The background of the cover features a dramatic scene of a woman with long brown hair holding a small child close to her. They are positioned in front of a large, bright, orange and yellow fire or explosion that illuminates the surrounding area. In the bottom right corner of the background, there is a small, dark silhouette of a person sitting on a ledge or rock. The overall atmosphere is one of intense heat, light, and emotional intensity.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

## WHY DOES GOD PERMIT WICKEDNESS?



THE WATCHTOWER®  
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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# WHY DOES GOD PERMIT WICKEDNESS?



AP Photo/Adam Butler

YOU do not have to look far to see that evil and suffering abound. Wars kill civilians as well as soldiers. Crime and violence are commonplace. Perhaps you have recently been a victim of prejudice or injustice. In view of what you have seen and experienced, you have very likely asked, 'Why does God permit wickedness?'

That question is not a new one. Some 3,600 years ago, a loyal servant of God named Job asked: "Why is it that the wicked themselves keep living?" (Job 21:7) Troubled by the evil deeds of his countrymen, the prophet Jeremiah of the seventh century B.C.E. asked: "Why is it that the way of wicked ones is what has succeeded, that all those who are committing treachery are the unworried ones?" (Jeremiah 12:1) Both Job and Jeremiah knew that God is righteous. Yet, they wondered why there was so much wickedness. Perhaps you too are puzzled by this.

Some people blame God for wickedness and suffering. Others wonder: 'If God is all-powerful, just, and loving, why does he not put an end to evil and suffering? Why has he allowed evil to continue until our day?' The following article considers answers to these and other vital questions.



© Jeroen Oerlemans/Panos Pictures

# WHY WICKEDNESS CONTINUES

**J**EHOVAH [GOD] is righteous in all his ways," says the Bible. (Psalm 145:17; Revelation 15:3) Concerning him, the prophet Moses declared: "Perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) "Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful," says James 5:11. God cannot and does not cause wickedness.

The disciple James wrote: "When under trial, let no one say: 'I am being tried by God.' For with evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." (James 1:13) Jehovah God neither tempts people with wickedness nor entices them to commit vile deeds. Who, then, is to blame for wickedness and the suffering it causes?

## Where Does the Blame Lie?

The Bible writer James puts part of the blame for wickedness on humans. He states: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire,

when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn, sin, when it has been accomplished, brings forth death." (James 1:14, 15) Individuals may act according to their improper desires. Consider, too, man's inherited sin. The power of sin can amplify wrong cravings and bring about very bad consequences. (Romans 7:21-23) Indeed, inherited sin has "ruled as king" over mankind, enslaving humans with wicked works that cause great suffering. (Romans 5:21) Moreover, wicked men can influence others to become corrupt.—Proverbs 1:10-16.

The primary cause of wickedness, though, is Satan the Devil. He brought wickedness into the world. Jesus Christ called Satan "the wicked one" and "the ruler of the world," or unrighteous human society. Mankind in general obeys Satan by heeding his urgings to ignore the good ways of Jehovah God. (Matthew 6:13; John 14:30; 1 John 2:15-17) "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one," says 1 John 5:19. In fact, Satan and his angels are "misleading the en-

tire inhabited earth," causing nothing but "woe." (Revelation 12:9, 12) Thus, the major part of the blame for wickedness has to be placed squarely on Satan the Devil.

Revealing another cause of affliction or suffering, Ecclesiastes 9:11 states: "Time and unforeseen occurrence befall [us] all." Jesus Christ spoke of a certain calamity involving 18 people who were killed when a tower fell on them. (Luke 13:4) They suffered because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. Similar things happen today. For example, a brick may break loose from the top of a high building and strike a pedestrian. Is God to blame? No. It was an unplanned and unforeseen occurrence. The same may often be said when sickness invades a household or sudden death leaves behind orphans and widows.

Clearly, then, God is not responsible for wickedness; nor does he cause suffering. On the contrary, it is Jehovah's purpose to eliminate wickedness and those who cause it. (Proverbs 2:22) In fact, he will do more than that. The Scriptures declare that God's purpose through Christ is "to break up the works of the Devil." (1 John 3:8) The present system of things—based on greed, hatred, and wicked deeds—will then be gone. God will even "wipe out every tear from [all] eyes," thus bringing an end to suffering. (Revelation 21:4) But you may ask: 'Why has God not already done this? Why has he allowed wickedness and suffering to continue until our day?' A key to the answer is found in the Bible account of Adam and Eve.

### A Vital Issue Is Raised

The reason why God has permitted wickedness to exist until our day is related to events that happened early in human history. An incident that took place back then raised an important issue concerning the Creator himself—a question that could not

be settled quickly or easily. Let us take a close look at what happened.

Jehovah God created the first man and woman perfect and placed them in Paradise. They were endowed with a gift that distinguished them from animals—the gift of free will. (Genesis 1:28; 2:15, 19) As free moral agents, Adam and Eve could use their intellect to choose to love, serve, and obey their Creator. Or they could select a course of independence from God and deliberately disobey him.

To give Adam and Eve an opportunity to demonstrate their love for him, the true God placed one restriction upon them. He commanded Adam: "From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die." (Genesis 2:16, 17) To remain in God's favor, to their own benefit and that of their future family, Adam and Eve would have to refrain from eating the fruit of that one particular tree. Would they?

The Bible tells us what happened. Using a serpent as his mouthpiece, Satan the Devil approached Eve and said: "Is it really so that God said you must not eat from every tree of the garden?" When Eve repeated God's command, Satan said to her: "You positively will not die. For God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad." Consequently, the tree seemed so desirable to Eve that "she began taking of its fruit and eating it." The account continues: "Afterward she gave some also to her husband when with her and he began eating it." (Genesis 3:1-6) Both Adam and Eve thus misused their free will and sinned by disobeying God.

Do you see the seriousness of what transpired? The Devil contradicted what God had

said to Adam. Satan's words implied that Adam and Eve would not need Jehovah in order to decide what was good and what was bad for them. Satan's challenge therefore brought into question the right and validity of Jehovah's rulership over man. The all-important issue that Satan raised, then, was that of the rightfulness of Jehovah's sovereignty. How did the true God answer the challenge?

### The Need for Sufficient Time

Jehovah had the power to destroy the three rebels—Satan, Adam, and Eve. God was unquestionably stronger than they were. But Satan did not question God's power. Instead, he questioned Jehovah's right to rule. The issue affected all creatures having free will. They needed to see that the gift of free will must be used properly—with in the bounds of physical, moral, and spiritual guidelines from God. Otherwise, harm results, just as surely as injury will occur when a man jumps off the roof of a tall building without regard for the law of gravity. (Galatians 6:7, 8) All intelligent creatures could benefit from observing for themselves the bad fruitage of choosing a course of independence from God. This required time.

The fact that it requires time to settle some issues can be illustrated this way: Suppose the father of one family challenges the father of another to a contest that will prove which man is stronger. That issue could be decided quickly. Strength could be measured by lifting rocks. The father who lifted the heaviest rock would be the stronger man. But suppose the challenge involved which father truly loves his sons and daughters and whether they love him in return. Or what if the challenge raises the question of which father manages his family in the best way? Neither a display of strength nor

mere words would be adequate. Sufficient time would have to pass, careful observation would be required, and right conclusions would have to be drawn in order for the issue to be settled.

### What the Passing of Time Has Shown

Some 6,000 years have passed since Satan questioned God's right to rule. What has history revealed? Consider two aspects of Satan's allegation against God. Satan boldly told Eve: "You positively will not die." (Genesis 3:4) By saying that Adam and Eve would not die if they partook of the forbidden fruit, Satan was in effect calling Jehovah a liar. A serious charge indeed! If God were not truthful in this matter, how could he be trusted in anything else? However, what has the elapsed time shown?

Adam and Eve became subject to sickness, pain, aging and, finally, death. "All the days of Adam that he lived amounted to nine hundred and thirty years and he died," states the Bible. (Genesis 3:19; 5:5) And from Adam, this sad legacy has been transmitted to all mankind. (Romans 5:12) The passing of time has proved Satan to be "a liar and the father of the lie" and has shown that Jehovah is "the God of truth."—John 8:44; Psalm 31:5.

Satan also told Eve: "God knows that in the very day of your eating from [the forbidden tree] your eyes are bound to be opened and you [both Eve and Adam] are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad." (Genesis 3:5) With those cunning words, Satan presented humans with a sham opportunity to be self-governed. Deceptively, Satan implied that humans would be better off independent of God. Has this proved true?

Throughout the course of history, empires have come and gone. Every conceivable form of human government has been tried. Time and again, however, dreadful things

have happened to the human family. "Man has dominated man to his injury," a Bible writer wisely concluded some 3,000 years ago. (Ecclesiastes 8:9) "It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step," wrote the prophet Jeremiah. (Jeremiah 10:23) Even scientific and technological achievements of recent years have not negated the truth of these statements. The passage of time has only proved these observations to be true.

### What Will You Do?

The time allowed by God has proved Satan wrong on the issue of the rightfulness of Jehovah's sovereignty. Jehovah God is the absolute Sovereign of the universe. He has the right to rule over his creation, and his way of ruling is the best. Acknowledging this fact, heavenly creatures who have intimately experienced life under God's rule declare:

*You can choose God's rulership by studying the Bible and applying in your life what it says*

"You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created."—Revelation 4:11.

Where do you stand on the question of God's rulership? Do you agree that God is worthy to rule over you? If you do, you must recognize Jehovah's sovereignty. You can do this by applying the marvelous truths and counsel found in his Word, the Bible, in every aspect of your life. "God is love," and his laws and commandments spring from his love for his creatures. (1 John 4:8) Jehovah does not deprive any of us of what is for our good. You can therefore take to heart the Bible's admonition: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight."—Proverbs 3:5, 6.



# HOW TO CULTIVATE LOVE FOR GOD IN YOUR CHILD'S HEART

**T**ODAY, it is a real challenge for a person to cultivate a close relationship with Jehovah God. (Psalm 16:8) True to prophecy, we live in “critical times hard to deal with.” Most people are “lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Yes, genuine love for God is truly rare in the world today.

The development of love for God in a child’s heart cannot rightly be left to chance. Love for Jehovah God must be cultivated in the hearts of our children. How can we do this?

## Heart-to-Heart Communication

We can cultivate love for God in the hearts of our children if our *own* heart is filled with love for him. (Luke 6:40) The Bible indicates this when it says: “You must love Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your vital force. And these words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son.”—Deuteronomy 6:4-7.

How can we cultivate love for God in the heart of our child? First, we must discern what is in our child’s heart. Second, we must reveal what is in our own heart.

On the road to Emmaus with two of his disciples, Jesus Christ first encouraged the disciples to express their hopes and fears. Only after listening to them for some time did Jesus correct their thinking by explaining the Scriptures. Later they commented: “Were not our hearts burning as he was speaking to us?” That conversation was an example of heart-to-heart communication. (Luke 24:15-32) How can we perceive our child’s feelings?

Recently, some parents whose children are now adults or are reaching adulthood and are examples of faith were asked about heart-to-heart communication. For instance, Glen, in Mexico, has four grown children.\* He observes: “Comfortable communication between parents and children doesn’t just happen. My wife and I set aside less important things to spend time with the children. When they were in their teens, we would sometimes sit all evening with them, talking about whatever came into their minds. Similarly at mealtimes, by listening to their conversation, we would discern problems and gently correct a tendency, often without their realizing it.”

Heart-to-heart communication also involves revealing what is in our own heart. Jesus said: “A good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart, . . . for out of the heart’s abundance his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45) Toshiki, whose three children are full-time ministers in Japan, says: “I told them many times why I came to have faith in Jehovah—how I came to believe with all my heart in his existence and how my own experience in life has convinced me that the Bible is true and is the best guide in life.” In Mexico, Cindy says: “My husband always prayed with the children. When they heard his heartfelt expressions, they knew that Jehovah was not make-believe.”

## The Power of Our Example

Even more powerful than words is our way of life, for it shows our children how much we love God. By noting Jesus Christ’s obedience to Jehovah, people could discern the

\* Some of the names have been changed.



❖ **Heart-to-heart talk about matters of faith does not happen by accident**

depth of his love for God. "In order for the world to know that I love the Father," said Jesus, "even as the Father has given me commandment to do, so I am doing."—John 14:31.

Gareth, one of Jehovah's Witnesses in Wales, comments: "Our children must see that we love Jehovah and that we try to do things his way. For instance, my children see that in obedience to what God tells us, I admit my mistakes. Now my children try to act in that way."

Greg, an Australian, says: "We wanted our children to see that we center our life on the truth. When we make decisions about work or play, we first consider how our Christian duties will be affected. It is a pleasure for us to observe that our 19-year-old daughter has adopted this attitude in her auxiliary pioneer service."

### Helping Our Children Understand God

We cannot love or trust someone whom we do not understand. When the apostle Paul wanted Christians in Philippi to grow in their love for Jehovah, he wrote: "This is what I continue praying, that your love may abound yet more and more with accurate



knowledge and full discernment." (Philippians 1:9) Falconero, who is raising four children in Peru, states: "Regularly reading and studying the Bible with them builds up their faith. Sometimes I neglected to study with them, and I saw their love for God weaken." Gary, from Australia, says: "I often show my children evidence that Bible prophecies are coming true. I also point out the benefits of applying Bible principles. The regularity of our family Bible study has been the key to building their faith."

Knowledge will best reach a child's heart in a relaxed though respectful atmosphere in which learning is a joy. (James 3:18) "During the family Bible study, we tried not to scold our children, even if they got a bit boisterous," say Shawn and Pauline of Britain, who have four children. "We varied how we

conducted the study. Sometimes we invited the children to choose the subject. We used the videos that Jehovah's organization has produced. Sometimes we replayed a section or paused the video to allow for discussion." Also from Britain, a mother named Kim says: "I prepare for the family study carefully so that I can ask questions that will make my children think. We enjoy studying. We laugh a lot."

### Selecting Associates

Love for Jehovah and appreciation for true worship can best flourish in our children if they are surrounded by people who are friends of God. Arranging for companions whom our children can beneficially talk to and play with may take effort. But doing so is worth it! Moreover, it is worthwhile to make opportunities for our children to meet Jehovah's Witnesses who have taken up the full-time ministry as their career in life. Many who have chosen that course did so because of associating with zealous servants of God.

- ❖ *Train your children to express their love for God*



A sister who became a missionary says: "My parents invited pioneers for a meal on numerous occasions. They were obviously so happy in their ministry that I wanted to serve God in the same way."

Of course, our children's attitudes can be influenced both for good and for bad. The dangers of bad associations therefore challenge our skills as parents. (1 Corinthians 15: 33) It is an art to teach youngsters how to avoid socializing with those who neither love Jehovah nor know him. (Proverbs 13: 20) Shawn, quoted earlier, says: "We taught our youngsters to have friendly working relationships with schoolmates but to leave those relationships there—at school. Our children understood why they should not share in extracurricular activities or school sports events."

### The Value of Training

By training our children to explain their faith, we help them to enjoy expressing their love for God. Says Mark, who lives in the United States: "We wanted our boys to feel that they could enjoy sharing their faith with others at any time, not just when they dress up to share formally in our public ministry. So when we go somewhere for recreation, such as to a park, the beach, or a forest, we take Bibles and Bible literature with us, and we talk to people there about the things we believe. The boys really enjoy witnessing informally with us in that way. They join in the discussions and speak about their faith."

The aged apostle John helped many people to grow in their love for God. Concerning them, he wrote: "No greater cause for thankfulness do I have than these things, that I should be hearing that my [spiritual] children go on walking in the truth." (3 John 4) If we cultivate love for God in our children's hearts, we will surely have the same joy.

# JOHN MILTON'S LOST TREATISE

RARELY has a writer had so great an impact on the world around him as did John Milton, author of the English epic poem *Paradise Lost*. According to one biographer, Milton "was loved by many, hated by some, but ignored by few." To this day, English literature and culture owe much to his works.

How did John Milton come to have such influence? What made his last work—*On Christian Doctrine*—so controversial that it remained unpublished for 150 years?

## His Early Days

John Milton was born into a financially well-off London family in 1608. "My father destined me in early childhood for the study of literature, for which I had so keen an appetite that from my twelfth year scarcely ever did I leave my studies for my bed before the hour of midnight," Milton recalled. He excelled scholastically and received a master's degree at Cambridge in 1632. Thereafter, he continued to read history and classical literature.

Milton wanted to be a poet, but the England of his day was in the throes of revolution. Parliament, led primarily by Oliver Cromwell, appointed a court that had King Charles I executed in 1649. Using persuasive prose, Milton defended this action and became a spokesman for the Cromwell government. In fact, before attaining fame as a poet, John Milton was already well-known for his tracts on politics and morals.

After the monarchy was restored with the coronation of Charles II in 1660, Milton's earlier alignment with Cromwell put his life



Courtesy of The Early Modern Web at Oxford

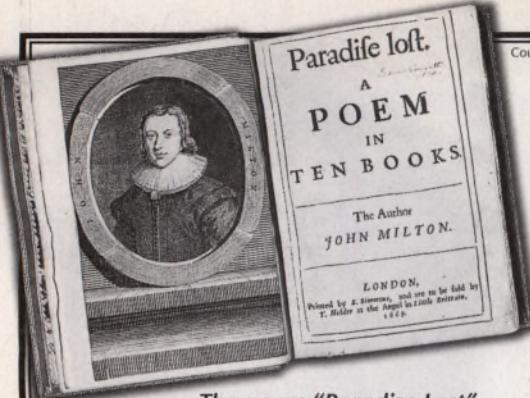
in danger. Milton went into hiding, and only with the help of powerful friends did he escape death. Through it all, he retained a strong spiritual inclination.

## "The Yardstick of the Bible"

Describing his early spiritual interests, Milton wrote: "I began by devoting myself when I was a boy to an earnest study of the Old and New Testaments in their original languages." Milton came to regard the Holy Scriptures as the only sure guide in moral and spiritual matters. But his examination of the accepted theological works of the day left him thoroughly disappointed. "I considered that I could not properly entrust either my creed or my hope of salvation to such guides," he later wrote. Determined to measure his beliefs strictly "against the yardstick of the Bible," Milton began listing key scriptures under general headings and quoted Bible texts from these lists.

Today, John Milton is best remembered for composing *Paradise Lost*, a poetic retelling of the Biblical account of man's fall from perfection. (Genesis, chapter 3) It is primarily this work, first published in 1667, that earned Milton literary fame, especially in the

Image courtesy of Rare Books and Special Collections, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina



*The poem "Paradise Lost"  
brought Milton fame*

English-speaking world. He later published a sequel entitled *Paradise Regained*. These poems present God's original purpose for man—to enjoy perfect life in an earthly paradise—and point to God's restoration of Paradise on earth through Christ. In *Paradise Lost*, for example, Michael the archangel foretells the time when Christ will "reward His faithful, and receive them into bliss, whether in heaven or earth, for then the earth shall all be paradise, far happier place than this of Eden, and far happier days."

## *On Christian Doctrine*

For years, Milton also wanted to produce a wide-ranging discussion of Christian life and doctrine. Despite having become totally blind by 1652, he labored on this project with the help of secretaries until his death in 1674. Milton entitled this final work *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine Compiled From the Holy Scriptures Alone*. In its preface, he wrote: "Most authors who have dealt with this subject . . . have relegated to the margin, with brief reference to chapter and verse, the scriptural texts upon which all that they teach is utterly dependent. I, on the other hand, have striven to cram my pages even to overflowing, with quotations drawn from all parts of the Bible." True to Milton's word, *On Christian Doctrine* alludes to or quotes the Scriptures over 9,000 times.

Although Milton had previously not hesitated to express his views, he held off publishing this treatise. Why? For one thing, he knew that its Scriptural explanations widely differed from accepted church teaching. Furthermore, with the restoration of the monarchy, he had fallen out of favor with the government. He may therefore have been waiting for quieter times. In any case, after Milton's death, his secretary took the Latin manuscript to a publisher, who refused to print it. The English secretary of state then confiscated the manuscript and filed it away. A century and a half would pass before Milton's treatise came to light.

In 1823, a clerk came across the wrapped manuscript of the noted poet. England's then reigning King George IV ordered that the work be translated from Latin and made public. When it was published in English two years later, the manuscript excited intense controversy in theological and literary circles. One bishop immediately pronounced the manuscript fraudulent, refusing to believe that Milton—regarded by many as England's

*Milton's final work was lost for 150 years*

De  
Doctrina Christiana  
ex auctoritate eius patris  
Iustissimae Iustitiae Ecclasthenie.  
Liber primus.  
Capitulo 1. m.  
Evidet Doctrina Christiana, quod ipsa per nos,  
Doctrina Christiana est ipsa Christus (huius nomine  
non a principio vegetus) et Propterea cultus eis obseruat Dei uite.  
secundum hancam secundum yobusq; iustitiam habet.  
  
Capitulo 2. m. quod videtur obstat - preludens dicitur fidei  
Johannes ex coro: cum Ioh. lib. 19. 20. forent uictum  
Choros, et mutauerunt Coronam Iudei in formam  
Coru. Post. 4. 15. 16; quemadmodum carceribus uobis  
ipsi eritis, non non ariente mortis his ullam emprise  
non quidem allocutus est vos Johanna in Choros  
  
Si enim ex dialogo tempus publici cultus potest  
sunt evangelii debentur, logo profecto erit iustus  
septimum: quemque dico ex praecepto Domini Iher-  
usalem, quem primum: quemque ex iudicio domini  
non conceditur observare. Et quae in hac forme  
fintur: doctrinam greges theologorum, illi:  
ceram, Salvinum, Marturem, Ius.  
cubum, Iustinum, p. aliosque video frigidi.

Image courtesy of Rare Books and Special Collections, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina

greatest religion poet—could have so firmly rejected cherished church doctrines. Foreseeing such a reaction and in confirmation of Milton's authorship, the translator had furnished the edition with footnotes detailing 500 parallels between *On Christian Doctrine* and *Paradise Lost*.\*

### Milton's Beliefs

By Milton's time, England had embraced the Protestant Reformation and had broken with the Roman Catholic Church. Protestants generally believed that authority on matters of faith and morals came only from the Holy Scriptures and not from the pope. In *On Christian Doctrine*, though, Milton showed that many Protestant teachings and practices were also out of harmony with the Scriptures. On Biblical grounds, he rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination in favor of free will. He promoted respectful use of God's name, Jehovah, using it freely in his writings.

Milton argued Scripturally that the human soul can die. Commenting on Genesis 2:7, he wrote: "When man had been created in this way, it is said, finally: *thus man became a living soul*. . . . He is not double or separable: not, as is commonly thought, produced from and composed of two different and distinct elements, soul and body. On the contrary, the whole man is the soul, and the soul the man." Milton then posed the question: "Does the whole man die, or only the body?" After presenting an array of Bible texts showing that all of man dies, he added: "But the most convincing explanation I can adduce for the death of the soul is God's own, Ezekiel 18:20: *the soul which sins shall itself die*." Milton also cited such texts as Luke 20:37 and John 11:25 to show that dead mankind's hope lies in a future resurrection from the sleep of death.

\* A new translation of *On Christian Doctrine*, published by Yale University in 1973, holds even more closely to Milton's original Latin manuscript.

What triggered the strongest reaction to *On Christian Doctrine*? It was Milton's simple but powerful Biblical proof that Christ, the Son of God, is subordinate to God, the Father. After quoting John 17:3 and John 20:17, Milton asks: "If the Father is Christ's God and our God, and if there is only one God, who can be God except the Father?"

Further, Milton points out: "The Son himself and his apostles acknowledge in everything they say and write that the Father is greater than the Son in all things." (John 14:28) "Indeed it is Christ who says, Matt. xxvi. 39: *O my Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will*. . . . Why does he pray to the Father alone, rather than to himself, if he is himself really God? If he is himself both man and supreme God, why does he pray at all for something which is in his own power? . . . As the Son everywhere adores and venerates the Father alone, so he teaches us to do the same."

### Milton's Limitations

John Milton sought the truth. He was still subject to human limitations, however, and some of his views may have been colored by bad experiences. For instance, soon after they married, his bride, the young daughter of a Royalist squire, abandoned him and returned to her family for about three years. During this time, Milton wrote tracts justifying divorce, not only on grounds of marital infidelity—Jesus' sole standard—but also in cases of incompatibility. (Matthew 19:9) Milton promoted the same idea in *On Christian Doctrine*.

Despite Milton's shortcomings, *On Christian Doctrine* forcefully presents the Bible's viewpoint on a multitude of important teachings. To this day, his treatise obliges its readers to measure their own beliefs against the unerring yardstick of Holy Scripture.

# Jehovah's Word Is Alive

## Highlights From the Book of Hosea

TRUE worship has all but disappeared from the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. Under the rulership of Jeroboam II, there is material prosperity in Israel, but that wanes soon after his death. What follows is a period of unrest and political instability. Four of the six succeeding kings are assassinated. (2 Kings 14:29; 15:8-30; 17:1-6) The 59-year-long prophetic career of Hosea, which began in 804 B.C.E., stretches into this time of turmoil.

Jehovah's sentiments toward the wayward nation of Israel are vividly portrayed by what takes place in Hosea's marriage. An exposé of Israel's error and the prophetic judgments against her and the kingdom of Judah are the subjects of Hosea's message. Using wording that is tender and sensitive and language that is forceful and expressive, Hosea has written all of this in a book bearing his name. As part of the inspired Word of God, its message is alive and exerts power.—Hebrews 4:12.

### "TAKE TO YOURSELF A WIFE OF FORNICATION" (Hosea 1:1-3:5)

Jehovah tells Hosea: "Go, take to yourself a wife of fornication." (Hosea 1:2) Hosea obeys and has a son by Gomer. The next two children she gives birth to are evidently illegitimate. The meanings of their names, Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi, point to Jehovah's withholding mercy from Israel and rejecting his disloyal people.

How does Jehovah actually feel about his rebellious people? He tells Hosea: "Go once again, love a woman loved by a companion and committing adultery, as in the case of Jehovah's love for the sons of Israel while they are turning to other gods."—Hosea 3:1.

### *Scriptural Questions Answered:*

**1:1—Why does Hosea mention all four kings who ruled over Judah during his ministry while naming only one ruler of Israel?** This is because only the kings from David's family line were recognized as the rightful rulers of God's chosen people. The kings of the northern kingdom were not of the Davidic line of descent, whereas those of Judah were.

**1:2-9—Did Hosea really take a wife of fornication?** Yes, Hosea actually married a woman who later became an adulteress. The prophet says nothing to indicate that what he related about his domestic life was a dream or a vision.

**1:7—When was the house of Judah shown mercy and saved?** This was fulfilled in 732 B.C.E., in the days of King Hezekiah. At that time, Jehovah ended the Assyrian threat to Jerusalem by having an angel slay 185,000 of the enemy's forces in one night. (2 Kings 19:34, 35) Jehovah thus delivered Judah, not "by a bow or by a sword or by war, by horses or by horsemen," but by an angel.

**1:10, 11—Since the northern kingdom of Israel fell in 740 B.C.E., how were the**

sons of Israel “collected together into a unity” with the sons of Judah? Many from the northern kingdom had gone to Judah before the inhabitants of the land of Judah were taken into captivity to Babylon in 607 B.C.E. (2 Chronicles 11:13-17; 30:6-12, 18-20, 25) When Jewish exiles returned to their homeland in 537 B.C.E., descendants of those from the northern kingdom of Israel were among the returnees.—Ezra 2:70.

**2:21-23**—What was foretold by Jehovah’s words: “I shall certainly sow [Jezreel] like seed for me in the earth, and I will show mercy to her”? The name of Hosea’s firstborn son by Gomer was Jezreel. (Hosea 1:2-4) The meaning of that name, “God Will Sow Seed,” is prophetic of Jehovah’s gathering a faithful remnant in 537 B.C.E. and sowing them like seed in Ju-

*Hosea's family life illustrated  
Jehovah's dealings with Israel*



dah. The land that had lain desolate for 70 years would now need to produce grain, sweet wine, and oil. In a poetic way, the prophecy states that these good things would appeal to the earth to release its nutrients, and the earth would ask the heavens for rain. In turn, the heavens would petition God to provide rain clouds. All of this would be for the purpose of abundantly taking care of the needs of the returning remnant. The apostles Paul and Peter apply Hosea 2:23 to the gathering of a remnant of spiritual Israel.—Romans 9:25, 26; 1 Peter 2:10.

#### **Lessons for Us:**

**1:2-9; 3:1, 2.** Think of the personal sacrifice Hosea made by remaining in a marriage in compliance with the divine will! When it comes to doing God’s will, to what extent are we willing to forgo personal preferences?

**1:6-9.** Jehovah hates spiritual adultery, just as he hates physical adultery.

**1:7, 10, 11; 2:14-23.** What Jehovah foretold about Israel and Judah was fulfilled. Jehovah’s word always comes true.

**2:16, 19, 21-23; 3:1-4.** Jehovah is willing to forgive those who manifest heartfelt repentance. (Nehemiah 9:17) Like Jehovah, we should be compassionate and merciful in our dealings with others.

#### **“JEHOVAH HAS A LEGAL CASE”**

**(Hosea 4:1-13:16)**

“Jehovah has a legal case with the inhabitants of the land.” Why? Because “there is no truth nor loving-kindness nor knowledge of God in the land.” (Hosea 4:1) The renegade people of Israel have engaged in defrauding and bloodshed and have committed physical and spiritual fornication.

Rather than looking to God for help, "to Egypt they have called; to Assyria they have gone."—Hosea 7:11.

Jehovah declares his judgment, saying: "Israel must be swallowed down." (Hosea 8:8) The kingdom of Judah is not free of guilt. "Jehovah has a legal case with Judah," states Hosea 12:2, "even to hold an accounting against Jacob according to his ways; according to his dealings he will repay him." But restoration is certain, for God promises: "From the hand of Sheol I shall redeem them; from death I shall recover them."—Hosea 13:14.

#### *Scriptural Questions Answered:*

**6:1-3**—Who was saying: "Come, you people, and do let us return to Jehovah"? Unfaithful Israelites may have been encouraging one another to return to Jehovah. If this is so, they were simply pretending to repent. Their loving-kindness was as brief and fleeting as "the morning clouds and . . . the dew that early goes away." (Hosea 6:4) On the other hand, the speaker could have been Hosea pleading with the people to come back to Jehovah. Whatever the case, the wayward inhabitants of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel needed to display genuine repentance and really return to Jehovah.

**7:4**—In what way were adulterous Israelites like "a furnace set burning"? This analogy illustrates the intensity of the evil desires in their heart.

#### *Lessons for Us:*

**4:1, 6.** If we want to stay in Jehovah's favor, we must continue to take in knowledge of him and live by what we learn.

**4:9-13.** Jehovah will hold an accounting with those who practice sexual immorality and carry on unclean worship.—Hosea 1:4.

**5:1.** Those taking the lead among God's people should reject apostasy totally. Otherwise, they may entice some to engage in false worship, thus becoming 'a trap and a net' to them.

**6:1-4; 7:14, 16.** To repent in words only is hypocritical and futile. In order to receive God's mercy, a wrongdoer must manifest heartfelt repentance, made evident by his return to something "higher," that is, to an elevated form of worship. His actions should be in harmony with God's high standards.—Hosea 7:16, footnote.

**6:6.** Practicing sin is an indication of a lack of loyal love for God. No amount of spiritual sacrifices can compensate for this deficiency.

**8:7, 13; 10:13.** The principle that "whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap" proved true in the case of the idolatrous Israelites.—Galatians 6:7.

**8:8; 9:17; 13:16.** Prophecies concerning the northern kingdom came true when its capital, Samaria, was taken by Assyria. (2 Kings 17:3-6) We can be confident that God will do what he has said and will carry out what he has spoken.—Numbers 23:19.

**8:14.** Jehovah sent "fire into [Judah's] cities" in 607 B.C.E. by the hand of the Babylonians, bringing foretold desolation to Jerusalem and the land of Judah. (2 Chronicles 36:19) God's word can never fail.—Joshua 23:14.

**9:10.** Though dedicated to the true God, Israelites "went in to Baal of Peor, and they proceeded to dedicate themselves to the shameful thing." We are wise if we take a warning from their bad example and



*With the fall of Samaria in 740 B.C.E., the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel ceased to exist*

guard against breaking our dedication to Jehovah.—1 Corinthians 10:11.

**10:1, 2, 12.** We should worship God with a heart that is not hypocritical. When ‘we sow seed for ourselves in righteousness, we reap in accord with God’s loving-kindness.’

**10:5.** Beth-aven (which means “House of Hurtfulness”) is a derogatory name given to Bethel (meaning “House of God”). When the calf idol of Beth-aven was taken into exile, residents of Samaria mourned the loss of their object of devotion. How senseless to put trust in a lifeless idol that cannot even protect itself!—Psalm 135:15-18; Jeremiah 10:3-5.

**11:1-4.** Jehovah always deals lovingly with his people. Submission to God is never oppressive.

**11:8-11; 13:14.** Jehovah’s word regarding the restoration of his people to true worship ‘did not return to him without results.’ (Isaiah 55:11) In 537 B.C.E., the Babylonian exile ended and a remnant returned to Jerusalem. (Ezra 2:1; 3:1-3) Whatever Jehovah has spoken through his prophets will without fail take place.

**12:6.** We should be firmly determined to show loving-kindness, to exercise justice, and to hope in Jehovah constantly.

**13:6.** The Israelites “became satisfied and their heart began to be exalted. That is why they forgot [Jehovah].” We need to guard against any tendency toward self-exaltation.

#### **“THE WAYS OF JEHOVAH ARE UPRIGHT” (Hosea 14:1-9)**

Hosea pleads: “Do come back, O Israel, to Jehovah your God, for you have stumbled in your error.” He urges people to say to Jehovah: “May you pardon error; and accept what is good, and we will offer in return the young bulls of our lips.”—Hosea 14:1, 2.

A repentant wrongdoer should come to Jehovah, accept his ways, and offer to him sacrifices of praise. Why? Because “the ways of Jehovah are upright, and the righteous are the ones who will walk in them.” (Hosea 14:9) How we rejoice that many will yet “certainly come quivering to Jehovah and to his goodness in the final part of the days”!—Hosea 3:5.

# JONATHAN

## "It Was With God That He Worked"

THE son of Israel's first king visits an outlaw in hiding. "Do not be afraid," he tells the fugitive, "for the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you yourself will be king over Israel, and I myself shall become second to you."—1 Samuel 23:17.

The visitor is Jonathan; the fugitive, David. Had it not been for Jonathan's death soon thereafter, it is possible that he would have become David's right-hand man.

Jonathan's friendship with David was remarkable. In fact, Jonathan was a remarkable man. His contemporaries thought so too, for they said of him: "It was with God that he worked." (1 Samuel 14:45) Why did they say this? What qualities did Jonathan have? And of what relevance is his life story to you?

### Israelites "in Sore Straits"

When the Bible introduces Jonathan, the Israelites are "in sore straits." The Philistines had pillaged their land and prevented them from defending themselves.—1 Samuel 13:5, 6, 17-19.

Jehovah stated, however, that he would not desert his people, and Jonathan was confident of that. It was concerning his father, Saul, that God had said: "He must save my people from the hand of the Philistines." Jonathan trusted that statement. He himself had already led 1,000 poorly armed Israelites to victory over the Philistines. Now he wanted to eliminate the Philistine threat completely.—1 Samuel 9:16; 12:22; 13:2, 3, 22.

### A Daring Raid

Jonathan targeted a Philistine outpost near the ravine pass of Michmash. (1 Samuel 13:23) To reach it, he would have to climb, using

"his hands and his feet." That did not deter him. Jonathan decided to attack with his armor-bearer alone and told him: "Perhaps Jehovah will work for us, for there is no hindrance to Jehovah to save by many or by few."—1 Samuel 14:6, 13.

The two Israelites sought a sign from Jehovah. They would show themselves to the men at the outpost. If the Philistines said: "Stand still until we make contact with you!" Jonathan and his armor-bearer would not go up to them. But if the enemies said: "Come up against us!" that would mean that Jehovah would give Jonathan and his armor-bearer the victory. If Jonathan was sure of God's support, he intended to go up to the outpost to fight.—1 Samuel 14:8-10.

What could two men do against the soldiers of a whole outpost? Well, did Jehovah not help Judge Ehud when he led Israel against Moab? Was God not with Shamgar, enabling him to strike down 600 Philistines with a cattle goad? And did Jehovah not empower Samson in his single-handed exploits against the Philistines? Jonathan trusted that God would help him too.—Judges 3:12-31; 15:6-8, 15; 16:29, 30.

On seeing the two Israelites, the Philistines shouted: "Come on up to us, and we will let you know a thing!" Jonathan and his armor-bearer did go up. Courageously, they attacked and killed about 20 of the enemy soldiers, throwing the outpost into panic. Perhaps the Philistines imagined that many Israelite warriors were following the first two. Thereafter, "a trembling occurred . . . among all the people of the outpost," says the account, "and the earth began quaking, and it developed into a trembling from God." Be-

cause of the divinely sent earthquake, turmoil spread among the Philistines, so that "the sword of each one [came] to be against his fellowman." When Israel's troops saw this, they took courage. Joined by Israelites who had been in hiding and those who had sided with the Philistines, "they kept striking down the Philistines from Michmash to Ajalon."—1 Samuel 14:11-23, 31.

### Redeemed by the People

King Saul unwisely imposed a curse on any of his soldiers who ate before the battle had been won. For some reason, Jonathan was unaware of this. Jonathan did eat. He dipped his rod into a honeycomb and ate some honey. Apparently, that gave him renewed vigor to finish the fight.—1 Samuel 14:24-27.

Upon learning that Jonathan had eaten, Saul decreed that he should die. Jonathan did not shrink from death. "Here I am! Let me die!" he said. "But the people said to Saul: 'Is Jonathan to die, who has performed this great salvation in Israel? It is unthinkable! As Jehovah is alive, not as much as a single hair of his head will fall to the earth; for it was with God that he worked this day.' With that the people redeemed Jonathan, and he did not die."—1 Samuel 14:38-45.

A present-day servant of God does not fight in literal wars, but there may be times in your life when you too need faith and courage. It may be hard to do what is right when everyone around you is doing wrong. Jehovah, however, will strengthen you and bless your desire to uphold his righteous standards. You may need courage to undertake some privilege of service within Jehovah's organization, such as expanding your ministry, accepting new privileges, or moving to serve where the need for Kingdom proclaimers is greater. You may wonder whether you are up to the challenge. Be assured, though, that you are doing a fine thing if you make your-

self available so that Jehovah can use you in a way he considers appropriate. Remember Jonathan! "It was with God that he worked."

### Jonathan and David

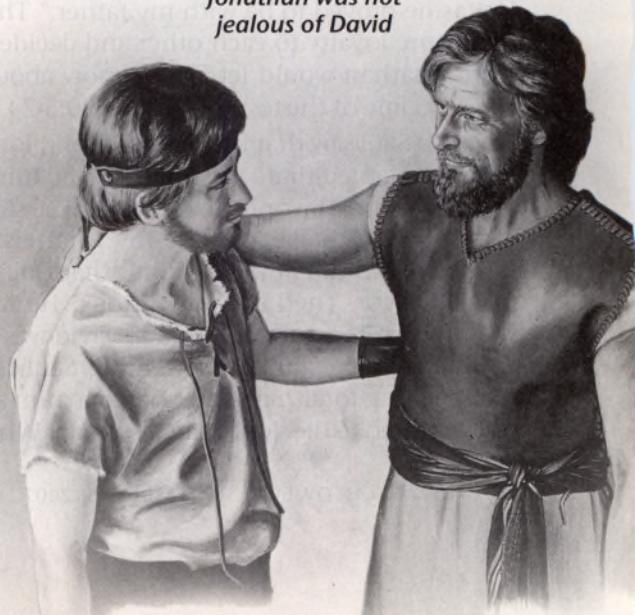
Some 20 years later, the Philistine champion Goliath taunted the Israelite army, but David slew him. Although Jonathan was likely 30 years David's senior, the two had much in common.\* The courage that Jonathan displayed at Michmash was evident also in David. More than all else, David had the same faith in Jehovah's saving power, enabling him to face Goliath fearlessly when all other Israelites shrank from the challenge. So it was that "Jonathan's very soul became bound up with the soul of David, and Jonathan began to love him as his own soul."

—1 Samuel 17:1-18:4.

Although David's prowess made King Saul see him as a rival, no trace of jealousy darkened Jonathan's countenance. He and David became very close friends, and it is likely that

\* Jonathan was at least 20 years old when he was first mentioned as a military commander early in Saul's 40-year reign. (Numbers 1:3; 1 Samuel 13:2) So Jonathan must have been approaching 60 when he died in about 1078 B.C.E. Since David was 30 at that time, Jonathan was evidently about 30 years older than David. —1 Samuel 31:2; 2 Samuel 5:4.

*Jonathan was not jealous of David*



in their confidential talk, Jonathan learned about David's anointing to be Israel's next king. Jonathan respected God's decision.

When King Saul spoke to his son and servants about killing David, Jonathan warned David. Jonathan convinced Saul that he had nothing to fear from David. Why, David had not sinned against the king at all! Had David not risked his life in facing Goliath? Jonathan's impassioned plea for his wronged friend placated Saul. However, the king soon reverted to murderous scheming and made further attempts on David's life, forcing him to flee.—1 Samuel 19:1-18.

Jonathan stood by David. The two friends met to plan what was to be done. Loyal to his friend and still striving to be loyal to his father, Jonathan said to David: "It is unthinkable! You will not die." However, David told Jonathan: "There is just about a step between me and death!"—1 Samuel 20:1-3.

Jonathan and David worked out a plan to test Saul's intentions. If David's absence from the king's table was noticed, Jonathan was to tell his father that David had asked to be excused to take part in a family sacrifice. If Saul reacted angrily, that was a sign of ill will toward David. Jonathan blessed him and implicitly acknowledged his future kingship, saying: "May Jehovah prove to be with you, just as he proved to be with my father." The two swore loyalty to each other and decided how Jonathan would let David know about the outcome of the test.—1 Samuel 20:5-24.

When Saul saw that David was absent, Jonathan explained that David had begged him: "If I have found favor in your eyes, let me slip away, please, that I may see my brothers." Jonathan was not afraid to admit that David had his favor. The king was furious! He insulted Jonathan and ranted that David was a threat to his son's succession as king. Saul demanded that Jonathan bring David to him as one destined to die. Jonathan retorted: "Why

should he be put to death? What has he done?" In a fit of rage, Saul hurled his spear at his son. Jonathan escaped unharmed but was deeply hurt at heart respecting David.—1 Samuel 20:25-34.

What loyalty Jonathan displayed! In purely human terms, he had little to gain and much to lose from his friendship with David. Yet, Jehovah had ordained that David would succeed Saul as king, and what God had purposed was for Jonathan's own good and that of others.

### A Tearful Parting

Jonathan met David secretly to give him the news. It was clear that David could never again set foot in Saul's court. The two men wept and embraced. Then David went into hiding.—1 Samuel 20:35-42.

Jonathan saw the fugitive just once more, when David was hiding from Saul "in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh." It was then that Jonathan encouraged David with the words: "Do not be afraid; for the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you yourself will be king over Israel, and I myself shall become second to you; and Saul my father also has knowledge to that effect." (1 Samuel 23:15-18) Soon thereafter, Jonathan and Saul died in a battle against the Philistines.—1 Samuel 31:1-4.

All who love God would do well to contemplate the course pursued by Jonathan. Do you face a conflict of loyalties? Then remember that Saul urged Jonathan to seek his own interests. Jonathan, however, honored Jehovah with heartfelt submission and reverence and rejoiced that the one whom God chose would be Israel's next king. Yes, Jonathan supported David and was loyal to Jehovah.

Jonathan had admirable qualities. Imitate them! Then people will be able to say of you as they did of Jonathan: "It was with God that he worked."—1 Samuel 14:45.

# "YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL"

*"Continue becoming merciful, just as your Father is merciful."—LUKE 6:36.*

THE Law given through Moses contained some 600 requirements and regulations. Although discharging the obligations of the Mosaic Law was necessary, the showing of mercy was also of major importance. Consider what Jesus said to the Pharisees, who manifested an unmerciful attitude. On two occasions he rebuked them, pointing out that God had decreed: "I want mercy, and not sacrifice." (Matthew 9:10-13; 12:1-7; Hosea 6:6) Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus said: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cumin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness."—Matthew 23:23.

<sup>2</sup> Undeniably, Jesus placed a high value on mercy. He told his followers: "Continue becoming merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:36) To "become imitators of God" in this regard, however, we need to know what true mercy is. (Ephesians 5:1) Moreover, appreciating the benefits of mercy will move us to display this quality more fully in our lives.

## Mercy Toward the Disadvantaged

<sup>3</sup> The psalmist sang: "Jehovah is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and great in loving-kindness. Jehovah is good to all,

1, 2. How do Jesus' words to the scribes and the Pharisees and to his followers show that mercy is a desirable quality?

3. Why should we look to Jehovah to learn what true mercy is?

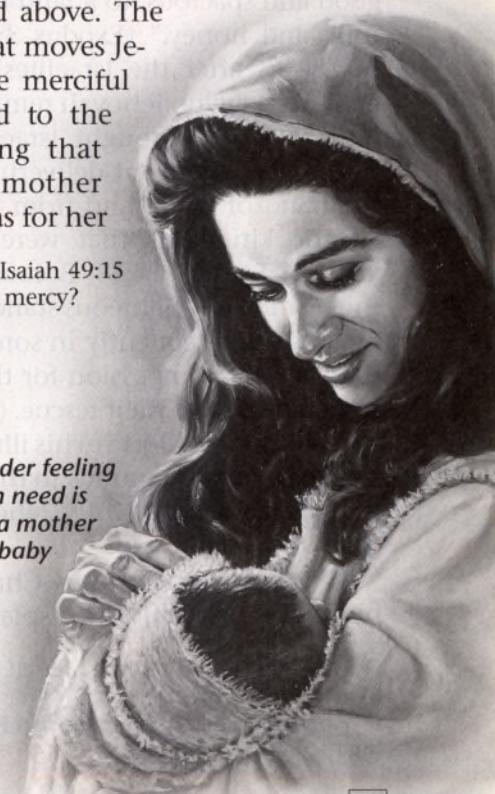
and his mercies are over all his works." (Psalm 145:8, 9) Jehovah is "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort." (2 Corinthians 1:3) Mercy is shown by treating someone in a compassionate way. This is a major facet of God's personality. His example and his instructions to us can teach us what true mercy is.

<sup>4</sup> As recorded at Isaiah 49:15, Jehovah says: "Can a wife forget her sucking so that she should not pity the son of her belly?" Hebrew words closely related to the one here translated "pity" are used in connection with mercy at Psalm 145:

8, 9, quoted above. The emotion that moves Jehovah to be merciful is compared to the warm feeling that a nursing mother normally has for her

4. What does Isaiah 49:15 teach us about mercy?

*Jehovah's tender feeling  
for those in need is  
like that of a mother  
for her baby*



child. Perhaps the baby is hungry or has some other need. Moved by the feelings of compassion or sympathy that this stirs in her, the mother attends to her infant's need. Jehovah has such tender feelings for those to whom he shows mercy.

<sup>5</sup> It is one thing to feel compassion but quite another to act on it for the benefit of the disadvantaged. Consider how Jehovah responded when his worshippers were in bondage in Egypt some 3,500 years ago. He told Moses: "Unquestionably I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and I have heard their outcry as a result of those who drive them to work; because I well know the pains they suffer. And I am proceeding to go down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a land good and spacious, to a land flowing with milk and honey." (Exodus 3:7, 8) About 500 years after the Israelites were delivered from Egypt, Jehovah reminded them: "It was I who brought Israel up out of Egypt and who went delivering you from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you." (1 Samuel 10:18) Because of deviating from God's righteous standards, the Israelites were frequently in sore straits. Yet, Jehovah felt compassion for them and repeatedly came to their rescue. (Judges 2:11-16; 2 Chronicles 36:15) This illustrates how the loving God responds to those in need, in danger, or in difficulty. Jehovah is "rich in mercy."—Ephesians 2:4.

<sup>6</sup> When on earth, Jesus Christ imitated his Father perfectly in displaying mercy.

5. How did Jehovah show himself to be "rich in mercy" toward Israel?

6. How did Jesus Christ imitate his Father in showing mercy?

How did Jesus respond when two blind men beseeched him, saying: "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David"? They were begging Jesus to restore their sight miraculously. Jesus did so, but he did not perform the miracle in a matter-of-fact manner. "Moved with pity," says the Bible, "Jesus touched their eyes, and immediately they received sight." (Matthew 20:30-34) Pity moved Jesus to perform many miracles that brought relief to the blind, the demon-possessed, the leprous, and the parents of afflicted children.—Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; Mark 5:18, 19; Luke 17:12, 13.

<sup>7</sup> The examples of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ show that mercy has two components—feelings of compassion, sympathy, or pity toward the disadvantaged and action that brings relief to the recipient. Being merciful requires both elements. In the Scriptures, mercy most often refers to a positive expression of kind consideration toward those in need. How, though, is mercy displayed in a judicial context? Does it also involve what might be viewed as a negative action, such as a holding back of punishment?

### Mercy Toward Transgressors

<sup>8</sup> Consider what happened after Nathan the prophet confronted King David of ancient Israel about David's adulterous relationship with Bath-sheba. The repentant David prayed: "Show me favor, O God, according to your loving-kindness. According to the abundance of your mercies wipe out my transgressions. Thoroughly wash me from my error, and cleanse me even from my sin. For my transgressions I my-

7. What do the examples of Jehovah God and his Son teach us about mercy?

8, 9. What did the mercy shown to David after his sin with Bath-sheba involve?

self know, and my sin is in front of me constantly. Against you, you alone, I have sinned, and what is bad in your eyes I have done.”—Psalm 51:1-4.

<sup>9</sup> David was cut to the heart. Jehovah pardoned his sin and exercised restraint in administering judgment upon him and Bath-sheba. According to the Mosaic Law, both David and Bath-sheba should have been put to death. (Deuteronomy 22:22) While they did not escape all the consequences of their sin, their lives were spared. (2 Samuel 12:13) God’s exercise of mercy entails the pardoning of error. However, he does not hold back from administering appropriate punishment.

<sup>10</sup> Since “through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world” and “the wages sin pays is death,” all humans are deserving of death. (Romans 5:12; 6:23) How grateful we can be that Jehovah shows mercy when rendering judgment! However, we must be careful not to presume upon God’s mercy. “All [Jehovah’s] ways are justice,” states Deuteronomy 32:4. In granting mercy, God does not ignore his perfect standards of justice.

<sup>11</sup> In the case of David and Bath-sheba, before the judgment of the death penalty could be softened, there had to be a pardoning of their sin. The Israelite judges were not authorized to do this. If they had been allowed to handle the case, they would have had no alternative but to pronounce the sentence of death. This is what the Law required. Out of regard for his covenant with David, however, Jehovah want-

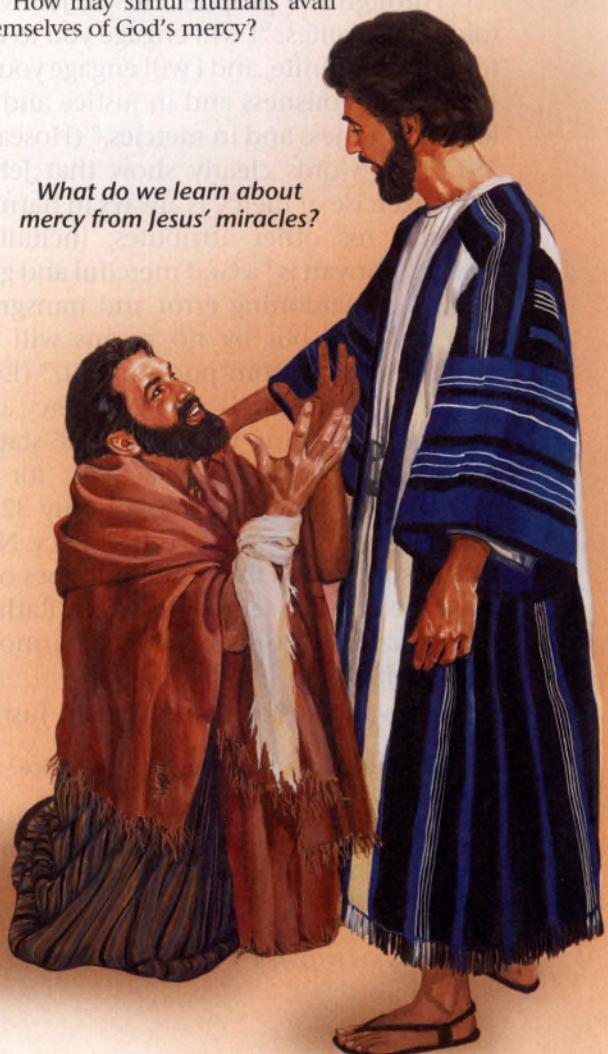
10. Although Jehovah is merciful in rendering judgment, why must we not presume upon his mercy?

11. How did Jehovah show due regard for justice in dealing with David for his sin with Bath-sheba?

ed to see if there was a basis for forgiving David’s sin. (2 Samuel 7:12-16) Hence, Jehovah God, “the Judge of all the earth,” who is “an examiner of the heart,” chose to handle the matter himself. (Genesis 18:25; 1 Chronicles 29:17) God could accurately read David’s heart, evaluate the genuineness of his repentance, and grant forgiveness.

<sup>12</sup> The mercy that Jehovah shows us by making possible our release from the penalty of inherited sin is in accord with his justice. To make possible the forgiveness of sin without the violation of justice,

12. How may sinful humans avail themselves of God’s mercy?



*What do we learn about  
mercy from Jesus’ miracles?*

Jehovah has provided the ransom sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ—the greatest expression of mercy ever shown. (Matthew 20:28; Romans 6:22, 23) To avail ourselves of God's mercy, which can save us from receiving punishment for inherited sin, we must 'exercise faith in the Son.'—John 3:16, 36.

### A God of Mercy and Justice

<sup>13</sup> While Jehovah's mercy does not violate his standard of justice, does it in some way affect his justice? Does mercy lessen the impact of divine justice by tempering it? No, it does not.

<sup>14</sup> Through the prophet Hosea, Jehovah told the Israelites: "I will engage you to me for time indefinite, and I will engage you to me in righteousness and in justice and in loving-kindness and in mercies." (Hosea 2:19) These words clearly show that Jehovah's exercise of mercy is always in harmony with his other attributes, including justice. Jehovah is "a God merciful and gracious, . . . pardoning error and transgression and sin, but by no means will he give exemption from punishment." (Exodus 34:6, 7) Jehovah is a God of mercy and justice. Concerning him, the Bible states: "The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice." (Deuteronomy 32:4) God's justice is perfect, as is his mercy. Neither is superior to the other, nor does one need the other to temper its effect. Rather, both qualities work in perfect harmony with each other.

<sup>15</sup> Jehovah's justice is not harsh. Justice

13, 14. Does God's mercy temper his justice? Explain.

15, 16. (a) What shows that divine justice is not harsh? (b) When Jehovah executes his judgment upon this wicked system of things, of what can his worshippers be sure?

almost invariably has legal implications, and judgment usually calls for the meting out of deserved punishment to wrongdoers. However, godly justice can also involve salvation for deserving ones. For example, when the wicked in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah met their end, the patriarch Lot and his two daughters were saved.—Genesis 19:12-26.

<sup>16</sup> We can be confident that when Jehovah executes his judgment upon the present wicked system of things, the "great crowd" of true worshippers, who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," will be spared. Thus, they will "come out of the great tribulation."—Revelation 7:9-14.

### Why Be Merciful?

<sup>17</sup> The examples of Jehovah and Jesus Christ indeed teach us what true mercy is. Giving us a fundamental reason to be merciful, Proverbs 19:17 states: "He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jeho-

17. What is a fundamental reason to be merciful?

*Did Jehovah violate his justice by extending mercy to David?*

vah, and his treatment He will repay to him." Jehovah is pleased when we imitate him and his Son by being merciful in our dealings with one another. (1 Corinthians 11:1) And others are encouraged to be merciful, for mercy begets mercy. —Luke 6:38.

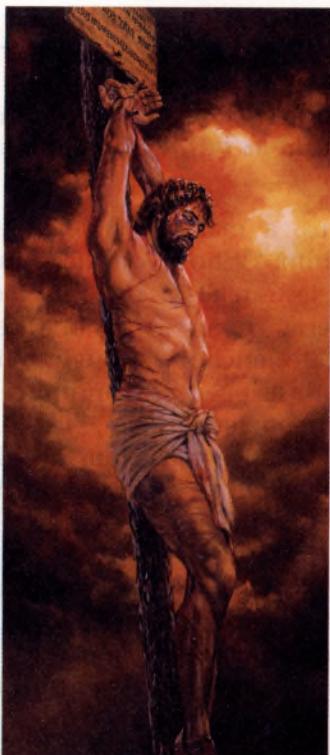
<sup>18</sup> Mercy is a blend of many good qualities. It involves graciousness, love, kindness, and goodness. Tender feelings of compassion or sympathy are at the root of acts of mercy. While godly mercy does not compromise justice, Jehovah is slow to anger and patiently gives wrongdoers sufficient time to attain to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9, 10) Mercy is thus related to patience and long-suffering. As a combination of many desirable traits—including various aspects of the fruitage of God's spirit—mercy becomes a framework within which these qualities may be cultivated. (Galatians 5:22, 23) How vital that we strive to be merciful!

### "Happy Are the Merciful"

<sup>19</sup> The disciple James tells us why we should make mercy an essential quality in our lives. He wrote: "Mercy exults triumphantly over judgment." (James 2:13b) James was speaking of the mercy that a worshipper of Jehovah shows toward

18. Why should we strive to be merciful?

19, 20. In what way does mercy exult over judgment?



*God's mercy toward sinful humans is in accord with his justice*

others. It exults triumphantly over judgment in that when the time comes for a person to "render an account for himself to God," Jehovah takes into consideration his merciful dealings and forgives him on the basis of the ransom sacrifice of His Son. (Romans 14:12) No doubt, one of the reasons why David was shown mercy for his sin with Bath-sheba was that he himself was a merciful man. (1 Samuel 24:4-7) On the other hand, "the one that does not practice mercy will have his judgment without mercy." (James 2:13a) No wonder the "merciless" are listed among those whom God views as "deserving of death"!—Romans 1:31, 32.

<sup>20</sup> In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy." (Matthew 5:7) How forcefully these words show that those seeking God's mercy should themselves be merciful! The following article will discuss how we can practice mercy in our daily life.

### What Did You Learn?

- What is mercy?
- In what ways is mercy manifested?
- In what way is Jehovah a God of mercy and justice?
- Why should we be merciful?

# PRACTICE MERCY—HOW?

*"Let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." —GALATIANS 6:10.*

WHILE speaking with Jesus, a man versed in the Law asked him: "Who really is my neighbor?" In reply, Jesus related the following parable: "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, who both stripped him and inflicted blows, and went off, leaving him half-dead. Now, by coincidence, a certain priest was going down over that road, but, when he saw him, he went by on the opposite side. Likewise, a Levite also, when he got down to the place and saw him, went by on the opposite side. But a certain Samaritan traveling the road came upon him and, at seeing him, he was moved with pity. So he approached him and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine upon them. Then he mounted him upon his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him, and whatever you spend besides this, I will repay you when I come back here.' " Next, Jesus asked his listener: "Who of these three seems to you to have made himself neighbor to the man that fell among the robbers?" The man answered: "The one that acted mercifully toward him." —Luke 10:25, 29-37a.

1, 2. What does the parable of the neighborly Samaritan teach us about mercy?

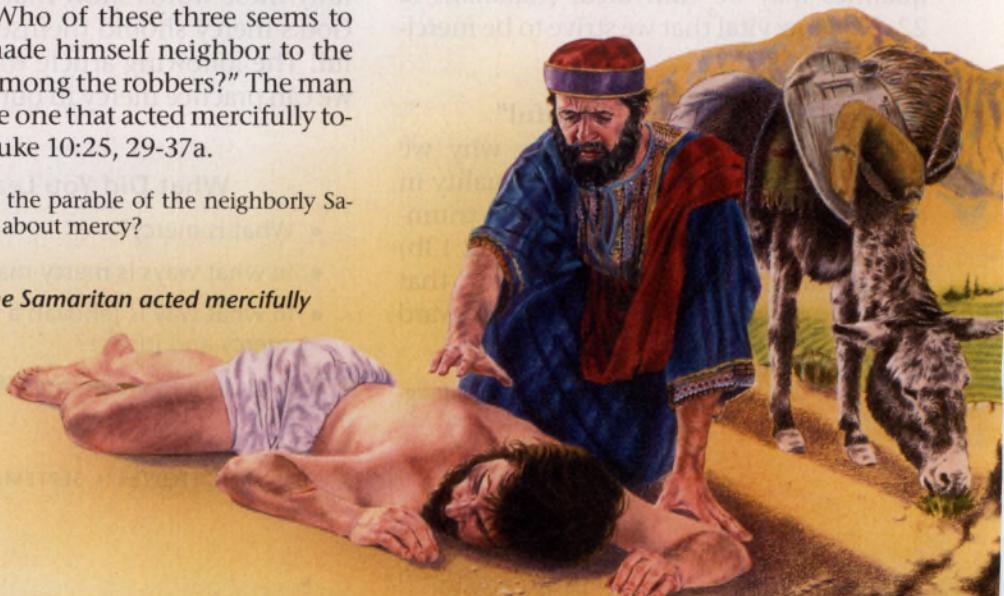
*The Samaritan acted mercifully*

<sup>2</sup> How vividly the Samaritan's treatment of the injured man illustrates what true mercy is! Moved by a feeling of pity, or compassion, the Samaritan acted in a way that brought relief to the victim. Moreover, the man in need was a stranger to the Samaritan. Mercy is not hindered by national, religious, or cultural barriers. After giving the illustration about the neighborly Samaritan, Jesus advised his listener: "Go your way and be doing the same yourself." (Luke 10:37b) We can take that admonition to heart and strive to be merciful to others. But how? In what ways can we practice mercy in our everyday life?

**"If a Brother . . . Is in a Naked State"**

<sup>3</sup> "As long as we have time favorable for it," said the apostle Paul, "let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Galatians 6:10)

3, 4. Why should we be especially concerned about practicing mercy within the Christian congregation?



Let us, then, first consider how we can abound in deeds of mercy toward those related to us in the faith.

<sup>4</sup> Exhorting true Christians to be merciful to one another, the disciple James wrote: "The one that does not practice mercy will have his judgment without mercy." (James 2:13) The context of these inspired words tells us some ways in which we can practice mercy. At James 1:27, for example, we read: "The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world." James 2:15, 16 states: "If a brother or a sister is in a naked state and lacking the food sufficient for the day, yet a certain one of you says to them: 'Go in peace, keep warm and well fed,' but you do not give them the necessities for their body, of what benefit is it?"

<sup>5</sup> Caring for others and helping those in need is a feature of true religion. Our way of worship does not allow us to limit our concern for others to a mere oral expression of the wish that everything will turn out well for them. Rather, a tender feeling of compassion moves us to act in behalf of those in serious need. (1 John 3:17, 18) Yes, preparing a meal for a sick person, assisting an elderly one with chores, providing transportation to Christian meetings when necessary, and not being closefisted toward deserving ones are among the deeds of mercy we should abound in.—Deuteronomy 15:7-10.

<sup>6</sup> Of greater importance than giving materially is giving spiritually to assist members of the expanding Christian congrega-



*Christians abound in acts of mercy*

tion. We are exhorted to "speak consolingly to the depressed souls, support the weak." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) "The aged women" are encouraged to be "teachers of what is good." (Titus 2:3) Concerning Christian overseers, the Bible states: "Each one must prove to be like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rain-storm."—Isaiah 32:2.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to caring for widows, orphans, and those in need of assistance and encouragement locally, the first-century congregations at times organized relief measures in behalf of believers in other places. For example, when the prophet Agabus foretold that "a great famine was about to come upon the entire inhabited earth," the disciples in Syrian Antioch "determined, each of them according as anyone could afford it, to send a relief ministration to the brothers dwelling in Judea." This was dispatched to the elders there "by the hand of Barnabas and Saul." (Acts 11:28-30) What about today? "The faithful and discreet slave" has organized relief committees to care for our brothers who may be affected by natural disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, or tsunamis. (Matthew 24:45) Voluntarily

5, 6. How may we abound in deeds of mercy in our association with the local congregation?

7. From the disciples in Syrian Antioch, what do we learn about displaying mercy?

contributing our time, effort, and resources in cooperation with this arrangement is a fine way for us to display mercy.

### **"If You Continue Showing Favoritism"**

<sup>8</sup> Warning about a characteristic that works against mercy and "the kingly law" of love, James wrote: "If you continue showing favoritism, you are working a sin, for you are reproved by the law as transgressors." (James 2:8, 9) Showing undue favor to the materially rich or to those having prominence can make us less sensitive to "the complaining cry of the lowly one." (Proverbs 21:13) Favoritism stifles a merciful spirit. We practice mercy by treating others impartially.

<sup>9</sup> Does being impartial mean that we should never show special consideration to anyone? Hardly. Concerning his fellow worker Epaphroditus, the apostle Paul wrote to Christians in Philippi: "Keep holding men of that sort dear." Why? "Because on account of the Lord's work he came quite near to death, exposing his soul to danger, that he might fully make up for your not being here to render private service to me." (Philippians 2:25, 29, 30) The faithful service rendered by Epaphroditus deserved recognition. Moreover, at 1 Timothy 5:17, we read: "Let the older men who preside in a fine way be reckoned worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard in speaking and teaching." Good spiritual qualities also merit acknowledgment. Showing such consideration is not favoritism.

### **"The Wisdom From Above Is . . . Full of Mercy"**

<sup>10</sup> Concerning the tongue, James said: "An unruly injurious thing, it is full of death-

8. How does favoritism work against mercy?
9. Why is it not wrong to show special consideration to deserving ones?
10. Why should we control our tongue?

dealing poison. With it we bless Jehovah, even the Father, and yet with it we curse men who have come into existence 'in the likeness of God.' Out of the same mouth come forth blessing and cursing." In this context, James added: "If you have bitter jealousy and contentiousness in your hearts, do not be bragging and lying against the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is the earthly, animal, demonic. For where jealousy and contentiousness are, there disorder and every vile thing are. But the wisdom from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good fruits, not making partial distinctions, not hypocritical."—James 3:8-10a, 14-17.

<sup>11</sup> Hence, the way we use our tongue is an indication of whether we have the wisdom that is "full of mercy." What if because of jealousy or contentiousness we were to boast, lie, or spread harmful gossip? Psalm 94:4 states: "All the practitioners of what is hurtful keep bragging about themselves." And how quickly injurious talk can damage an innocent one's good reputation! (Psalm 64:2-4) Moreover, think of the harm that can be done by "a false witness [who] launches forth mere lies." (Proverbs 14:5; 1 Kings 21:7-13) After discussing the misuse of the tongue, James says: "It is not proper, my brothers, for these things to go on occurring this way." (James 3:10b) True mercy requires that we use our tongue in a chaste, peaceable, and reasonable way. Jesus said: "I tell you that every unprofitable saying that men speak, they will render an account concerning it on Judgment Day." (Matthew 12:36) How important it is that we be merciful in the use of our tongue!

11. How can we be merciful in the use of our tongue?

### **"Forgive Men Their Trespasses"**

<sup>12</sup> Jesus' parable of the slave who owed his master, a king, 60,000,000 denarii shows another way to be merciful. Having no means to pay the debt, the slave begged for mercy. "Moved to pity at this," the master of the slave forgave his debt. But the slave went out and found a fellow slave who owed him only a hundred denarii and mercilessly had him thrown into prison. When the master heard what had happened, he summoned the forgiven slave and said to him: "Wicked slave, I canceled all that debt for you, when you entreated me. Ought you not, in turn, to have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I also had mercy on you?" With that the master had him delivered to the jailers. Jesus concluded the parable, saying: "In like manner my heavenly Father will also deal with you if you do not forgive each one his brother from your hearts."—Matthew 18:23-35.

<sup>13</sup> How forcefully the above-mentioned parable points out that mercy includes a readiness to forgive! Jehovah has forgiven us a huge debt of sin. Should we not also "forgive men their trespasses"? (Matthew 6: 14, 15) Before Jesus related the parable about the merciless slave, Peter asked him: "Lord, how many times is my brother to sin against me and am I to forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus replied: "I say to you, not, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18:21, 22) Yes, a merciful person is ready to forgive "up to seventy-seven times," that is, without limit.

<sup>14</sup> Showing still another way to display mercy, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: "Stop judging that you may not be

12, 13. (a) What do we learn about mercy from the parable of the slave who owed his master a large sum of money? (b) What does it mean to forgive our brother "up to seventy-seven times"?

14. According to Matthew 7:1-4, how may we practice mercy daily?

judged; for with what judgment you are judging, you will be judged . . . Why, then, do you look at the straw in your brother's eye, but do not consider the rafter in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Allow me to extract the straw from your eye'; when, look! a rafter is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:1-4) Therefore, we can practice mercy daily by putting up with the weaknesses of others without being judgmental or overly critical.

### **"Work What Is Good Toward All"**

<sup>15</sup> While the Bible book of James highlights mercy among believers, this does not mean that acts of mercy are limited to those within the Christian congregation. "Jehovah is good to all," says Psalm 145:9, "and his mercies are over all his works." We are exhorted to "become imitators of God" and to "work what is good toward all." (Ephesians 5:1; Galatians 6:10) While we do not love "either the world or the things in the world," we are not insensitive to the needs of those in the world.—1 John 2:15.

<sup>16</sup> As Christians, we do not hesitate to provide whatever help we can to victims

15. Why are acts of mercy not limited to fellow believers?

16. What factors affect the way we show mercy to others?

### **IN OUR NEXT ISSUE**

**Choices That Lead to Happiness**

**Distressed Sisters Who "Built the House of Israel"**

**Deliverance From the Traps of the Birdcatcher**

of “unforeseen occurrence” or to those in dire situations. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Of course, circumstances would dictate what we can do and how much. (Proverbs 3:27) When providing material help to others, we want to be careful that a deed that seems good does not promote laziness. (Proverbs 20:1, 4; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12) Hence, a true act of mercy is a response that combines tender feelings of compassion or sympathy with sound reasoning.

<sup>17</sup> The finest way to show mercy to those outside the Christian congregation is to share Bible truth with them. Why? Because the majority of mankind today are groping about in spiritual darkness. Having no way to deal with problems that confront them nor any real hope for the future, most people are “skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36) The message of God’s Word can be ‘a lamp to their foot,’ helping them to deal with life’s problems. It can also be ‘a light to their roadway’ in that the Bible foretells God’s purpose for the future, giving them a basis for having a bright hope. (Psalm 119:105) What a privilege it is to carry the wonderful message of truth to those who are in dire need of it! In view of the nearness of the impending “great tribulation,” now is the time

17. What is the finest way to show mercy to those outside the Christian congregation?

### What Did You Learn?

- Why is it especially important to be merciful to fellow believers?
- How can we practice mercy within the Christian congregation?
- How may we work what is good toward those outside the congregation?



*The finest way to show mercy to those outside the congregation is to share Bible truth with them*

to have a zealous share in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. (Matthew 24:3-8, 21, 22, 36-41; 28:19, 20) No other act of mercy is as important.

### Give “the Things That Are Inside”

<sup>18</sup> “Give as gifts of mercy the things that are inside,” said Jesus. (Luke 11:41) For a good deed to be an act of true mercy, it must be a gift that comes from inside—from a loving and willing heart. (2 Corinthians 9:7) In a world where harshness, selfishness, and a lack of concern about the suffering and problems of others are the norm, how refreshing such mercy is!

<sup>19</sup> Let us, then, work to increase the influence that mercy has on our lives. The more merciful we are, the more we become like God. This helps us lead a truly meaningful and satisfying life.—Matthew 5:7.

<sup>18, 19.</sup> Why should we work to increase the influence that mercy has on our lives?

## Questions From Readers

Since the Jews were commanded to have "nothing leavened" during the Passover, why did Jesus use wine—a product of fermentation—when instituting the Memorial of his death?—Exodus 12:20; Luke 22:7, 8, 14-20.

The Passover observance, marking the Exodus of the sons of Israel from Egypt, was instituted in 1513 B.C.E. When giving instructions for its observance, Jehovah said: "Nothing leavened are you to eat. In all your dwellings you are to eat unfermented cakes." (Exodus 12:11, 20) This divine prohibition applied only to the type of bread to be eaten during the Passover. There was no mention of wine.

The primary reason for the restriction on leaven was that the Israelites' departure from Egypt was hurried. "The people carried their flour dough before it was leavened," explains Exodus 12:34, "with their kneading troughs wrapped up in their mantles upon their shoulder." The absence of leaven during subsequent Passover observances would serve to remind future generations of this important fact.

In time, leaven often came to be viewed as a symbol of sin or corruption. Referring to an immoral person within the Christian congregation, for example, the apostle Paul asked: "Do you not know that a little leaven ferments the whole lump?" Then he said: "Clear away the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, according as you are free from ferment. For, indeed, Christ our passover has been sacrificed. Consequently let us keep the festival, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of badness and wickedness, but with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:6-8) Only unleavened bread could serve



as a symbol of Jesus' sinless human body.—Hebrews 7:26.

The use of wine at the Passover observance was a later addition by the Jews. Likely, it was added after their return from Babylonian exile. The Bible records no objection to this innovation, and therefore Jesus could properly make use of wine at the Passover meal. Of course, the natural fermentation that took place in wine of ancient times was different from what occurred in connection with bread. In the case of dough, fermentation required the addition of yeast, or leaven. Wine made from grapes needed no such additive. The elements of fermentation were already present in the grapes. Plain grape juice would not have been available at the Passover because it would not have remained unfermented from harvesttime in the fall until Passover in the springtime.

Hence, Jesus' use of wine as a Memorial emblem does not in any way conflict with the Passover instructions regarding leaven. Any red wine that is not sweetened, fortified, or spiced is appropriate for use as a symbol of Christ's "precious blood."—1 Peter 1:19.

# "THRIVING DURING GRAY-HEADEDNESS"

MANY people in Mediterranean lands plant date palms in their courtyards. These trees are known for their beauty and tasty fruit. Moreover, they keep on thriving for well over a hundred years.

King Solomon of ancient Israel poetically described the stature of a beautiful Shulammite girl as resembling a palm tree. (*Song of Solomon 7:7*) The book *Plants of the Bible* states: "The Hebrew word for the date palm is 'tāmār.' . . . It became the Jews' symbol of grace and elegance and was often bestowed by them to women." For example, Solomon's beautiful half sister was named Tamar. (*2 Samuel 13:1*) Some parents still give that name to their daughters.

Beautiful women are not the only ones likened to a palm tree. The psalmist sang: "The righteous himself will blossom forth as a palm tree does; as a cedar in Lebanon does, he will grow big. Those who are planted in the house of Jehovah, in the courtyards of our God, they will blossom forth. They will still keep on thriving during gray-headedness, fat and fresh they will continue to be."—*Psalm 92:12-14*.

Figuratively speaking, those who serve God faithfully during their old age have much in common with the elegant palm tree. "Gray-headedness is a crown of beauty when it is found in the way of righteousness," says the Bible. (*Proverbs 16:31*) Although their physical strength may falter with advancing years, elderly ones can retain their spiritual vitality by drawing sustenance through a regular study of God's Word, the Bible. (*Psalm 1:1-3; Jeremiah 17:7, 8*) Thanks to their winsome words and their fine example, faithful older ones are a tremendous source of encouragement to others and keep bearing fruit year after year. (*Titus 2:2-5; Hebrews 13:15, 16*) Like the date palm, elderly ones can thrive in their old age.

