac-

cording to all that is written in it."—Josh. 1:8.

<sup>22</sup> Thus, in order to imitate God we must do even more than read and study the Bible. We must understand and appreciate it, so as to be motivated to do all that God desires us to do. We need to get "accurate knowledge" concerning God's will and purposes. It is this that the apostle Paul showed could change our life to conform to God's example. He wrote: "Strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe yourselves with the new personality, which *through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it.*" (Col. 3:9, 10) It is only by taking in this "accurate knowledge" that we can truly conform ourselves to the image of God, imitating his marvelous qualities of love, kindness and mercy. We should let the very appeal of these Godly qualities motivate our hearts.

<sup>23</sup> Aiding us also to imitate Jehovah God are the reasons given in his Word for our doing so. Would we have God forgive us? Then we must imitate him by being forgiving. As Jesus said in concluding his illustration about the unforgiving slave: "In like manner my heavenly Father will also deal with you if you do not forgive each one his brother from your hearts." And

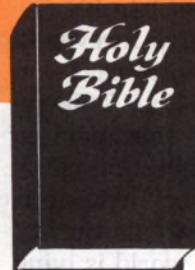
21. (a) What is the best aid to imitating God, and is merely possessing it sufficient? (b) How can we listen to God?

22. What is required to imitate God, to change our life to conform to his example?

23. What vital reason is there for us to imitate God in being forgiving to others?



TO "BECOME IMITATORS OF GOD,"  
WE NEED MORE THAN THE "BOOK OF  
CREATION"; WE MUST READ  
AND UNDERSTAND  
THE HOLY BIBLE



wrote the apostle Paul: "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you." No question about it, by considering carefully God's Word we will both learn how to imitate Jehovah God and also be motivated to do so.—Matt. 18:35; Eph. 4:32.

<sup>24</sup> Another aid to help us to imitate God is prayer. In prayer we speak to Jehovah. We open our hearts to him, calling upon him in time of trouble, when we have big decisions to make, as well as talking to him about everyday matters. And we feel his sustaining power, guidance and comfort, even as the Bible psalmist promised: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." (Ps. 55:22) Thus prayer makes Jehovah more real to us and aids us to imitate him.

#### EXAMPLES OF IMITATORS OF GOD

<sup>25</sup> We also are helped to imitate God by the example of those who themselves are imitators of God. The best example, of course, is Jesus Christ. In fact, one of the main reasons why he came to earth was to make known his heavenly Father to us. And he imitated his Father so perfectly that, had Jehovah God been on earth, he would have conducted himself exactly as Jesus did. That is why Jesus could say: "He that has seen me has seen the Father also."—John 14:9.

<sup>26</sup> But there are others described in the Bible who faithfully imitated Jesus Christ in his imitating God, and we can also be helped to imitate God by looking to their examples. (Heb. chap. 11) The apostle Paul was just such a person, and that is why he could wisely encourage: "Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1) Imitating the example of

24. How is prayer an aid for us in imitating God? 25, 26. (a) What is the outstanding example of imitating God, and to what extent did he do this? (b) What other fine examples do the Scriptures urge us to imitate?

such persons of faith will surely help us to imitate Jehovah God.

<sup>27</sup> We should not assume, however, that only people of long ago set a fine example of imitating God. Christians are further counseled to "remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith." (Heb. 13:7) There are many people living today who are conforming their lives to God's ways. By associating regularly with them you can be helped greatly to become an imitator of God. Who are these people?

<sup>28</sup> Since humans are imitative creatures who invariably reflect in their lives the qualities of the god they worship, the way to find out is to locate a people who not merely profess to follow the Bible, the Word of the true God, but actually practice what it says. In this connection observe the report in the newspaper *Journal de Montréal* of July 27, 1973, regarding a religious gathering of more than 28,000 persons in Montreal:

"Jehovah's Witnesses are very, very civilized people. Courtesy is their way of life. Neatness, cleanliness, and decency also. And this was easily noticeable at their assembly. . . . No one steps on your feet, nor do you step on any paper. It's almost perfect cleanliness."

"You almost feel as though you were in paradise, as the atmosphere is relaxed, peaceful, and serene. And everyone is dressed modestly, and nobody's trying to show off or draw attention to themselves as they do at baseball games."

"And especially, no discrimination. People of all races enjoy fellowship together. There is no one with hidden motives or reservations."

"Decidedly, there is a great lesson to be learned from the conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses. In observing them, one would think that America has been transformed!"

27, 28. (a) By what means can we locate the people today who are imitating God? (b) To whom does evidence point as being the people who are truly imitating God today?

<sup>29</sup> Yes, Jehovah's witnesses are that people imitating God today. Therefore, if you keep company with them regularly, you will be helped greatly to heed the apostolic admonition: "Become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walk-

29. Why is it vital that we associate closely with the people imitating God?

ing in love." (Eph. 5:1, 2) In the strenuous times ahead, you cannot expect to imitate God faithfully without availingly yourself of the aids he has provided. And associating closely with those who are doing God's will is a vital aid to life with perfection in view in Jehovah's righteous new system.—2 Pet. 3:13; Heb. 10:24, 25.

**W**HEN you truly admire someone, do you not want to be like him? You may even make a deliberate effort to imitate him. Children are like that. Many young boys are heard to say, "When I grow up I'm going to be just like my daddy." Should we not feel similarly about our heavenly Father, Jehovah God? How truly desirable he is in every way! How bountifully he provides for us, even to the extent of making arrangements for us to be ransomed from sin and death to enjoy everlasting life! (John 3:16; Ps. 145:16) Should we not be moved to want to be like God? But in what ways can we imitate him? To what extent can we be like God?

<sup>2</sup> It may surprise you to what extent Jesus Christ emphasized that we need to be like God. In his Sermon on the Mount he said: "You must accordingly be *perfect*, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) But can we imperfect crea-

1. How should we feel toward our heavenly Father, and why?

2. (a) Why is it possible for us to be perfect as God is perfect? (b) In what sense is the English word "perfect" frequently used, and how does this compare with the meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words translated "perfect"?

# In What Ways Can We "BECOME IMITATORS OF GOD"?

"You must accordingly be perfect,  
as your heavenly Father is perfect."  
—Matt. 5:48.

tures be perfect? Yes, because in the Scriptures, even as in our everyday conversation, the word "perfect" is used in a relative sense. Thus it might be said that a thing is perfect if it completely or fully serves the purpose for which it is intended. Because this is so, we find that such servants of God as Noah and Job were spoken of as being "perfect." (Gen. 6:9; Job 2:3, *Authorized Version, Leeser Version*) The Hebrew and Greek words here translated "perfect" have the sense of being

'complete, fully developed, intact,' even as the English word "perfect" also is defined as "complete, sound, flawless."

<sup>3</sup> True, men such as Noah and Job were not "perfect" in the sense of being sinless, but the sum total of what they did was what God required of them, considering the time when they lived and their circumstances. They pleased God; they did what he rightly expected of them. Thus they were faultless, blameless, perfect in that sense.

3, 4. (a) In what sense were Noah and Job perfect? (b) In what sense can we be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect?

<sup>4</sup> With these thoughts in mind we can understand the words of Jesus. When he said, "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," he did not mean he expected us to be sinless, but, rather, to be perfect in certain other ways or respects. This can be seen from the context of Jesus' words. He had stated that God sends the sunshine and the rain not only upon the good and righteous, but also upon the unrighteous and the wicked ones. So, if we would be imitators of God, perfect as he is perfect, we must not only show kindness, mercy and generosity to our relatives, our friends, or those of our own race or nationality, but also be ready and willing to do good wherever an opportunity or a need presents itself. Then it can be said that our love is complete, is perfect.

<sup>5</sup> To be imitators of God by being perfect even as He is perfect, we also must be doing all we can in the interest of pure worship. Jesus Christ showed this when a rich young man came up to him and asked what he must do to inherit everlasting life. Jesus explained: "If you want to be perfect, go sell your belongings and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, and come be my follower." (Matt. 19:16-23) Apparently the young man was distracted from serving God wholesouled by his many material possessions. His heart was turned toward his riches. Jesus realized that he would be benefited if he unburdened himself of these distractions. They were preventing him from being perfect or complete in his service to God.

<sup>6</sup> What meaning do Jesus' words about being "perfect" have for us today? This: We simply cannot be content with giving token service to God. We must love Jehovah God with our *whole* mind, heart, soul and strength, and not allow personal desires or ambitions to interfere with our

complete devotion to Him. Thus if we have no Scriptural obligations or physical handicaps to keep us from sharing full time in preaching the good news of God's kingdom to others, we will be sharing in the full-time preaching work. We cannot be "perfect" if we hold back in our service to God.

#### BEING UPRIGHT AND JUST

<sup>7</sup> To 'be perfect as God is perfect' involves loving what he loves. This would include pursuing that which is just and right. The Bible tells us that God is "a lover of justice," and that in him "there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Ps. 37:28; Deut. 32:4) Therefore, to be "imitators of God" we must be honest in all our dealings, and, if we are employed, that includes our dealings with our employer. (Eph. 5:1) Today when dishonesty is so rampant, it is common for persons to go along with practices that are really wrong, thus, in effect, following "after the crowd for evil ends."—Ex. 23:2.

<sup>8</sup> For example, many employees customarily do as little as they possibly can and still hold their jobs, or when no one is looking they may take things that do not belong to them. We simply could not do such things and be imitators of God. Common today, too, is the practice of taking advantage of welfare and unemployment provisions that do not apply to one and of borrowing and not paying back. However, to "be perfect" in justice we must "make honest provision . . . in the sight of men," keeping our "conduct fine among the nations."—Ps. 37:21; 2 Cor. 8:21; 1 Pet. 2:12.

<sup>9</sup> To imitate God in his justice also requires that we be conscientious in the payment of taxes. God's Word tells us to "pay back Caesar's things to Caesar," and to

5, 6. (a) Why, apparently, did Jesus tell a certain rich young man that he fell short of being perfect? (b) What lesson can we today learn from this first-century experience?

7, 8. (a) What do the Scriptures say as to Jehovah God's being just? (b) To imitate God as to justice, what is required of us if we are secularly employed? 9. What does Godlike justice require of us in our relationship to "Caesar"?

"render to all their dues, to him who calls for the tax, the tax." (Mark 12:17; Rom. 13:7) A well-to-do Christian not so long ago had to be disfellowshiped from the Christian congregation of Jehovah's witnesses for refusing to heed these Scriptural injunctions. Actually, he was a very rare exception, like Achan in ancient Israel, for Jehovah's witnesses as a whole have a fine reputation as law-abiding taxpayers. (Josh. 7:1-26) Thus, the German newspaper *Sindelfinger Zeitung* carried an article with the heading "The Most Honest People . . . Are Jehovah's Witnesses." It spoke about the matter of paying taxes, and concluded with the statement: "The Jehovah's Witnesses are recognizably the most honest people in the Federal Republic, says the Federal Ministry of Finance." That is the way it should be, seeing that the very purpose of Jehovah's witnesses is to be imitators of God.

#### FAITHFUL AND DEPENDABLE

<sup>10</sup> Jehovah God himself sets a shining example for us to imitate in being faithful and dependable. As God's prophet Moses said to his people Israel: "You well know that Jehovah your God is the true God, the faithful God, keeping covenant and loving-kindness." (Deut. 7:9) Moses' successor Joshua also testified to this same fact, saying: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed." Jehovah is our "faithful Creator" to whom we can with utmost confidence and trust "keep on commanding" our souls.—Josh. 23:14; 1 Pet. 4:19; 1 Cor. 10:13.

<sup>11</sup> So, then, as imitators of Jehovah God

10. What do the Scriptures say about Jehovah God as being faithful and dependable?

11. (a) What responsibilities do we have toward God as dedicated children of his? (b) How can we show our faithful dependability in carrying out the principal work of God's servants today?

we, too, must be faithful and dependable. We have committed to us such personal assets as time, money, energy and personal influence. We need to be faithful in the stewardship of these. (1 Cor. 4:1, 2) Have we told Jehovah that we want to be one of his children, and that we will serve him as long as we live? Are we faithfully keeping our word to do this? The principal work that Jehovah wants his servants to do now is to preach about his kingdom, the government that will destroy wickedness and bring peace to the earth. In a prophecy that has fulfillment in our day, Jesus said: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth . . . and then the end will come." (Matt. 24:14) Are we faithful in doing this preaching? Do we engage in it regularly, calling on all the people in the area where we have been assigned to preach? Do we make return visits on all persons who show an interest in wanting to know more about God? Are we dependable when it comes to conducting home Bible studies with such persons?

<sup>12</sup> There is another area in which it is vital that we be faithful and dependable, and that is in our family relationships. Are we as married Christians keeping our vows to love and cherish each other? Or do we let other interests or matters, such as ambitions of one kind or another, cause us to "shortchange" our marital partner? Do we faithfully limit our sex interest to our mate, or is there a wandering of desire at times? Love and empathy will help us to be faithful and dependable. Doing so, we will be imitating Jehovah, proving ourselves perfect as he is perfect. For Jehovah is certainly the faithful and dependable husbandly Owner of his wifely organization.—Isa. 54:1, 5.

<sup>13</sup> And what about you young folks? Are

12, 13. (a) How can we show Godlike dependability in the marital relationship? (b) How can youthful Christians show that they are dependable?

you imitating God by being dependable and faithful? For example, do you take an interest in your school assignments and care for them diligently? Do you show yourselves reliable when it comes to duties about the house? When father comes home at night, does he find that you have performed the tasks he may have given you to do? In your youth you have the opportunity to remember your Grand Creator by doing things that will cause you to become precious in his eyes.—Eccl. 12:1.

#### HATE WHAT GOD HATES

<sup>14</sup> Still another way in which we can "become imitators of God," and thus prove ourselves perfect as He is perfect, is by hating what God hates. What does he hate? He tells us: "I, Jehovah, am . . . hating robbery along with unrighteousness." "There are six things that Jehovah does hate; yes, seven are things detestable to his soul: lofty eyes, a false tongue, and hands that are shedding innocent blood, a heart fabricating hurtful schemes, feet that are in a hurry to run to badness, a false witness that launches forth lies, and anyone sending forth contentions among brothers." Also, the Bible encourages: "You lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad." "Abhor what is wicked."—Isa. 61:8; Prov. 6:16-19; Ps. 97:10; Rom. 12:9.

<sup>15</sup> What does it mean to "hate what is bad"? It means to have an 'intense feeling of aversion' toward what is bad, to 'dislike it exceedingly.' Yes, it is not enough that we be indifferent or neutral toward what is wicked or bad. What is bad can at times be so appealing to our fallen tendencies; it can promise excitement, sensual pleasure or even wealth and ease. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we regard what is bad with detestation. How can we do this?

14. In imitation of Jehovah, what are some of the things we should hate?

15. (a) What does it mean to 'hate what is bad'? (b) Why is it vital that we hate what is bad?

<sup>16</sup> First of all, we can sincerely endeavor to keep all forms of badness from taking root in us by guarding our hearts, our affections, desires and emotions. (Prov. 4:23; 1 Pet. 3:10, 11) An important way to do this is by being careful about what books, magazines and newspaper articles we read. Do we have a morbid curiosity regarding wickedness to the point that we relish reading about what is bad? Then we cannot be said to be hating it. And if we hate what is bad, we will not be watching TV programs or movies that feature violence, brutality, sexual immorality and other forms of badness. We cannot keep viewing such things without becoming calloused and no longer hating them; in fact, we will even come to desire such things.

<sup>17</sup> Also, if we are to become imitators of Jehovah by hating what is bad we will be extremely careful regarding the persons we choose as companions, remembering that "bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Cor. 15:33) This would include our giving loyal support to the action of a congregational judicial committee when it disfellowships a person because of conduct unbecoming a Christian. (1 Cor. 5:1-13) Such a person is not good association. We should feel righteously indignant over the badness in which he engaged, and the reproach his conduct brought upon Jehovah God and the Christian congregation. We should consider how his bad course could stumble new or immature Christians. We should react as did the apostle Paul when he said: "Who is stumbled, and I am not incensed?"—2 Cor. 11:29.

#### IMITATING GOD AS TO LOVE

<sup>18</sup> But, above all, the way that we can prove ourselves 'perfect as our Father is

16. How can we avoid having badness take root and develop in us?

17. (a) Why must we be careful about our associations? (b) How should we view any disfellowshipping action of the judicial committee, and why?

18. (a) What is the finest way we can 'prove ourselves perfect' as God is? (b) What reasons do we have to imitate him in this way?

perfect' is by displaying the fine quality of love. How his Word magnifies this quality of his! "God IS love," the Bible says. Especially has God recommended "his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Surely this loving provision of his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, should cause us to respond appreciatively! The apostle John showed this, saying: "If this is how God loved us, then we are ourselves under obligation to love one another."—1 John 4:9-11, 16; Rom. 5:8.

<sup>19</sup> Among the ways we can be like God as to love is by being generous. Jehovah is the Giver of "every good gift and every perfect present," and "he gives generously to all and without reproaching." (Jas. 1:17, 5) With what can we be generous so as to be imitators of God? For one thing, we have the truth regarding God's purposes. And since we have freely received it, so we should freely give it by sharing the Kingdom good news with others on every appropriate occasion. We can also manifest Godlike generosity by giving generously of our material means toward the support of the Kingdom preaching work locally and world wide. Yet another way to show generosity is by helping any of our fellow Christians who may be in need. It is absolutely vital that we demonstrate such generosity, for it is an important way that we heed Jesus' command to "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." —Matt. 5:46-48; 1 John 3:17, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Another way in which we can imitate God as to love is by being forgiving. In fact, it is in connection with God's being forgiving that we are specifically counseled to become imitators of God. Note the context of the apostolic admonition that we

have had under consideration: "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you. Therefore, become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love." —Eph. 4:32-5:2.

<sup>21</sup> Since we are all imperfect and are limited in wisdom, understanding and discernment, should we not be able to make allowances for the sins of our Christian brothers and be ready to forgive them? Yes, love "covers a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. 4:8) If Jehovah 'remembers that we are but dust' and so 'puts our transgressions as far from us as the sunrise is from the sunset,' should not we imperfect creatures be even more willing to be forgiving toward those who may transgress against us and who ask our forgiveness? Since God forgives "in a large way," should not we imitate him also in this? That means that we want to be willing to forgive "seventy-seven times," as Jesus told Peter to do, including even serious offenses against us if the offender shows true repentance.—Ps. 103:8-14; Isa. 55:7; Matt. 18:21-35.

<sup>22</sup> Yet another way in which God sets such a loving example for us is by being slow to anger and long-suffering. Pointing toward this appealing aspect of God's personality, the apostle Peter wrote: "Jehovah . . . is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9) How slow to anger God showed himself to be in dealing with his nation of Israel during the reign of the kings! The Bible says: "Jehovah the God of their forefathers kept sending against them by means of his messengers, sending again and again, because he felt compassion for his people."—2 Chron. 36:15.

19. In what ways can we show Godlike generosity?  
20, 21. (a) In connection with what specifically are we urged to "become imitators of God"? (b) How can we imitate God by being forgiving?

22-24. (a) What does the Bible say as to Jehovah's being long-suffering? (b) How can all of us imitate Jehovah and also show ourselves long-suffering?

<sup>23</sup> We can imitate this aspect of God's love by avoiding becoming disturbed because of the shortcomings of others. At times those over whom one presides may show indifference or carelessness, and so how easy it is then for an overseer to "fly off the handle," as the saying goes. But to be imitators of God overseers also need to be patient, long-suffering and slow to anger.

<sup>24</sup> Particularly in the family circle should we want to exercise this quality of long-suffering. It is common for husbands of the world to be impatient with their wives. How fitting, therefore, the counsel of the apostle Paul to Christians: "Husbands, keep on loving your wives and do not be bitterly angry with them"! (Col. 3:19) Very appropriate, too, are the apostle Peter's words regarding treatment of wives. "You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with them 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." Heeding this counsel is just as important as carrying out God's will to preach his Kingdom message earth wide.—1 Pet. 3:7.

<sup>25</sup> Still another way in which we need to imitate God if we are to be perfect as he is perfect is in imitation of his loving endurance. "Love . . . endures all things," the Bible says. (1 Cor. 13:4, 7) Does God manifest endurance? Yes, for he continues to do right, despite feeling pain and hurt when his creatures go wrong. (Ps. 78:40, 41) As the inspired apostle reminds us: "God . . . tolerated with much long-suffering vessels of wrath made fit for destruction." Why? Because of his love, so that he "might make known the riches of

his glory upon vessels of mercy."—Rom. 9:22, 23.

<sup>26</sup> If we would be imitators of God as to his love we too must manifest endurance. We may "not give up in doing what is fine." (Gal. 6:9) Love will help us to continue faithful in our work of Kingdom-preaching despite the indifference of the people we speak to, or even their opposition. We may be serving at a Bethel home where Bible literature is produced to facilitate the earth-wide Kingdom preaching. Our duties there may be routine, but love for Jehovah God will help us to endure therein, knowing that it works toward the vindication of God's name and the salvation of others, and is proof of our appreciation for all that he has done for us.

#### WHY STRIVE TO BE PERFECT AS GOD IS?

<sup>27</sup> Surely there is much involved in being an imitator of God and thus proving ourselves perfect as he is perfect! But notice that this matter of being "perfect" is not optional. Jesus said: "You *must* accordingly be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5:48) Yes, being just and upright, faithful and dependable, hating what God hates, and showing love by being generous, forgiving, long-suffering and exercising endurance is absolutely vital if we are to be true Christians, "imitators of God, as beloved children." (Eph. 5:1) But, really, to be perfect as God is perfect results in no great hardship or sacrifice on our part. Rather, we are benefited. For is not Jehovah the "happy God"? (1 Tim. 1:11) Imitating Him will contribute to our happiness too. How so?

<sup>28</sup> For one thing, by imitating Jehovah we make his heart rejoice, even as he tells us: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him

25, 26. (a) How has God shown endurance? (b) How can we manifest Godlike endurance?

27, 28. (a) Is the matter of being perfect as God is perfect optional? (b) Why does it work to our happiness to be perfect as God is perfect?

that is taunting me." (Prov. 27:11) Certainly we can be happy if our course of life is making our heavenly Father rejoice, can we not? And by imitating God we will have not only happiness, peace of mind

and contentment now, but also the sure hope of everlasting life in his new system of things. Surely there is every reason to strive to 'be perfect as our heavenly Father, Jehovah God, is perfect'!

## DO WE NEED Priesthood?

**T**HREE is no doubt that people need help. Sickness takes a dreadful toll. Crime constitutes an ever-increasing menace. Immorality causes loathsome diseases as well as all kinds of calamity and violence. Many people are despondent, without hope, not knowing what to do.—Luke 21:25, 26.

Priests number in the thousands today, representing various religious organizations. There are priests of the different branches of the Catholic Church, Episcopal priests, also Buddhist, Shinto and other non-Christian priests. Have they alleviated the suffering and halted the tide of crime, immorality, sickness and death?

Many of these priests, especially among Christendom's religions, say No, and they are leaving the priesthood for something that they feel is more effective or satisfying. Each one of us can view the world situation and answer for himself as to whether the world's priests have really benefited the people.

What is a priest supposed to do? Can he be expected to eliminate all these bad conditions among mankind? No earthly priest can do that, but, if he is the right kind of priest, he can help to keep the

people he serves in good standing with God. He can aid them to make over their lives and personalities to be peaceful, respectable, right-living persons. He can help them to eliminate from their lives many of the causes of distress that mankind in general suffer. He can give them hope and direct them in a purposeful way of life.

We cannot really see, by looking at the priests of the world's religions, what a priest of God should be. But if we look at the priesthood that God himself set up over Israel in ancient times, we find that they were really helpful to the people. They interceded before God in the people's behalf. They instructed the people in the right way to live. They safeguarded the people's health to a great extent. This they did by seeing to the morality and even the physical cleanliness of the people.—Lev. chaps. 11-15.

Someone may say, 'But are not these things the job of government?' Partly so, but there are things that no government can do by itself. That is one reason why the godless Communistic form of government can never bring peace and happiness to its subjects. Ancient Israel had good government, a God-established gov-

ernment, and God's laws were enforced when good kings ruled. Nevertheless, God also provided a priesthood for them. Why?

If there were no sins against the living God, there would be no need for a priest. The perfect man Adam in Eden needed no priest, for he was created sinless by Jehovah God. (Gen. 2:7, 8; Eccl. 7:29) But all of us today have inherited sinfulness because Adam deliberately sinned, and we are his offspring. We have 'fallen short of the glory of God,' which men should reflect. (Rom. 3:23) Sin is also transgression against God's law. (1 John 3:4) A priest is therefore necessary, in order that he may offer a sacrifice that will atone for or cover that sin and also to help the erring one to be restored to a right course, and to favor with God.—Heb. 5:1.

#### ISRAEL'S PRIESTHOOD

In Israel the high priest was the primary figure in the priesthood. He was the one who made atonement for the entire nation once a year, on atonement day. (Lev. chap. 16) He was the one who petitioned God in behalf of the nation, and questions of national importance were presented to God by the high priest. The answer was given by God by means of the sacred lots, the Urim and the Thummim (meaning "lights," that is, "*the light*" and "*perfections*," that is, "*the perfection*"). He was also the chief instructor in the law of God.—Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21; Neh. 7:65.

While the high priest of ancient Israel was of great help to the people, he himself was not perfect or sinless. Of him, the Bible says, at Hebrews 5:1-3: "For every high priest taken from among men is appointed in behalf of men over the things pertaining to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal moderately with the ignorant and erring ones since he also is surrounded with his own weakness, and on its account he is

obliged to make offerings for sins as much for himself as for the people."

#### A BETTER PRIESTHOOD

Hence, the high priests that served Israel over the years needed help themselves. But God has arranged for a priesthood that will do things in both a spiritual and a physical sense that no priesthood has yet been able to do. The Bible says that these priests will have an unbroken period of one thousand years to restore mankind to perfection. Of this priestly body, we read: "They will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years." (Rev. 20:6) From whom will God form this priestly body, and what benefits will such a priesthood bring?

As was the case in ancient Israel, the one with whom we are mainly concerned is the great High Priest, with whom the others serve as underpriests, carrying out his commands and administering the valuable benefits of his sacrifice. How was he chosen, and what qualifications did he have to meet to be worthy of this exalted office, and to prove trustworthy toward mankind?

This High Priest is none other than Jesus Christ. He is called the "last Adam" because he can bring forth "children" from the sinful human race by cleansing and regenerating them, giving them life on the basis of his sacrifice. He was born into a race of sinners, but he himself was without sin and, unlike other priests, needed no priest to help him. This was because he had a virgin birth through Mary and his life was directly from God. He remained sinless right down to the time of his sacrificial death.—1 Cor. 15:45-47; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:21-24.

Jesus Christ had a prehuman existence as Jehovah's only-begotten Son, having been involved in the creating of all other things. (John 1:3; Col. 1:15, 16) His Fa-

ther Jehovah God transferred his life to the womb of Mary, in this way having him born as a human. God thus "prepared a body" for him. This gave him something to sacrifice—a perfect human life, just as Adam had possessed, but which he forfeited by sin. (Heb. 10:5; 8:3) Therefore, when he sacrificed his life, this value could purchase the offspring of Adam. When he, as High Priest, offered a sacrifice for sin, it was not an animal substitute, but was his own human life. That is why his offering had to be made only once.—Heb. 7:26, 27.

#### "ACCORDING TO THE MANNER OF MELCHIZEDEK"

But Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe, and of the family of Aaron, through whose line the priesthood ran. How, then, could he be a priest? Did he appoint himself? No, he could not do that. This is explained in Hebrews 5:4-6: "Also, a man takes this honor, not of his own accord, but only when he is called by God, just as Aaron also was. So too the Christ did not glorify himself by becoming a high priest, but was glorified by him who spoke with reference to him: 'You are my son; I, today, I have become your father.' Just as he says also in another place: 'You are a priest forever according to the manner of Melchizedek.' "

By resurrecting Jesus Christ from the dead, Almighty God fulfilled those words quoted from Psalm 2:7 as written by David. Thus God became an everlasting Father to the resurrected Jesus Christ, and this one, being raised incorruptible, became the everlasting Son of his heavenly Life-Giver, Jehovah God. Being now an incorruptible Son, he could be made a "priest forever" needing no successor, and thus he could be a priest "according to the manner of Melchizedek!"—Acts 13:33-37; Ps. 110:4.

Christ, being resurrected, rewarded with incorruptible life in the heavens, could now do something no other priest had ever been able to do, namely, appear in the very presence of God. This he had to do in order to pay God the price for purchase of the human race—namely, the value of his human life, which he had willingly laid down in its perfection.—Heb. 9:24; 4:14; 1 Cor. 7:23.

There is only a brief account of Melchizedek in the Bible. He was not a Hebrew, an Israelite or a Levite. God's servant, "Abram the Hebrew," met him while on his way back from warfare in which Abram had rescued his nephew Lot from marauders. The event occurred between the years 1943 and 1933 B.C.E., long before the nation of Israel with its priesthood was formed. The account reads:

"Then the king of Sodom went out to meet [Abram] after he returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, to the Low Plain of Shaveh, that is, the king's Low Plain. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine, and he was priest of the Most High God. Then he blessed him and said: 'Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, Producer of heaven and earth; and blessed be the Most High God, who has delivered your oppressors into your hand!' At that Abram gave him a tenth of everything."—Gen. 14:17-20.

The Bible does not give the genealogy of Melchizedek nor does it record his death. This was undoubtedly for the purpose of foreshadowing the fact that Jesus Christ, God's great King and High Priest, received his priesthood, not by fleshly line of descent, as did the Aaronic priests, but by direct appointment from Jehovah. Furthermore, Christ lives forever and has no successors. Therefore, Christ is High Priest, not by succession from Melchizedek, but his priesthood is only in a "man-

ner" like that of that king-priest of Salem.—Heb. 7:1-3, 15-17.

#### WHAT CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD MEANS TO US

Consequently, in our High Priest Jesus Christ we have perfection. We, all being imperfect, sinful humans, need a perfect High Priest. This is what is explained at Hebrews 7:11-14: "If, then, perfection were really through the Levitical priesthood, (for with it as a feature the people were given the Law,) what further need would there be for another priest to arise according to the manner of Melchizedek and not said to be according to the manner of Aaron? For since the priesthood is being changed, there comes to be of necessity a change also of the law. For the man respecting whom these things are said has been a member of another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is quite plain that our Lord has sprung up out of Judah."

This perfect High Priest can bring perfection to his underpriests. The writer of the book of Hebrews goes on to say: "For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in besides of a better hope did, through which we are drawing near to

God." Jesus is then spoken of as becoming "the one given in pledge of a better covenant." This is the new covenant, by which the body of the priesthood with him can attain perfection.—Heb. 7:19-22.

What does this mean for the great majority of people on earth, and for those that have died? It means the opportunity for human perfection. Jesus, owning the human race, counts each life as precious, so much so that he sacrificed his human life to buy them. Accordingly, he will lovingly and carefully deal with these lives, destroying only the individuals who refuse to accept his priestly services and obey God's principles in love of God and fellowman, and love of what is right. We need not worry that he cannot see us through to perfection during his thousand-year rule, for "he is able also to save completely [to perfection] those who are approaching God through him, because he is always alive to plead for them."—Heb. 7:25.

Do you desire life on earth in full perfection of health and with everlasting life before you? Then you will want to learn more about this priesthood and how we can approach God through his High Priest. This will be discussed in following issues of *The Watchtower*.

#### Time Well Spent

● Jehovah's Christian witnesses appreciate that true worship is valuable. It has given them real joy and a purpose in living. That is why they are eager to use time well in telling others about their Bible-based beliefs.

Take the example of one of Jehovah's witnesses in the state of Minnesota. One night he was working with another man on a power shovel. Since it was very stormy that night, the two men spent a lot of time in the truck warming up and drying off. During the course of the evening's work the conversation swung toward religion. After answering his fellow worker's question about what Jehovah's wit-

nesses do about charity, the Witness mentioned the home Bible study arrangement and said: "That's something you should take advantage of. It doesn't cost anything and we could have it in your own home at a time convenient to you." The fellow worker replied: "You know, I've been thinking about that. When could you come over?"

What was the result of time well spent in upbuilding conversation about the Bible? Both the fellow worker and his wife progressed to the point of themselves helping others to gain a knowledge of God's Word as dedicated, baptized witnesses of Jehovah.

## Questions from Readers

- Does the *por-nei'a* (gross sexual immorality) mentioned in the Bible include masturbation, making masturbation a valid basis for Scriptural divorce?—Ecuador.

The Bible does not mention masturbation or self-abuse, and there is no indication that the Greek word *por-nei'a* included this practice.

Masturbation is definitely an unclean habit. This is evident from the fact that, according to the Mosaic law, even an involuntary emission of semen made a man ceremonially unclean until the evening. (Lev. 15:16; Deut. 23:10, 11) This being the case, a deliberately induced emission of semen through masturbation would have been a greater uncleanness. But it was not as serious as the gross sexual immorality designated by the Greek word *por-nei'a*.

—See also “Masturbation” at the end of this article.

For example, adultery, homosexuality and bestiality (different forms of *por-nei'a*) were capital offenses under the Law and therefore paved the way for the surviving mate to remarry. (Lev. 20:10, 13, 15, 16) But we can point to no evidence indicating that this was true of masturbation.

Nevertheless, the Bible speaks out strongly against unclean practices. The inspired apostle Paul wrote to fellow believers: “God called us, not with allowance for uncleanness, but in connection with sanctification.” (1 Thess. 4:7) Hence, the Christian should strive hard to avoid any unclean habits, including masturbation.\*

\* On breaking free from masturbation, see *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1973, pp. 564 to 569.

### “WATCHTOWER” STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

April 7: “Become Imitators of God.” Page 144. Songs to Be Used: 50, 100.

April 14: In What Ways Can We “Become Imitators of God”? Page 150. Songs to Be Used: 28, 49.

“Watchtower” Studies for the weeks April 21 and 28 will be available in the regular edition of the magazine.

### ANSWER LINE

QUESTION FROM OUR FRIENDS FROM ECUADOR  
Dear Friends: In your article about sex sins against the spirit, you did not mention masturbation. Could this be a sin? Please give me some information about this subject.

ANSWER FROM OUR FRIENDS FROM ECUADOR  
Dear Friends: Thank you for your letter. We are sorry to hear that you are having trouble with masturbation. This is a very common problem among young people. It is important to understand that masturbation is a sin, but it is not the only sin. There are many other sins that we commit every day, such as lying, stealing, and pride. The most important thing is to confess our sins to God and ask for his forgiveness. We hope that this information will help you.

ANSWER FROM OUR FRIENDS FROM ECUADOR  
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