

The **WATCHTOWER**

Announcing
**JEHOVAH'S
KINGDOM**

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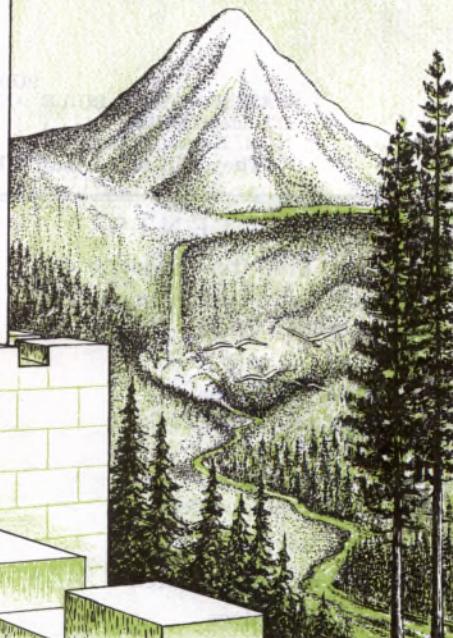
**ACQUAINT YOURSELF WITH
GOD AND KEEP PEACE**

**ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD LEADS
TO ETERNAL PEACE**

**HOW TO BREAK FREE
FROM SUPERSTITION**

HOW TO AVOID REGRETS

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"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13

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THE smile of gratitude quickly disappeared from the traveling woman's face as she stared at the food offered her.

"Eat," urged the hostess, "the food is not spoiled."

"No, no," protested the traveler, "this is catfish. If I eat it, I will be accused of murdering my own children!"

Illogical? Persons who are unshackled by slavery to superstition probably would say so. Yet, to many individuals, eating this food is considered a serious offense.

Nevertheless, many persons have broken free from such taboos. They no longer fear the dead, rely on "medicines," or allow dreams and omens to regulate their lives. They are now happy, contented people. How did they break free from superstition?

TRUTH ABOUT THE DEAD FREES

It is the truth that has made possible this break from superstition, particularly the truth concerning the condition of the dead. As Jesus Christ said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—John 8:32.

Well, what is the truth about the dead? Can they communicate with or harm the

HOW TO BREAK FREE from SUPERSTITION

living? Why did the woman say that eating catfish would be comparable to inflicting death on her children?

Catfish in the streams near this African woman's village are regarded by many as reincarnated spirits of dead humans. So villagers explain regarding the taboo: "It is our law. We don't eat it. If a woman eats, she will either be barren or her children will die. If a man eats, he will not have children." Some even believe that death for the eater will ensue.

A young African named Samuel observed this taboo, and abstained from catfish. But then he began to study the Bible. He noted that the Bible teaches that the dead are unconscious. For instance, in one place the Bible says: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all."—Eccl. 9:5.

Samuel also was shown in the Bible that at death man's "spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his

thoughts do perish." (Ps. 146:4) From this Samuel could see that the spirit, or life force, is not an independent intellect that continues after death. Rather, death completely terminates life. As the Bible also observes: "If [God] sets his heart upon anyone, if that one's spirit and breath he gathers to himself, all flesh will expire together, and earthling man himself will return to the very dust."—Job 34:14, 15.

Thus, when he learned the Bible truth that the spirit in man is not a personality that survives the death of the body, Samuel could see the error in believing that catfish possess the reincarnated spirits of departed humans. He, therefore, realized how absurd it is to believe that a dead fish could interfere with his procreative powers. So Samuel started eating catfish.

However, because he did not marry for some years, his tribesmen were sure that catfish had spoiled his mating powers. When he finally did marry, they were equally sure that he would have no children, or that any offspring he did have would die. What was the outcome?

Well, Samuel's first child did not die, nor did his second, nor his third, and the fourth is on the way! But what about Samuel's sister, who has abstained from catfish all her life? She protested to Samuel about breaking this taboo. But he replied: "If there is any truth in the taboo, then why are all my children living, but your children are dead?"

It was true. This sister had suffered the loss of her three children. Superstitious observance of the taboo had not preserved them!

Once freed by Bible truth, Samuel determined never again to be enslaved by superstitions. So when his father died, he refused to put a gift in the coffin for the deceased to carry into the spirit world. Nor did he share in having a 'meal with

the dead.' Neither did he participate in the feast to 'cross over,' which celebrates the supposed joining of the deceased with other spirits. For Samuel's fearless stand in support of Bible truth, has he been harmed by some vindictive spirit? No, not in the least.

Perhaps you are one who holds to superstitious beliefs in connection with the dead. Do you, for instance, wonder if your little brother is really your dead uncle come back to life? Do you reassure yourself by noticing the shape of the little fellow's ear, concluding that uncle's ear was shaped just like that? Or do you superstitiously refrain from naming your children after a living relative because you believe this relative, after his death, will be born again as a baby and only that baby should carry his name?

Allow Bible truth to set you free from such superstitious beliefs! Trust in the Bible, "just as it truthfully is, as the word of God." (1 Thess. 2:13) The truth is that future life is gained, not by reincarnation, but through the resurrection power invested in Jesus Christ, who declares: "I am the resurrection and the life."—John 11:25.

Following his own resurrection from the dead Jesus remembered every detail of his previous human life. So did the resurrected Lazarus, who continued to be a disciple of Jesus after coming forth from the grave. (John 11:38-44; 12:1, 9-11) How about you? Can you remember a past existence? If you really lived before, you should be able to do so. Actually, reincarnation is a myth based on fallible human reasoning. God's Word of truth exposes it as such.

BASIS FOR SUPERSTITIOUS FEARS

This does not mean that people's superstitious fears are completely without basis. For example, Samuel recalls the experi-

ence of a young African boy of nine. One day while walking in the forest he heard his name called. He turned, saw no one, and continued walking. Just then a stone thrown from behind landed in front of him. The boy arrived at home in fear, but his father explained that this was the work of his mother, who had just died.

Thereafter the presence of a dead body in his town always filled the youth's heart with a sickening dread. However, later in life he reasoned carefully on the Bible passage at Job 7:9, 10: "The cloud certainly comes to its end and goes away; so he that is going down to Sheol [the grave] will not come up. He will not return any more to his house, and his place will not acknowledge him any more." Now the man realized that it could not have been his mother who had called his name and thrown the stone when he was a youth. She was dead, unconscious, and she could not return to do these things. Who, then, was responsible for them?

The Bible reveals the source of many supernatural phenomena to be wicked invisible spirit creatures—and not departed spirits of humans. Satan the Devil is the chief of these wicked angelic creatures, and Jesus called him "the father of the lie." (John 8:44) Satan and his wicked spirits deliberately have endeavored to deceive people into believing that humans survive death and enter into a spirit world. They have even impersonated the voices of deceased persons in an effort to perpetuate the lie that man does not cease to exist at death.

THROWING OFF THE YOKE OF "MEDICINE"

It is also commonly believed in some places that natural objects, including trees, rocks, rivers, mountains, and particularly images, are possessed of indwelling souls capable of influencing lives for good or for

bad. Therefore, for protection against bad and fickle powers, a "medicine" is concocted of objects representative of powerful qualities. A stone, for instance, or bones, claws and beaks are considered useful. Such "medicines" may be stuffed into horns or made up into small packages.

One such "medicine" is known as "Gyeefa," worn only by grown men. It is suspended from the neck in a skin pouch. Gyeefa has "soldiers" that report to him. These "soldiers" are finger rings worn by growing boys like Peter.

To prevent the "medicine" from harming him, Peter had to observe the "law of the medicine." This law included a ban on roast cassava. Also, if Peter were on a journey and saw driver ants approaching him or he heard the call of the dudu bird on his right side, then he would be obliged to turn around and return to the starting point of his journey. And finally, no one was to be permitted to "talk over" Peter. Thus if Peter were sitting in a rice kitchen, no one dare go to the kitchen's top and talk from a position above Peter. One can easily imagine the difficulties that observing such burdensome regulations would entail.

When Peter was twelve he was sent to Lower Buchanan in West Africa for schooling. The fine opportunity for beneficial mental development turned out to be a time of distress and foreboding for Peter. Why so? Because the master of the house lived on the second floor, above Peter. And Peter dare not tell him not to "talk over" him! For most of his time there Peter lived outside the house, and finally the fear of the "medicine" made him leave.

Years later, while studying the Bible with one of Jehovah's witnesses, Peter was impressed with the fact that God condemned "anyone who employs divination,

a practicer of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer." (Deut. 18:10) Peter realized that the "law of the medicine" regarding driver ants and dudu birds was nothing more than paying attention to omens. Too, how could Gyeefa with its odd assortment of *lifeless* objects protect him, a *living* man. He was trusting in magic power. And what sort of judgment would come to him from the true God for trusting in Gyeefa, a false idol?

Truth's power and the fear of Jehovah God led Peter to challenge the "law of the medicine." He started eating roast cassava. When driver ants came in his direction, he walked right through them and never changed course. That was fifteen years ago, and has harm come to Peter for altogether disregarding the Gyeefa superstitions? Not at all, as he continues to 'walk in security with Jehovah as his confidence.'—Prov. 3:23-26.

Then there was John, who wore under his outer clothing a "medicine" in the form of a small gown to which sacrifices were made at every new moon. Failure to do so was supposed to bring on sickness or loss of sanity. If John should argue with someone, the mere striking of his chest was supposed to start the "medicine" working against his antagonist. Then one day John read in the Bible: "But to whom can you people liken me so that I should be made his equal?" says the Holy One."—Isa. 40:25.

John was troubled. Had the "medicine" taken the place of God in his life? Was he really relying on the true God? Was he praying? How, in fact, could he pray to the true God and expect to be heard? The Almighty is a God exacting exclusive devotion and does not share glory with any rival. After learning to 'trust in Jehovah with his whole heart' John wrapped up his expensive "medicine," valued at \$100,

and threw it into the ocean.—Ex. 20:5; Isa. 42:8; Prov. 3:5.

It was ten years ago that John replaced the expensive gown with the "breastplate of righteousness" of which the Bible speaks. And during all these years the drowned "medicine" has been unable to deprive John of good health and soundness of mind.—Eph. 6:14.

NO LONGER DECEIVED BY DREAMS

But someone may ask: How can a person believe that a deceased relative is really dead when the deceased apparently talks to one in dreams?

For instance, a young woman dreamed frequently of her deceased grandmother. While she was alive the grandmother had been very fond of this granddaughter. Now, the grandmother would appear in dreams and prescribe medicine when her granddaughter was sick. On one occasion she even appeared and apparently changed the diapers of the granddaughter's baby! Would not this convince one that grandmother was really alive in a spirit world?

Of course, this is what the "father of the lie," Satan the Devil, desires individuals to believe. He wants to keep people enslaved to superstition and fear, making them believe that the deceased can really communicate with and do things either for or against the living. He and his agents are masters of deception. As the Bible explains: "Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light. It is therefore nothing great if his ministers also keep transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness."—2 Cor. 11:14, 15.

In time, however, the granddaughter decided to put her faith in the Bible and diligently sought to understand it. Consequently, after turning to Jehovah, she no longer had such dreams of her grandmother. No longer did she think of her grandmother as a household spirit, but merely

desired to see her again in the resurrection. Through faith in the truth, this young woman 'opposed the Devil, and he fled from her.'—Jas. 4:7.

'OLD WIVES' TALES' AND OMENS

In many places people are often enslaved by what amount to 'old wives' tales.' For example, one grannie gave her daughter a piece of stone taken from a place where lightning had struck. "Put it in baby's bath water," she advised; "it will make him strong!" Grannie also disclosed that a piece of cork in the water will make baby agile, 'ready to walk in nine months.'

Daughter dutifully followed this advice with her first four children before learning that the Bible condemned superstition. Therefore, her last six children were bathed without the stone and cork. Could she observe any difference in the development of her children? Not at all. All ten of them walked after nine months and all are healthy and strong. Superstitious persons like to pass on their superstitions to others. Be wise. Learn to distinguish between truth and superstitious 'old wives' tales.' Heed the Bible, which says: "Turn down the false stories which violate what is holy and which old women tell."—1 Tim. 4:7.

Perhaps you are superstitious only about little things, and still feel that you are acceptable to God as a Christian. You may not fear the dead or carry "medicine," but if you are on a journey and happen to stub your right toe, do you accept this as an omen of good luck? Or if a branch of a tree breaks off right before your eyes, do you take this as an omen of ill for your family? Once you have established that mentality, any little thing that does not go right will appear to confirm your superstition. However, branches break and troubles come as normal occurrences in life. The Bible explains that "time and unfore-

seen occurrence befall" everyone.—Eccl. 9:11.

You will be wise to keep reminding yourself that the true God does not communicate with humans through omens. In fact, he condemns "anyone who looks for omens." (Deut. 18:10) Therefore pay no attention to them! What a wonderful mental relief you will experience!

BREAK FREE BY TURNING TO JEHOVAH

Remember, such little superstitions on your part will not be overlooked by Jehovah, who is "searching the heart, examining the kidneys, even to give to each one according to his ways, according to the fruitage of his dealings." (Jer. 17:10) Superstition alienates one from the true God, Jehovah. It prevents one from drawing close to Him, because superstition is based on falsehood and ignorance.

A person dares not deceive himself with false reasonings. For "God is light and there is no darkness at all in union with him." This means that the break from superstitious practices must be complete and final. Otherwise, "If we make the statement: 'We are having a sharing with him,' and yet we go on walking in the darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth."—1 John 1:5, 6.

Jehovah's spirit or active force is needed to activate the mind to reject ignorance and foolish fears, and thus break free from superstition. Make room for God's spirit to enter your mind by absorbing liberating Bible truth through reading, study and discussion of God's Word. Call on the name of Jehovah for security and spiritual strength, for "the name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous runs and is given protection." Make the break for wondrous mental freedom, for "where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom."

—Prov. 18:10; 2 Cor. 3:17.

Offering Sacrifices Through God's Effectual Priesthood

What were some of the pre-Christian ways by which man could approach Jehovah God and commune with him?

There were angels who ministered in a great variety of ways to the needs of man, and by means of them men had contact with God. The patriarchs themselves served as a priesthood or way of approach to Jehovah God for their households, as did, for example, Abraham and Job. (Job 1:5) And with the establishment of the nation of Israel, the Aaronic priesthood, and in particular the high priest, served as a way of approach to God and a means of communication with Him.—Heb. 5:4.*

What qualifications does Jesus Christ have to serve as God's effectual high priest today?

First of all, because of his perfection and faithfulness to death, he was uniquely able to provide an actual sin-aton ing sacrifice by laying down his body and his perfect human life, on the torture stake. He was raised from the dead a glorious spirit creature and ascended to heaven, there to present the value of his sacrifice to Jehovah God. He is alive evermore to serve as a sacrificial priest to all who exercise faith in his ransom sacrifice, and he will restore all obedient humankind to perfection during his Kingdom rule.—Heb. 9:11-14.

What are the requirements or duties of the priesthood today as foreshadowed by the Aaronic priesthood?

Christ's underpriests today are the remaining ones of his anointed footstep followers. Just as the typical priests saw to it that the animal sacrifices met with Jehovah's requirements, so Christ's priesthood of today and their helpers must see to it that each one is offering up a sacrifice of praise commensurate with one's ability. They are to make clear God's requirements as to what kinds of sacrifices are acceptable to Him.—Mal. 1:7-9.

Even as the priests and Levites had much work to do in connection with the sacrificial offerings of the people, so today the responsible servants in the congregations have much work to do in the way of drawing up schedules,

preparing programs, arranging meetings, organizing effective arrangements for field service, seeing that all matters relating to the Kingdom Hall are taken care of, and that there are sufficient literature and territory available for use by the publishers.—1 Thess. 5:12, 13.

Further, as it was the duty of the priests back there to sound the trumpet for assembling the people and to prepare for battle, so the remnant today and their helpers must sound a distinct call to all to gather to Jehovah's organization and to engage in spiritual warfare against Jehovah's enemies.—2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 6:10-18.

Then again, even as the lips of the Aaronic priests kept knowledge, and the law is what the people sought at their mouth, so today the remnant of Christ's body are obligated to keep on ministering to their fellow worshipers their spiritual food at the proper time.—Matt. 24:45-47.

What obligation do the words at Hebrews 13:15 place upon the anointed remnant and their helpers?

'To offer the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of their lips which make public declaration to Jehovah's name.' One way of doing this is by speaking up at congregational meetings, as counseled at Hebrews 10:23-25. This requires thoughtful and thorough advance preparation. Among other ways this can be done is by going from house to house with the good news of God's kingdom in printed form, by making return visits where interest in Bible truth is found, and by conducting Bible studies in the homes of those who want to learn more about Jehovah God and his will and purposes for humankind.

Zealous servants of Jehovah will also be alert not to overlook any opportunities to witness incidentally wherever possible. Taking advantage of such opportunities not only brings much joy to the Kingdom publisher himself but time and again has resulted in helping persons get on the road to everlasting life in God's new system of things.

All of the anointed spiritual priesthood and their "other sheep" helpers will therefore want to be diligent during November by offering sacrifices of praise, glorifying Jehovah's name.

* For details see *The Watchtower*, June 1 and 15, 1968.

Acquaint Yourself With God **AND KEEP PEACE**

"Acquaint yourself, please, with him, and keep peace; thereby good things will come to you."—Job 22:21.

WHEN the man Eliphaz the Temanite told his friend Job to acquaint himself with Jehovah God, Job was to all appearances not at peace with God or was not keeping peace with him. Evidently good things were not coming to Job. From the height of prosperity he had been plummeted into the depths of abject poverty. He had lost his vast properties, had been bereaved of his ten beautiful children, and had then fallen victim to a loathsome disease that covered him with ulcers from head to foot. His despairing wife had foolishly told him to curse God and die. Hearing of his unparalleled calamity, three acquaintances of Job, one of whom was this Eliphaz from the south, came to comfort him. After seven days of silent scrutiny of Job and then hearing him call down evil upon the day of his birth, the three would-be comforters proceeded to attack Job's integrity toward God. (Job 1:1 to 4:1) It was during the course of the argument that followed that Eliphaz said to Job: "Acquaint yourself, please, with him, and keep peace; thereby good things will come to you."—Job 22:21, NW; AT; AS.

1. How did it come about that Eliphaz the Temanite said to Job the words of our text above?

² The words of Eliphaz, though spoken under a misunderstanding of Job's case and misdirected toward Job, were good in themselves. This twentieth-century world fails to recognize that men cannot have peace among themselves and enjoy prosperity until, first, they get acquainted with God and become familiar with his will and come into peaceful relationship with him in his way. But how can men of earth get acquainted with a God who is an invisible spirit Being? As one college student recently said: "How can I experience God?" This at a time when student unrest has spread around the earth.

³ By getting acquainted with the Holy Bible a person can get acquainted with God, its Author, for the Bible tells us of men who made God a part of their daily experience. It tells us of ancient men, Enoch and Noah, who were said to walk with God. (Gen. 5:22; 6:9) Do you know that this God brought a whole nation into acquaintanceship with him, and that individual men of this nation had miraculous visions in which they saw God? Do you know that men of this nation ate and

2. As suggested in the words of Eliphaz, what does the modern world fail to recognize as necessary to the having of peace among themselves?

3. (a) How can we acquaint ourselves with God?
(b) How did God bring a nation into acquaintanceship with him, and how were some men thereof favored?

drank with God on earth? The writer of the book of Job and of the first five books of the Holy Bible tells us of a divine contract with this nation of which he was the mediator between God and man. This man was the prophet Moses. This contract or covenant was made at a mountain in the Sinai Peninsula, which is part of Arabia. It was in the spring of the year 1513 B.C.E., and God had brought the people of Moses there after having delivered them out of Egypt, by which he made his name Jehovah known to them as their forefathers had never appreciated it.—Ex. 6:3.

⁴ After the making of the covenant with Jehovah God over animal victims of sacrifice, Moses and his brother and two of his nephews and seventy other men of the nation went up into Mount Sinai. Exodus 24:9-11 tells us: "Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the older men of Israel proceeded to go up, and they got to see the God of Israel. And under his feet there was what seemed like a work of sapphire flagstones and like the very heavens for purity. And he did not put out his hand against the distinguished men of the sons of Israel, but they got a vision of the true God and ate and drank."

⁵ Actually those seventy-four men saw no shape or form of God. What they saw in vision was an awe-inspiring display of the glory of the "God of Israel." Under the glorious manifestation of Him, or, as we would say, "under his feet," those favored men saw something "like a work of sapphire flagstones and like the very heavens for purity," or like the clear, blue sky without a cloud. Those men were on earth and below his "feet" in nice harmony with God's own saying: "The heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool."

4. How did more than seventy men of Israel come to eat and drink together with God on earth?

5. Did those favored men see God's shape, and why was it fitting for them to be "under his feet"?

How, then, could any man-made temple or church building contain such a dazzlingly glorious God as this? It really could not do so.—Isa. 66:1; Acts 7:48, 49.

⁶ A human creature is really in a dangerous position when he has a vision of the only living and true God. Human flesh and blood are so frail and perishable when brought near to any display of the glory of God's person. Man can go only so far, and no farther, in beholding the glorious manifestation of the invisible God. Not without good cause does Exodus 24:11 say with regard to those seventy-four men in the mountain of Sinai: "And he [that is, God] did not put out his hand against the distinguished men of the sons of Israel, but they got a vision of the true God and ate and drank." Certainly they did not eat and drink in any overfamiliar, irreverential way; they did so as at a sacrificial meal. What they ate was possibly the part of the animal sacrifices that was assigned to the sacrificers to eat from the communion sacrifices that had been offered to God at the base of Mount Sinai. Wine, used as drink offerings to God, was likely what they drank. In this way those reverential men had a communion meal with God. As they were considered worthy persons, God did not kill them.—Ex. 24:1-11.

⁷ Afterward, when the prophet Moses was alone with God in the mountain, he neither ate nor drank, even for forty days and nights. He looked upon the place of close association with God as a holy area. Some months earlier, when Moses was sent down to Egypt to deliver his people, God's angel appeared to him in the midst of a burning bush near the foot of Mount Sinai and told him: "Draw your sandals from

6. Were those seventy-four men in danger at this vision of God, and what kind of meal did they eat with him?

7. How did Moses come to look upon the place of close association with God?

off your feet, because the place where you are standing is holy ground."—Ex. 3:1-5.

WHAT MOSES SAW OF GOD

⁸ As the mediator between Jehovah God and his chosen people, did Moses see God more directly than anybody else in the whole nation? Was it possible to see Him more directly? How favored Moses was in this regard God pointed out to Moses' brother Aaron and his sister Miriam, when these complained against Moses. God said: "Hear my words, please. If there came to be a prophet of yours for Jehovah, it would be in a vision I would make myself known to him. In a dream I would speak to him. Not so my servant Moses! He is being entrusted with all my house. Mouth to mouth I speak to him, thus showing him, and not by riddles; and the appearance of Jehovah is what he beholds. Why, then, did you not fear to speak against my servant, against Moses?" (Num. 12:1-8) All of this was very fitting with respect to Moses, for he was a prophetic figure of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the promised prophet who was to be greater than Moses.—Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:19-23; 7:37, 38.

⁹ On one occasion especially Moses did see an "appearance of Jehovah." In that case did he see God's form directly? Persons speaking "mouth to mouth," suggests their speaking face to face, but did Moses actually see God's face there on Mount Sinai? At the time it was still the year 1513 B.C.E. The nation, despite having the Ten Commandments, had become guilty of committing idolatry. The situation was critical. So Moses saw it necessary to make a special plea to God in

8. How did God's words spoken in rebuke to Aaron and Miriam show Moses' favored position with God, and why was this fitting?

9, 10. (a) Speaking "mouth to mouth" suggests what regarding the speakers, and raises what question regarding Moses? (b) What promise did Moses get from God after Israel committed idolatry at Mount Sinai?

Mount Sinai. From Jehovah God he won the promise that Jehovah's presence would go with him until Moses brought his people to the Promised Land. Moses says:

¹⁰ "And Jehovah went on to say to Moses: 'This thing, too, of which you have spoken, I shall do, because you have found favor in my eyes and I know you by name.'

¹¹ "At this he [that is, Moses] said: 'Cause me to see, please, your glory.'

¹² "But he said: 'I myself shall cause all my goodness to pass before your face, and I will declare the name of Jehovah before you; and I will favor the one whom I may favor, and I will show mercy to the one to whom I may show mercy.' And he added: 'You are not able to see my face, because no man may see me and yet live.' And Jehovah said further: 'Here is a place with me, and you must station yourself upon the rock. And it has to occur that while my glory is passing by I must place you in a hole in the rock, and I must put my palm over you as a screen until I have passed by. After that I must take my palm away, and you will indeed see my back. But my face may not be seen.'

—Ex. 33:17-23.

¹³ This was to be no materialization by the invisible God in human form, in the way that the gods of Grecian mythology were said to have appeared to men. (Acts 14:11-13) That was to be a manifestation of divine glory to the degree that would be not too much for a human person to see and experience without being blinded, killed and dissolved to nothing. Mercifully Jehovah promised to take special precautions toward Moses. The next day the promised manifestation came, such as no man aside from Moses had ever seen. Ac-

11, 12. What did Moses ask to be allowed to see, but what was God's reply?

13. Was this manifestation to be by a materialization of God, and why did special precautions need to be taken toward Moses?

cording to the divine instructions, Moses presented himself in Mount Sinai with two stone tablets upon which God was to inscribe the Ten Commandments. What happened now?

¹⁴ "And Jehovah proceeded to come down in the cloud and station himself with him there and declare the name of Jehovah. And Jehovah went passing by before his face and declaring: 'Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, pardoning error and transgression and sin, but by no means will he give exemption from punishment, bringing punishment for the error of fathers upon sons and upon grandsons, upon the third generation and upon the fourth generation.'

¹⁵ "Moses at once hurried to bow low to the earth and prostrate himself."—Ex. 34:1-8.

¹⁶ Moses does not tell us that he saw God's form directly. All he saw was the afterglow of God's passing manifestation. And yet Moses' own face was emitting rays of light when he came down from the mountain and appeared to the people. (Ex. 34:29, 30) How much better, too, Moses became acquainted with Jehovah God! What a wondrous declaration of the personality of God to Moses! What so-called god is to be compared with Jehovah?

¹⁷ He assures us that he is a God of love, and yet also of justice, with the power of self-control when he is dealing with sinful mankind. And in thus dealing with imperfect mankind, he keeps his loving treatment of them in perfect balance with a just treatment, thus displaying an amazing wisdom under all changing circum-

stances and conditions. What a matchless God! A God of perfect love, perfect justice, perfect power and perfect wisdom. Such an adorable personality deserved to be associated with a brilliance of glory that was too bright for weak human eyes to behold or a frail human body to encounter.

¹⁸ Small wonder that special precaution had to be taken to give Moses enough insulation against being hurt or even being destroyed when Jehovah's glory passed by and He declared His peerless name as Moses was listening within the hole in a rock. Never could Moses, or any other man, have seen God's face and have lived! A mere man would have died before the "face" or full manifestation of God's glory reached him. Moses was impelled to bow down and prostrate himself in worship as the glorious Divine Presence passed by. How ridiculous, then, for a Russian astronaut to say there is no God because he did not meet Him when his spacecraft was orbiting in outer space about the earth! But we today, by believing and accepting Moses' vision of the divine glory, acquaint ourselves better with this marvelous God Jehovah.

ISAIAH SEES GOD IN VISION

¹⁹ Moses did not remain alone among men in having a vision of Jehovah God, and thus getting better acquainted with Him. Seven hundred and thirty-six years passed and the scene changed from Mount Sinai in Arabia to the hills of ancient Jerusalem. There was a glorious temple on the city's Mount Moriah. But a terrible calamity had shocked the nation. The prosperous king, Uzziah or Azariah, had presumed to force his way into the first

14, 15. What did God do as he went passing by Moses, and what did Moses do?

16. How did what Moses saw affect his countenance, and how did he by this experience get better acquainted with God?

17. What kind of God does Jehovah describe himself to be, and what deserves to be associated with such a personality?

18. (a) Against what was Moses insulated as the Divine Presence passed by? (b) As a result of this, how can we acquaint ourselves better with this God Jehovah?

19, 20. (a) Where did the prophet Isaiah have his vision of God, and after what profanation of the temple? (b) When did Isaiah have this vision, and what features of it does he describe?

holy compartment of the temple to offer incense there like a priest and had been struck with leprosy, from which eventually he died like an outcast. During his loathsome affliction his faithful son Jotham had to serve as king on Jerusalem's throne. In the year of Uzziah's miserable death (777 B.C.E.) and likely after he died, the prophet Isaiah had a vision of God. It was different from the vision given to Moses. Isaiah himself tells us:

²⁰ "In the year that King Uzziah died I, however, got to see Jehovah, sitting on a throne lofty and lifted up, and his skirts were filling the temple. Seraphs were standing above him. Each one had six wings. With two he kept his face covered, and with two he kept his feet covered, and with two he would fly about. And this one called to that one and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of armies. The fullness of all the earth is his glory.' And the pivots of the thresholds began to quiver at the voice of the one calling, and the house itself gradually filled with smoke."—Isa. 6:1-4; 2 Chron. 26:1-23.

²¹ No description is given of the Divine Person, since God cannot be likened to a creature man. The skirts of his majestic garment filled the temple. His temple is a palace, and he is the invisible heavenly King of his people. So his throne does not rest upon the ground, but, besides being lofty, is lifted up.

²² The seraphs, whose appearance is like flashing fire, do not sit in Jehovah's presence, but, while attending upon him, they stand, always in readiness. The prophet Isaiah was then looking with unveiled face at the vision of God, but those heavenly seraphs did not presume to look but covered their faces with their upper wings. As if on a holy location, the seraphs cov-

ered their feet with their lower wings, in due respect for the heavenly King, "Jehovah of armies." With their middle set of wings the seraphs flew as heavenly creatures.

²³ In this temple vision it was these seraphs that declared God's holiness and glory. To emphasize the supreme holiness of "Jehovah of armies," they said the word "holy" three times, making such a threefold declaration back and forth to one another. God's glory not only filled the house or temple but was also to become the "fullness of all the earth." Already we can see the glory of Jehovah God in all his masterly works of creation, both living things and lifeless things. But the time approaches when all the inhabitants of earth will join us in discerning Jehovah's glory in the things that he has created, and they will no longer make this earth an unholy place, profaning it, defiling it. Not in vain has it been predicted: "The earth will be filled with the knowing of the glory of Jehovah as the waters themselves cover over the sea." (Hab. 2:14) The chant that the seraphs gave voice to in Jehovah's temple was prophetic.

²⁴ At this vision of Jehovah enthroned in his temple the prophet Isaiah became frightened. At the voices of the seraphs calling to one another the pivots of the temple threshold began to quiver, and so why should not Isaiah tremble, he being a living creature with sensitive religious feelings? Although he was already a prophet of Jehovah God, he felt unclean at seeing such a holy tableau. He even feared for his life! "Woe to me!" he cried out. "For I am as good as brought to silence [in death], because a man unclean in lips I am, and in among a people unclean in lips I am dwelling; for my eyes

21. How does the vision show Jehovah to be the King of his people?

22. How did the seraphs show respect for the presence of God and the holiness of the location?

23. How did the seraphs emphasize the holiness of Jehovah and prophesy concerning his glory?

24. Why, according to what he exclaimed, did Isaiah have reason to fear at seeing the vision?

have seen the King, Jehovah of armies, himself!"—Isa. 6:5.

²⁵ How did Isaiah come to live to tell the story? In this way: From the temple now filled with miraculous smoke one of those winged seraphs came to his aid. "At that," Isaiah tells us, "one of the seraphs flew to me, and in his hand there was a glowing coal that he had taken with tongs off the altar. And he proceeded to touch my mouth and to say: 'Look! This has touched your lips, and your error has departed and your sin itself is atoned for.'"

²⁶ Isaiah now felt clean in the Divine Presence, even clean enough to volunteer for Jehovah's further prophetic service. "And," says he, "I began to hear the voice of Jehovah saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I proceeded to say: 'Here I am! Send me.' And he went on to say: 'Go, and you must say to this people.'" Forthwith Isaiah was sent on a prophetic errand that foreshadowed the work of the coming Messiah, more than eight hundred years in the future. Never did Isaiah forget that temple vision of Jehovah's glory. As a correct prefiguration of the Messiah, Isaiah proved true to his commission received from Jehovah. (Isa. 6:6-13; Matt. 13:10-15) But what about us? Do we, on becoming better acquainted with Jehovah God, readily offer ourselves for His service, as Isaiah did? Yes, fuller acquaintance with God impels us to say to him: "Here I am! Send me."

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL'S VISIONS

²⁷ Before the Messiah or Anointed One came, still another man had miraculous visions of the living and true God. This was

the prophet Ezekiel, in the century following that of Isaiah. The ruin that Isaiah had foretold to come upon his own people was just six years away when Ezekiel had his first awe-inspiring vision. He was then an exile in pagan Babylon. He says that it was "while I was in the midst of the exiled people by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I began to see visions of God." He dates it as occurring on Tammuz 5 of the year, Jewish calendar, that is, "in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month," and "in the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin," or in the year 613 before our Common Era.—Ezek. 1:1-4.

²⁸ At that time the Creator of heaven and earth was on the march toward executing his judicial decision against his unfaithful people in the kingdom of Judah with its capital at Jerusalem. Accordingly what Ezekiel saw was like something on the move. It was like a chariot so gigantic as to make him feel like an ant. It had no gasoline engine or electric or atomic motor to propel it, but it moved swiftly, rolling over everything in its way. It had no visible steering gear and no brakes, and yet it could change the direction of its movement from straight forward to sideways, instantaneously, without slowing down in order to overcome the momentum of the chariot. What made this colossal chariot go? It was evidently the active force, the spirit, of the One who rode on the chariot.

²⁹ This was not a two-wheeled chariot. It was one of four wheels. As for the wheels themselves, they were of strange construction. Evidently they could see where they were going, for the rims were filled with eyes, all around. Moreover, inside each wheel that revolved forward

25. How, by the seraph's aid, did Isaiah come to live to tell the story?

26. (a) For what did Isaiah, now cleansed, get to volunteer? (b) In what way did Isaiah truly prefigure the Messiah and furnish a lesson for us?

27. When did the prophet Ezekiel begin to have visions of God?

28. In his first vision, what thing in motion did Ezekiel see, and what was it that propelled it?

29. What was peculiar about the wheels of this celestial chariot?

there was another wheel that cut across at right angles, vertically, enabling the chariot to move sideways without its wheels turning as when wheeling around a corner. Note how Ezekiel describes the locomotion of this chariot:

³⁰ "As for the appearance of the wheels and their structure, it was like the glow of chrysolite; and the four of them had one likeness. And their appearance and their structure were just as when a wheel proved to be in the midst of a wheel. When they went they would go on their four respective sides. They would not turn another way when they went. And as for their rims, they had such height that they caused fearfulness; and their rims were full of eyes all around the four of them."—Ezek. 1:16-18.

³¹ In ancient times the royal chariots would have runners to run before and beside them, to impart grandeur to the chariot rider. (1 Ki. 1:5; 18:44-46) There were four cherubs that accompanied the celestial chariot that the prophet Ezekiel saw in vision. Those cherubs corresponded with runners. At first Ezekiel calls them "living creatures." They were certainly not human creatures, although they had some features like those of a man. (Ezek. 1:5, 15; 10:9-13) The prophet Ezekiel helps us to visualize how the sight of the four living creatures and the chariot then burst in upon him with an almost indescribable glory:

³² "And I began to see, and, look! there was a tempestuous wind coming from the north, a great cloud mass and quivering fire, and it had a brightness all around, and out of the midst of it there was something like the look of electrum, out of the midst of the fire. And out of the midst of

it there was the likeness of four living creatures, and this was how they looked: they had the likeness of earthling man. And each one had four faces, and each one of them four wings. And their feet were straight feet, and the sole of their feet was like the sole of the foot of a calf; and they were gleaming as with the glow of burnished copper. And there were the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides, and the four of them had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joining one to the other. They would not turn when they went; they would go each one straight forward."

³³ The prophet Moses gave no description of the cherubs that appeared at the entrance of the garden of Eden over thirty-four centuries previous when the sinful Adam and Eve were driven out. (Gen. 3:24) But the prophet Ezekiel gives us the above description of the cherubic living creatures and adds the following: "And as for the likeness of their faces, the four of them had a man's face with a lion's face to the right, and the four of them had a bull's face on the left; the four of them also had an eagle's face. That is the way their faces were. And their wings were spreading out upward. Each one had two joining to each other, and two were covering their bodies."—Ezek. 1:4-11.

³⁴ How did the wheels of the celestial chariot harmonize with the movement of the runner-like cherubs? The prophet Ezekiel tells us: "And when the living creatures went, the wheels would go beside them, and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels would be lifted up. Wherever the spirit inclined to go, they would go, the spirit inclining to go there; and the wheels themselves would be lifted up close alongside them, for the

30. How does Ezekiel describe the movement of the chariot wheels?

31. Who accompanied the chariot like runners?

32. According to Ezekiel's description, how did the cherubs look?

33. What faces did the cherubic living creatures have?

34. How did the wheels harmonize with the cherubs in movement?

spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When they went, these would go; and when they stood still, these would stand still; and when they were lifted up from the earth, the wheels would be lifted up close alongside them, for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.”—Ezek. 1:19-21.

³⁵ Creatures according to the description of those cherubic living creatures do not, of course, exist in the heavens, in the invisible spirit realm. For this reason the various features of their seemingly grotesque appearance were symbolic of good qualities such as are outstanding in man, lion, bull, eagle, and other winged creatures. Interesting as these qualities are, here for the moment we are interested more in what was above the four cherubic living creatures and above the wheels alongside them. What did the prophet Ezekiel see up there? He tells us:

³⁶ “And over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse like the sparkle of awesome ice, stretched out over their heads up above. And under the expanse their wings were straight, one to the other. Each one had two wings covering on this side and each one had two covering on that side their bodies. And I got to hear the sound of their wings, a sound like that of vast waters, like the sound of the Almighty One, when they went, the sound of a tumult, like the sound of an encampment. When they stood still, they would let their wings down.”—Ezek. 1:22-24.

³⁷ Ah, that “expanse”! It was the platform of that celestial chariot. Like translucent ice it seemed, but awesome it was. The One riding on the chariot was thus pictured as moving ahead to the execu-

tion of his judicial decision on a firm platform, like congealed water. Underneath this awe-inspiring platform the sound of the movement of the chariot of the Almighty One was like that of tumultuous waters, or like an encampment of soldiers clamoring to move into action in order to execute the enemies of the Almighty One. But there was a voice that dominated over all these sound effects below the ice-like platform or “expanse.” The prophet Ezekiel hears it coming forth from above the awesome expanse. It came from the Almighty One riding on this chariot platform. What appearance did he take on? Ezekiel tells us:

THE RIDER ON THE CELESTIAL CHARIOT

³⁸ “And there came to be a voice above the expanse that was over their head. (When they stood still, they would let their wings down.) And above the expanse that was over their head there was something in appearance like sapphire stone, the likeness of a throne. And upon the likeness of the throne there was a likeness of someone in appearance like an earthling man upon it, up above. And I got to see something like the glow of electrum, like the appearance of fire all around inside thereof, from the appearance of his hips and upward; and from the appearance of his hips and downward I saw something like the appearance of fire, and he had a brightness all around. There was something like the appearance of the bow that occurs in a cloud mass on the day of a pouring rain. That is how the appearance was of the brightness round about. It was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. When I got to see it, then I fell upon my face, and I began to hear the voice of one speaking.”—Ezek. 1:25-28.

35, 36. (a) What do the features of the cherubs symbolize? (b) What did Ezekiel see just above the cherubs and wheels, and what did he hear?

37. As what part of a chariot does that “expanse” serve, and what dominated above all the other sound effects?

38. How does Ezekiel describe the chariot rider and the light effects about him?

³⁹ The glow like that of electrum (the metallic mixture of gold and silver), the fire completely surrounding and outlining the chariot rider, with a brightness all around, and the semicircular bow with all the variety of colors of the rainbow—all this is summed up in the one word of description, "glory." The "glory of Jehovah"! There was an appearance of a form that suggested that of a man, with an "appearance of his hips." But nothing of the features of face and form is given with any detail. The throne upon which this Almighty One, Jehovah, sits, is as a sapphire stone expertly cut and faceted, its deep blue suggesting the heavens, where Jehovah really thrones. From this sapphire-like throne Jehovah spoke to his prophet Ezekiel.

⁴⁰ The following year the prophet Ezekiel had another vision of Jehovah's celestial chariot with the wheels beside which were the cherubic living creatures, this time, however, before the temple built by King Solomon in Jerusalem. "And I continued to see," says Ezekiel, "and, look! upon the expanse that was over the head of the cherubs there was something like sapphire stone, like the appearance of the likeness of a throne, appearing above them. . . . And the cherubs were standing to the right of the house when the man entered, and the cloud was filling the inner courtyard. And the glory of Jehovah began to rise up from the cherubs by the threshold of the house, and the house gradually became filled with the cloud, and the courtyard itself was full of the brightness of the glory of Jehovah. And the very sound of the wings of the cherubs made itself heard to the outer court-

39. (a) All together those light effects are summed up in what word? (b) How much detail is given about the chariot rider, and what did his throne resemble?

40. The following year Ezekiel had a vision of the celestial chariot as being where?

yard, like the sound of God Almighty when he speaks."—Ezek. 10:1-5; 8:1.

⁴¹ Thus Jehovah's celestial chariot had wheeled itself from the Babylonian river Chebar, where Ezekiel first had a vision of it, and had rolled westward to Jerusalem and its temple. This betokened that the fiery execution of Jehovah's judicial decision upon unfaithful Jerusalem and its polluted temple was getting closer. The city, along with its temple, was to be destroyed. (Ezek. 10:6-22) In a figurative way, Ezekiel was himself destroying the unfaithful city of Jerusalem. How? It was by receiving the commission from Jehovah to be a prophet and by then declaring the message of impending destruction. Twenty years after Ezekiel saw Jehovah's chariot at the river Chebar, or fourteen years after the actual destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel was caused to think back on his destructive mission. In the twenty-fifth year of his exile in Babylon he was given a vision of a new temple of Jehovah, in all its completeness. An angel, taking on the appearance of a man, conducted Ezekiel on a sight-seeing tour of it.

⁴² "Then he made me go to the gate, the gate that is facing toward the east," says Ezekiel. "And, look! the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the direction of the east, and his voice was like the voice of vast waters; and the earth itself shone because of his glory. And it was like the appearance of the vision that I had seen, like the vision that I saw when I came to bring the city to ruin; and there were appearances like the appearance that I saw by the river Chebar, and I went falling upon my face. And the glory of Jehovah itself came into the house by way of

41. (a) From where had the chariot rolled, and what did its new location suggest? (b) How was it as if Ezekiel himself were destroying Jerusalem?

42. Fourteen years after Jerusalem's destruction, what vision of God did Ezekiel have in connection with the new temple?

the gate the front of which was toward the east.”—Ezek. 43:1-4; 40:1-4.

⁴³ So glorious was the vision of the Almighty God Jehovah that it was enough to make frail man of flesh fall upon his face, prostrating himself. The glory of Jehovah God is nothing to look at profanely, impudently, defiantly. Ezekiel's miraculous visions of the “glory of Jehovah” were awesome enough to make a man

43. What does the effect of the vision upon Ezekiel indicate as to God's glory?

quail and feel obliged to worship. But Ezekiel survived those extraordinary experiences according to God's purpose for him.

⁴⁴ Glorious is Jehovah God as he rides along victoriously on his celestial chariot, attended by his cherubic living creatures. He is similarly riding today to the execution of his judgments. It now behooves men to acquaint themselves with this God and make peace and keep peace with him.

44. In view of Ezekiel's vision, why does it now behoove men to acquaint themselves with God and come to peace with him?

ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD

*Leads to
Eternal Peace*

AROUND sixty years after Ezekiel had his first vision of the glorious Charioteer Jehovah, a fellow exile of Ezekiel in Babylonia had a vision of God as the Sovereign of the universe. It was at night when the vision came. The account in Daniel 7:1-3 reads: “In the first year of Belshazzar the king of Babylon, Daniel himself beheld a dream and visions of his head upon his bed. At that time he wrote down the dream itself. The complete account of the matters he told. Daniel was speaking up and saying: ‘I happened to be beholding in my visions during the night, and, see there! the four winds of the heavens were stirring up the vast sea. And four huge beasts were coming up out of

the sea, each one being different from the others.’”—Dan. 7:1-7.

² The vision was prophetic. According to what Daniel was told by an interpreter in the vision, the four huge beasts pictured four world powers that

would follow one another on the world stage of politics. Their political domination of all the earth would carry forward from the days of Belshazzar's grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, who had destroyed Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. It would continue down to the time for God to set up his promised kingdom and destroy the beastly political governments of the earth. These world powers would be judged according to their record, especially according to their dealings with the faithful people of Jehovah God. He is the Supreme Judge, he being Sovereign of all the universe. In Daniel's vision His time came to pass judgment on those beastly political world powers and to execute his judicial sen-

1. When did Daniel have his vision of Jehovah, and what did he see at the start of the vision?

2. What do the four beasts symbolize, and for what are the symbolic beasts to be judged by the Supreme Judge?

tence. Then He made his appearance as Supreme Judge. How did he appear in the vision to Daniel? Daniel tells us:

³ "I kept on beholding until there were thrones placed [one being for Jehovah God and the other being, likely, for his Messiah or Christ] and the Ancient of Days sat down. His clothing was white just like snow, and the hair of his head was like clean wool. His throne was flames of fire; its wheels were a burning fire. There was a stream of fire flowing and going out from before him. There were a thousand thousands that kept ministering to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand that kept standing right before him. The Court took its seat, and there were books that were opened."—Dan. 7: 9, 10.

⁴ Here Jehovah God, "the Ancient of Days," is envisioned in a court scene, coming to judgment, to judge, not specifically Judah and Jerusalem as in the case of Ezekiel's vision of the celestial chariot, but the political world powers of the whole earth. In the present day these would be the seventh world power and the relics of the preceding six world powers. The world powers pictured by the four symbolic huge beasts out of the sea must be brought to judgment. The wisdom of this Supreme Court Judge is highlighted in his head of hair as being "like clean wool." This feature agrees fully with the fact that he is called "the Ancient of Days" and the wisdom of all past eternity is His. The prophet Moses said to him, in Psalm 90:2: "Even from time indefinite to time indefinite you are God." The brilliance of his righteousness in handing down judicial decisions is pictured in the fact that "his clothing was

white just like snow," this clothing, too, not catching fire although the "throne was flames of fire." His throne is a wheeled throne, it not resting upon a chariot platform as in the vision of Ezekiel. But the throne wheels themselves "were a burning fire." This was indeed a glorious vision of Jehovah God.

⁵ The fiery quality of the throne and of its wheels suggests that fiery judgment is approaching. A warning of this is provided in the fact that "there was a stream of fire flowing and going out from before him." Scripturally supporting this feature of the vision is Psalm 97:1-3: "Jehovah himself has become king! . . . righteousness and judgment are the established place of his throne. Before him a very fire goes, and it consumes his adversaries all around."

⁶ The Ancient of Days as Judge Supreme also has plenty of court attendants, their number running up into the tens of millions. The great number of these attendants indicates the many, many matters that the Supreme Judge has to do with throughout heaven as well as earth. Only he who has such all-excelling wisdom could handle them all justly, without conflicting decisions. Since he has such a vast number of angelic court attendants, what can all the political powers of earth do, even in a United Nations organization of them all, to resist the full execution of his court decisions? Their destruction in the near future is certain! O yes! There was a small but aggressive horn that came up out of the head of the fourth symbolic beast. But what can it do? Nothing, according to what Daniel now says:

⁷ "I kept on beholding at that time be-

5. The fiery quality of the Judge's throne and its wheels, with a flow of fire in front, suggests what?

6. What does the great number of court attendants indicate, and what question arises therefore as to earthly nations?

7. What is seen to happen to both the horn and the beast bearing it and to the other beasts?

3. In the vision how did the Supreme Judge appear to Daniel?

4. Those to be judged are represented by what today, and what is indicated by the color of the Judge's hair and clothing?

cause of the sound of the grandiose words that the horn was speaking; I kept on beholding until the beast was killed and its body was destroyed and it was given to the burning fire. But as for the rest of the beasts, their rulerships were taken away, and there was a lengthening in life given to them for a time and a season."—Dan. 7:11, 12.

⁸ The "time and a season" of those political relics of previous world powers end in the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon. (Rev. 16:14-16) What will the destruction of all the political elements of the present system of government at Har-Magedon mean? Most emphatically the end of an epoch in human history! A change of rulership will come for the world of mankind. Who will be mankind's new ruler? Does the vision to Daniel reveal this? Listen to what Daniel tells us that he saw:

⁹ "I kept on beholding in the visions of the night, and, see there! with the clouds of the heavens someone like a son of man happened to be coming; and to the Ancient of Days he gained access, and they brought him up close even before that One. And to him there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him. His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin."—Dan. 7:13, 14.

¹⁰ An interpretation of this joy-inspiring feature was given to Daniel by a certain one who appeared in the vision. The words of his interpretation are thrilling, as follows: "And the kingdom and the ruler-

8. When will the "time and a season" for any political relics end, and what will destruction of the political elements of this system mean?

9. Whom does Daniel see brought before the Judge, and what is given to this one?

10. What does the interpreter in the vision say regarding the transfer of kingship here pictured?

ship and the grandeur of the kingdoms under all the heavens were given to the people who are the holy ones of the Supreme One. Their kingdom is an indefinitely lasting kingdom, and all the rulerships will serve and obey even them."—Dan. 7:27.

¹¹ What an acquaintanceship with God, "the Supreme One," this vision to Daniel gives us! The One Most High over all creation in heaven and earth is He! Presiding Judge of the Court of Last Instance is He! Entire nations, yes, all nations, are accountable to him. They rule today as they have so long ruled, only by his permission. Who on earth is there who will be able to chide Him as Judge for picturing the political world powers as huge beasts rising up out of the tempestuous sea? When the appointed time of the Supreme Judge comes, he brings the beastlike political world powers to their end in fiery destruction, to make way for a new rulership over mankind, one better than all previous earthly rulerships because of its being perfect, heavenly, proceeding only from God and not from a raging wild sea. The new rulership he entrusts to the one to whom he judicially decides to give it, inasmuch as He is the heavenly Source of all rightful government on earth. He gives it to his Messiah, the Christ, and to the faithful followers of His Messiah, and they all will rule together for God's glory and the eternal blessing of mankind.

THE VISION OF A FOLLOWER OF MESSIAH

¹² Nineteen centuries ago the Messiah was presented to earth's inhabitants as "the Son of man." (Matt. 16:13-16; 25:31) It was in the autumn of the year 29 C.E.

11. (a) Is the Supreme Judge to be chided for picturing the world powers as wild beasts and treating them as such? (b) To whom does he entrust the new rulership?

12. (a) When was "the Son of man" on earth introduced to humankind, and what comparison did the apostle John hear him make at Jerusalem? (b) Years later what did "the Son of man" send to John?

that the fisherman, John the son of Zebedee, became a follower of him, this step leading to his becoming later on one of the twelve apostles of this Messiah or Anointed One. In his account of the life of Jesus Christ, the apostle John wrote down many of the sayings of the Messiah. According to John 14:9 the Messiah Jesus said in John's hearing at Jerusalem: "He that has seen me has seen the Father also." Even in the flesh as the "Son of man" Jesus perfectly reflected his heavenly Father, Jehovah God. Thus by his teachings, his works, his way of life as a perfect

man on earth, the Messiah enlarged man's acquaintanceship with God. But about sixty-three years after his sacrificial death for mankind, the Messiah Jesus sent a revelation to the apostle John. It envisioned Jehovah God as no previous men of God had seen him in vision. As it were, John himself entered right into heaven to get this divine vision.

¹³ On invitation John proceeds to enter the "opened door" that he sees in heaven in his vision. He is not forbidden to tell us what he sees, but unselfishly shares the vision with us, writing: "After these things I immediately came to be in the power of the spirit: and, look! a throne was in its position in heaven, and there is one seated upon the throne. And the one seated is, in appearance, like a jasper stone and a precious red-colored stone, and round about the throne there is a rainbow like an emerald in appearance. And round about the throne there are twenty-four thrones, and upon these

thrones I saw seated twenty-four older persons dressed in white outer garments, and upon their heads golden crowns. And out of the throne there are proceeding lightnings and voices and thunders; and there are seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, and these mean the seven spirits of God. And before the throne there is, as it were, a glassy sea like crystal.

¹⁴ "And in the midst of the throne and around the throne there are four living creatures that are full of eyes in front and behind. And the first living creature is like a lion, and the second living creature is

like a young bull, and the third living creature has a face like a man's, and the fourth living creature is like a flying eagle. And as for the four living creatures, each one of them respectively has six wings; round about and underneath they are full of eyes. And they have no rest day and night as they say: 'Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is coming.' "—Rev. 4:1-8.

¹⁵ To the apostle John's eyes Jehovah God sparkled like a gem, the ancient jasper stone, and this also with the gleaming of a "precious red-colored stone." In a literal way it was true of him just as John wrote a couple of years later: "God is light and there is no darkness at all in union with him." (1 John 1:5) Nothing like sun-spots in all the dazzling glory of this God. Such a clean brightness befits this ever-living One before whom the never slumbering cherubic living creatures ceaselessly say: "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah God, the Almighty, who was and who is and

13. 14. (a) In the heavenly vision how did God appear to John? (b) Who are throning about God's throne, and what creatures are also around his throne?

15. (a) Why did John appropriately say later: "God is light"? (b) Why does such brightness befit the holy state of Him about which the living creatures chant?

THE NEXT ISSUE

- "The Writing of Correct Words of Truth."
- "Between-the-Lines" Translations of the Bible.
- Did Christ Really Rise from the Dead?
- Strengthening Ourselves in Jehovah.

who is coming." Holiness means such a bright, clean, speckless state, and He is the very embodiment of a threefold holiness. Never may profane creatures intrude upon his holy presence. Beautifully framing the effulgence of light from His glorious person is a rainbow like an emerald in appearance "round about the throne."

¹⁶ Even those who are made kings in heaven are not too high to worship before this God Most Holy, for the apostle John says: "And whenever the living creatures offer glory and honor and thanksgiving to the one seated upon the throne, the one that lives forever and ever, the twenty-four older persons fall down before the one seated upon the throne and worship the one that lives forever and ever, and they cast their crowns before the throne, saying: '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.' "—Rev. 4:9-11.

INCREASING OUR ACQUAINTANCE WITH GOD

¹⁷ Ah, this is the God whom the religious critics of Jehovah's witnesses challenge us to acquaint ourselves with, if we can do so, just the same as the faultfinding Temanite named Eliphaz challenged Job to do amid his sufferings. (Job 22:1, 21) We can take the modern-day challenge for what it is worth. Now of all times is the opportune time for us to acquaint ourselves with the ever-living God who bears the name Jeho-

16. How is it shown in the vision that those throning in heaven are not too high to worship before this holy God?

17, 18. (a) As in the case of Job, what do religious critics challenge Jehovah's witnesses to do, and what can we do about the challenge as such? (b) How is it possible to make God a part of our daily experience?

vah, the Almighty One. We may already be acquainted with him to some degree. So was Job, but God brought him into a more intimate acquaintance with himself, so that Job was moved to say: "In hear-say I have heard about you, but now my own eye does see you. That is why I make a retraction, and I do repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:5, 6) Likewise, we can now increase our acquaintanceship with him.

¹⁸ Today as never before his written Word has been opened to human understanding. As a result, we can grow in appreciation of him through the greatly increased understanding that is now possible for us. We can pray to him with more accurate knowledge. We can rely upon him with more confidence, as if seeing him who is invisible. Thus we can make this only adorable God a part of our daily experience.

¹⁹ It indeed means peace for us to acquaint ourselves with this God, not a superficial worldly peace, but a true peace that even the approaching destruction of this war-racked system of things cannot take away. In a world at enmity with God, we want the peace of friendship with Him. We want to be people toward whom God has goodwill. (Luke 2:14) By now becoming his "men of good will" it is certain that "good things will come" to us from Him, good things now when this world is experiencing so much bad, and good things in God's promised new order of things, where we shall experience his goodness forever.

19. Our acquainting ourselves with God will mean what for us, and what things will certainly come to us?



ARE YOU GRATEFULLY RECEIVING

What Jehovah Provides?

ALL of us without exception are recipients of provisions for which we ought to be grateful. Whether we partake of food, draw a breath of air or absorb warmth from the sun, we are receiving something to sustain our life. Besides these essential provisions, we receive many other things each day. It may be home care, training on the job, a letter with good news, a token of affection, a friendly greeting, or perhaps a guest into our home. These and other provisions fill a need or contribute to our enjoyment of life. Do you ever stop to express thanks for these things?

Receiving is not limited in scope to just taking material things offered or admitting a person into our presence or inside our homes. We can open our mind to a flow of ideas. We can take to heart spiritual provisions, counsel, or encouragement based on the Bible.

No matter what we possess or think is ours, if we trace down its origin, it was actually received from another source. To remind us of this fact, the Christian apostle Paul asked: "What do you have that you did not receive? If, now, you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as though you did not receive it?" (1 Cor. 4:7) There is no reason for us to boast in ourselves because of what we have materially or spiritually. There is a need to be

grateful, to recognize the true source of each beneficial provision and to use it for the purpose intended.

SUPERIORITY OF SPIRITUAL THINGS

Of all the things we receive, what brings us the most happiness and lasting good? If our appraisal is based on God's Word, we must answer that it is gifts that are spiritual. Is this the way that you feel?

We should be particularly susceptible to what Jehovah God gives, since the Bible identifies him as the Giver of every good gift and every perfect present. (Jas. 1:17) In view of this it is logical, as the apostle Paul stated, for Christians to "rest their hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God, who furnishes us all things richly for our enjoyment."—1 Tim. 6:17.

Yet, even though Jehovah is a Giver without equal, is it not strange that the majority of mankind do not accept His spiritual provisions? Such refusal on their part, if continued, will result in a termination of their ability eventually to receive anything. To ensure our continued happiness and to lay hold on the hope set before us, there is a need to determine whether we individually are gratefully receiving those divine provisions that lead to "the real life."—1 Tim. 6:19.

GIFTS GOD PROVIDES

What, then, are some of the spiritual gifts from God that we should appreciate? It has well been said that, of all gifts, Jesus Christ is God's greatest gift to mankind. Nothing could surpass that beloved Son as a gift. "God loved the world [of mankind] so much that he gave his only-begotten Son." (John 3:16) Yet, despite the fact that Jesus Christ was God's chief

agent of life, how many people received him as such? The Jewish nation of which he was a part did not do so, nor do the majority of mankind today. Do you?

In addition to giving his Son, Jehovah provided mankind with his "word of the truth," the Holy Scriptures. (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16) These Scriptures are not, as some claim, the product of man. Although men were used in writing them, the apostle Peter explains that holy spirit moved these men to do so. Is that the way you view the Bible?—2 Pet. 1:20, 21.

Closely linked with God's gift of his Son and his Word the Bible is the holy spirit. Prior to ascending into the heavens, Jesus told his disciples to wait in the city of Jerusalem for the fulfillment of Jehovah's promise to send the helper or holy spirit. Ten days following Jesus' ascension into the heavens, this gift of the holy spirit was poured out on 120 disciples. (Acts 1:4, 8; 2:1-4) Operation of the holy spirit on that day of Pentecost brought a significant blessing and produced progressive enlightenment to those who gratefully received it. The same holy spirit can benefit us today.

A fourth gift from Jehovah God, provided by means of his Son, is dedicated men to build up the Christian congregation. The Christian apostle Paul spoke of these in connection with a Bible psalm, saying: "When he ascended on high he carried away captives; he gave *gifts in men*." And he [Jesus Christ] gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the training of the holy ones,

for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ."—Eph. 4:8, 11, 12; Ps. 68:18.

In addition to these four gifts, Jehovah has made available many others, including 'the gift of everlasting life.' (Rom. 6:23) But to be worthy of this reward of life one must first gratefully receive these aforementioned gifts. Are we individually gratefully receiving these spiritual provisions? Are we, for example, receiving Jesus Christ? How can we determine whether we are or not?

RECEIVING THE GIFT OF GOD'S SON

In the first century, when Jesus walked the earth and presented the Kingdom message, it was rather obvious whether people received him or not. Those few that did became his disciples. They accepted Jesus as God's provision through whom eternal life could be obtained and shared with him in preaching that good news to others.—Luke 8:1.

Of course, in the first century the majority of persons did not accept Jesus, and some of these went to the point of causing his death. But how did one show his acceptance or rejection of God's Son after Jesus' death in 33 C.E.?

The principle that Jesus stated applied: "He that receives you [representatives of mine] receives me also, and he that receives me receives him also that sent me forth." (Matt. 10:40) This principle is illustrated by the inquiry of the heavenly voice to the Pharisee Saul: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Right away Saul wanted to know, "Who are you?" And the heavenly voice answered: "I am Jesus, whom



you are persecuting."—Acts 9:4, 5. Saul, of course, was not rejecting Jesus by directly persecuting him. Jesus was in heaven where Saul could not touch him. Yet Saul was persecuting Jesus' disciples, and this was, in effect, persecution of Jesus himself. That is why in an illustration Jesus had said: "Truly I say to you, To the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."—Matt. 25:40.

So the question is, Are you gratefully receiving God's Son by showing kindness and hospitality to his earthly representatives who are taking the lead in preaching the Kingdom good news? Do you gratefully accept the counsel and direction of these individuals who are "substituting for Christ"? Are you sharing with them in the public preaching work that Jesus assigned to his disciples?—2 Cor. 5:20; Heb. 13:17; Acts 1:8.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

What is your attitude toward God's provision of his Word? The apostles Paul and Barnabas said regarding certain Jews in the first century: "It was necessary for the word of God to be spoken first to you. Since you are thrusting it away from you and do not judge yourselves worthy of everlasting life, look! we turn to the nations." (Acts 13:46) Rejection of the gift of God's Word meant the rejection of life itself! May we never have such an attitude toward God's Word. Rather, may we, like the early Thessalonian Christians, accept it, "not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God."—1 Thess. 2:13.

When you first heard the grand truths about God's kingdom, the paradise earth and the hope of resurrection for the dead you probably were thrilled. But are you

also gratefully receiving the Bible's principles regarding proper morals?

For example, at the recent "Peace on Earth" International Assemblies various parts of the program touched on proper moral conduct for a Christian. Have you personally put all this counsel into practice in your own life? Does all that you do conform to the high moral standards of God's Word? Are you willing to receive such counsel from God's Word with the same readiness of mind as you did doctrinal truths? If you are, you are putting away your old personality, and you are clothing yourself with a new personality that is created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty. This acceptance of God's Word will qualify you for eternal life.—Eph. 4:22-24; Rom. 12:2.

RECEIVING GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus said: "The Father in heaven [will] give holy spirit to those asking him!" (Luke 11:13) Holy spirit is a gift that God gives to those who sincerely desire it. But not all do. The disciple Stephen said of certain first-century Jewish leaders: "Obstinate men and uncircumcised in hearts and ears, you are always resisting the holy spirit." (Acts 7:51) The heart condition of those men was bad. They resisted holy spirit by turning a deaf ear to the message God was having proclaimed by his representatives.

Are you gratefully receiving holy spirit? The apostle Paul showed what was necessary to do so when he rebuked some for again trying to keep the Mosaic law. He said: "Did you receive the spirit due to works of law or due to a hearing by faith?" (Gal. 3:2) There we have it, "a hearing by faith." To receive God's holy spirit it is necessary to listen to God's instructions with faith, and then live in harmony with those instructions. Are you doing this?

Also, there is the need actually to ask God for holy spirit. How often do you do so? Do you just assume that God knows your need for his spirit? You ask him for other things, do you not? It is vital likewise that you keep on asking him for holy spirit, for the Father gives "holy spirit to those *asking* him!"

RECEIVING "GIFTS IN MEN"

Those called "gifts in men" in the Bible include "apostles, . . . shepherds and teachers." (Eph. 4:11) Thus, the apostle John was such a "gift" provided by God. However, not all received John. He himself wrote that Diotrephes "does not receive anything from us with respect." (3 John 9) Diotrephes certainly was not gratefully receiving Jehovah's provisions.

What about today? Are you receiving the "gifts in men" that Jehovah God is providing for your spiritual strengthening? When traveling representatives visit your congregation to build up its spirituality, do you receive them by supporting the arrangements during the time they are with you? Such occasions are stimulating and helpful, just as the visits of the mature Christian brothers in the first century were.

Those today who fail to receive God's "gifts in men" certainly miss out on a blessing; they fail to receive the spiritual help that they so much need now. On the other hand, by receiving such persons you will be greatly helped. What is more, by receiving also this provision you put yourself in line for God's reward of eternal life.

MAINTAIN APPRECIATION FOR GOD'S GIFTS

By receiving all of these provisions from Jehovah's bountiful hand you will be happy. It is good, therefore, to ask yourself:

Do I appreciate all these spiritual gifts? Am I gratefully receiving what Jehovah provides? Or do I feel there is too much to give up in this system of things in order to be a recipient of God's gifts? What if I give up everything to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ—is this worth while?

The apostle Peter posed such a question. He said: "Look! We have left all things and followed you; what actually will there be for us?" Jesus said to them: "Truly I say to you, In the re-creation, when the Son of man sits down upon his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also yourselves sit upon twelve thrones . . . And everyone that has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive many times more and will inherit everlasting life.'"—Matt. 19:27-29.

How worth while it is to receive God's provisions gratefully! For no matter what you leave behind in this system, you will receive a hundredfold more from God, as well as everlasting life. Jesus gave up more than any human could. He laid aside a glorious spirit existence in heaven. He even sacrificed life itself in faithful obedience to his Father's will on earth. But look at the reward that he received—his Father's smile of approval and exaltation to a position even superior to what he had before coming to earth!—Phil. 2:5-11.

When we evaluate the real spiritual worth of Jehovah's kind and loving gifts, our hearts move us to give more of what we have in the way of time, energy and effort in doing his will. In this way we prove worthy of that gift that only Jehovah can provide; namely, everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord.—Rom. 6:23.



YOU know what regret is. It is a wish that something could be done over and done differently. It is mental sorrow for past conduct or neglect. Do you have any regrets? All of us have done things that we wish we could go back and do differently.

But think for a moment about our God, Jehovah, in this respect. The Bible says: "The Excellency of Israel will not prove false, and He will not feel regrets, for He is not an earthling man so as to feel regrets." (1 Sam. 15:29) Jehovah has no regrets. When he looks back, there is not a place or a time in the endless millenniums gone by where he ever made a mistake or acted unwisely, unjustly or unkindly. When Jehovah does something, it is right to begin with and never needs to be changed.

The same cannot be said for humans. This includes all earthly servants of Jehovah, with the exception, of course, of the perfect man Jesus Christ.—1 Pet. 2:22.

EXAMPLES OF REGRET BY HUMANS

For instance, there was God's servant Moses. Moses had to deal with the rebellious people of Israel for forty years. He struggled and, at times, contended with them, trying to help them gain Jehovah's approval so that they could enter the Promised Land. Finally, after many years of wandering in the wilderness, the time came for them to enter. What rejoicing there must have been in Israel!

But, just as they were about to go in, Jehovah reminded Moses in regard to himself and his brother Aaron: "You men acted undutifully toward me in the middle of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin." Therefore God told Moses: "From a dis-

HOW TO AVOID REGRETS

tance you will see the land, but you will not go there into the land that I am giving to the sons of Israel." (Deut. 32:49-52) How Moses must have looked back with regret on how he had handled matters at Meribah!—Num. 20:9-13.

Then there was God's servant David, who improperly took a census of Israel. He was called to account for this, and so pleaded with Jehovah: "I have sinned very much in what I have done. . . . let your servant's error pass by, please; for I have acted very foolishly." (2 Sam. 24:10) Obviously, David's heart was filled with remorse over what he had done. His mistake was a serious one indeed; in time it resulted in loss of the lives of 70,000 of his people. (2 Sam. 24:15) How would you feel about making a mistake that ultimately involved the loss of the lives of 70,000 persons?

The Christian apostle Peter was another example. On the night before his death Jesus had made an ominous prediction about Peter. "On this night," Jesus said, "before a cock crows, you will disown me three times." Peter seemed indignant that the Master should even suggest such a thing! "Even if I should have to die with

you," Peter protested, "I will by no means disown you."—Matt. 26:34, 35.

But the rapid events of that night quickly changed his circumstances. Within hours Peter found himself being accused before men who did not share his faith: "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene." Before he realized what had happened, he had repeatedly told them: "I do not know the man!" Finally the cock crowed. The full weight of Peter's wrong fell upon him with crushing impact. Brokenhearted, "he went outside and wept bitterly." (Matt. 26:70-75) Words could hardly express the sorrow that Peter felt in regret.

The list goes on and on. We can hardly refer to any faithful servant of God from the past without finding that he had a personal cause to feel regret. Without question, the same must be true today. How about you? What regrets do you have?

Consider your past, say the last five years. Can you recall things that happened during those years that you now have reason to regret? Did you presume too much, as did Moses, and later suffer for it? Or, as in David's case, did improper actions on your part result in hurt to other persons? Have you ever behaved as Peter did, allowing fear of others to pressure you into a wrong course? Or, in your case, it may be other matters that cause your regret. All of us know the unpleasant feeling of regret. The question is, What can we do?

SHALL WE WORRY?

Many persons worry. But will worry solve the problem? Apology to the one wronged may help to restore good relations. Avoiding the circumstances that led to the wrong will help to avoid future difficulty. But worry is nothing but a waste of time, and a dangerous waste at that. It often results in loss of sleep, ulcers and serious difficulties because one's mind is

not on the work at hand. Rather than solving a problem, it produces more.

If a person has acted improperly, perhaps violating God's law or ignoring the counsel in His Word, then he should seek God's forgiveness. In doing so, he should avail himself of the provisions that God has made. Jesus instructed his followers to pray to God for forgiveness. (Mark 11: 24, 25) He did not say they would be rewarded for worry, but for asking in faith. Jehovah has made provision for forgiveness of the sins of those who truly repent, correct their course and humbly seek his forgiveness on the basis of the ransom.—Acts 3:19; 1 John 2:1, 2.

AVOIDING THINGS TO REGRET

Our chief concern now should be for the present and the future. We must maintain a course of faithfulness that will prevent any possible regrets at a future time. Just as we looked back over the past five years, let us look five years into the future. That will be the year 1974. What will we be regretting then? What are we doing right now, or failing to do now, that years from now we will wish we had done or had done differently?

Jehovah has provided sufficient information so that we can definitely know the trend of future events. His Word reveals that we are without question fast approaching the end of this entire wicked system of things. (Matt. 24:3-14; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 John 2:17) Intense hatred and violence will flare even hotter. Disregard for law will grow worse. Antagonism toward anything religious will become prevalent. This spirit will emerge so strong that it will ultimately result in the destruction of the entire empire of false religion, Babylon the Great.—Rev. 18:1-8.

So when the end of this system of things soon comes, what will be our greatest need? our most valuable possession? It

will not be our money or material possessions. It will not be any friendly elements of the world. No, but our most valuable possession and greatest need will be an unshakable faith in our God, Jehovah.

We will need absolute assurance in our heart and mind that Jehovah is really alive and that all the Bible says about Him is true. We will have to possess a firm conviction that our salvation is guaranteed even if the Devil succeeds in taking our very lives. At that time, if there are any questions in your mind, any weaknesses in your faith, if you are not absolutely convinced that what you believe is true, you are going to have some regrets. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to remain firm without this faith.

A most urgent activity to which we need to apply ourselves now is building, strengthening, making firm our faith. As always, Jehovah provides for this need. All the essentials required for building faith are to be found in the daily activities of the Christian congregation. Faith is built through persistent prayer, daily study of God's Word, association with others of like faith, faithful attendance at meetings and regular participation in the ministry.

Jehovah's people would be most unwise to neglect these vital provisions. How foolish it would be to view prayer as a necessity only in time of urgent need! What a mistake to regard study of God's Word as a drudgery to be avoided! How shortsighted to view the necessity of avoiding worldly association as an unfair restriction! How immature we would be to consider meetings as of little consequence in our weekly schedule! What a lack of appreciation we would show if we shared only irregularly in the ministry!

To what extent are you involved in this program? Are you a faithful participant or an occasional visitor? Are you an active

supporter or a disinterested bystander? Have personal interests and their pursuit been your prime concern? Based on what we have learned from God's Word, we can appreciate that those who now neglect their spiritual need will one day wish they had not. They are asking for regret.

We have no desire for these regrets. The apostle Paul advised us wisely when he urged us: "Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of [that is, nothing to regret], handling the word of the truth aright." (2 Tim. 2:15) Let that "word of the truth" guide you. Apply its principles in all the affairs of life. Keep your eye focused on the marvelous hope to which it directs attention. Doing so, you will be spared so many experiences that would be nothing but a cause for regret.

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They Stopped Going to Church

THE churches of Christendom today are in a state of decline. Church attendance and support are decreasing annually in country after country. Many persons are abandoning their respective churches because of what they have seen going on in them and because of their desire for Bible truth. The following two experiences illustrate what is happening. The first one is from Canada.

"Early in life I became a member of the Pentecostal religion because that was the religion of my parents. However, I realized that not all religions could be right, since they taught so many different and conflicting ideas. So I would approach my pastor of the Calvary Temple in Winnipeg, Canada, and discuss matters with him.

"I questioned him about the Trinity. At no time did he ever give me a direct answer, but he repeatedly told me that just how three persons could be one God is a mystery, and that I must accept this teaching on faith. Another teaching of the Pentecostal religion that bothered me for many years was that all good people were going to go to heaven. I found this difficult to accept. I asked him, 'Why has God created this globe? Was he just going to abandon it and take us all to heaven?'

"'Yes,' my pastor would always answer. My confusion grew and I searched harder for the truth of God. In 1967 I stopped attending the Calvary Temple and I began to pray earnestly to God for guidance. Not much later that same year, I felt a need to change jobs and, although I did not understand why, I did so. I accepted a position as manager of the pet department in a store. I had a woman employee working under me. We began getting into many discussions on life in general. I quickly noted that her remarks contained quotations from the Bible. This drew me out, and it did not take me long to realize that this woman was telling me the truth from God's Word. Yes, I knew that this was what I had been searching for.

"I did not care that this humble woman was one of Jehovah's witnesses nor that most people seem to be prejudiced against them. I realized that Jehovah's witnesses had the Bible truth and I was so happy to have found the way to learn it.

"I literally begged this woman to study the Bible with me regularly. She and her husband began doing so. I was so overjoyed that I could not seem to get enough knowledge. Two weeks after I began studying the Bible with them, I asked them if I could accompany them in their work of preaching from house to house. They were surprised but kindly encouraged me to take in more knowledge of the Bible first. I withdrew my membership in the Pentecostal church, and since May 1968 I have had the joy and happiness of sharing God's truth with others as one of his dedicated servants.

"When I look back on my days in the Calvary Temple, I realize now why I was unable to gain a clear understanding of their teachings of the Trinity, immortality of the soul and hellfire. It is because such things are not really taught in the Bible."

The second experience comes from a woman in South Africa. She writes:

"I belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church here in Johannesburg, South Africa, and my son, a university student, belonged to the Methodist Church. One day we were discussing our church teachings, and to our dismay we discovered that neither of us knew anything about the Holy Bible. We realized that something was very wrong, but we thought that it was our own fault. So we decided in the future to listen more attentively in church to see what we could learn. But during the next few weeks we found that no matter how carefully we listened, we were just not receiving any real spiritual benefit from our respective churches.

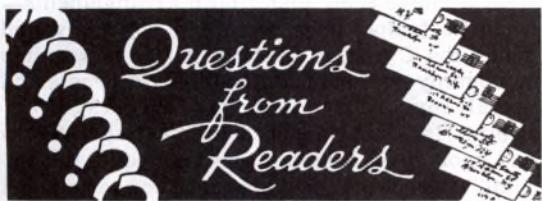
"About this time my son discovered a copy of the *Watchtower* magazine in our home and suggested that we read it together. The main article dealt with the marvelous hope outlined in the Holy Bible about living forever in a paradise earth. It was as clear as crystal. So we decided to subscribe for *The Watchtower* immediately. When ten days had passed and we had received nothing yet, we looked up the telephone number of the branch office of the Watch Tower Society to inquire about the delay. It was explained that it would take a little longer for the magazines to start coming to us, but that someone would be asked to call on us and bring us the latest issues.

"Later, when one of Jehovah's witnesses called, we accepted the free home Bible study that was offered. Now we are receiving rich spiritual food. Neither of us went back to church again. After our second study, we attended our first meeting at the Kingdom Hall. We were astounded at the friendliness and enthusiasm of everyone. Since then we have been regularly attending the meetings of Jeho-

vah's witnesses. We have learned the marvelous truths of God's Word the Bible, truths that the churches we previously attended simply did not teach."

How wise these individuals are for fleeing from such institutions that profess to teach God's truths but are in fact not teaching them, even denying them by their words and actions.

—Titus 1:16; Rev. 18:4, 5, 8.



- Jehovah allowed polygamy among the Jews, but not among Christians. Has God's morality changed?—J. P., U.S.A.

No, God's morality has not changed. It has always been perfect, and it still is. Moses, knowing of the marital arrangements that God permitted then, was moved to say about Jehovah: "Righteous and upright is he." (Deut. 32:4) Though God allowed temporarily a marriage relationship that he does not now allow, his righteousness is as evident today as it was in the days of Moses.

Frequently when persons hear or read that polygamy was tolerated in ancient Israel or among Hebrew patriarchs they form notions of God as winking at loose sexual practices. They imagine that Jehovah condoned or encouraged promiscuity. Nothing could be farther from the truth! Why, one of the Ten Commandments forbade a man to have sexual relations with another's wife. And on penalty of death God prohibited incest, bestiality and sodomy.—Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:6-23.

We must keep in mind that God did not institute polygamy. The first one mentioned in the Bible with two wives was Lamech, the boastful descendant of Cain. (Gen. 4:19-24) No one practicing polygamy survived the Flood, for Noah and his sons each had one wife. Later, when God dealt with the post-Flood patriarchs he had not yet given extensive laws on human behavior, including marriage. In

some instances a man took a secondary wife in order to produce offspring because his wife was barren, as Abraham did at the urging of his wife Sarah. (Gen. 16:1, 2) Yet, it is noteworthy that many times in the Bible where polygamy was involved, there was unhappiness or trouble, as with Sarah and Hagar, Hannah and Peninnah, as well as Solomon's wives.

—Gen. 21:9; 1 Sam. 1:1-6; 1 Ki. 11:1-6.

Hence, with the background of a patriarchal society, when Jehovah accepted the Israelites as his national people polygamy already existed to some extent, though it appears that monogamy was much more common throughout Israel's history. Acknowledging polygamous marriages that already existed, God gave very stringent laws to regulate and control things. Quite contrary to the charge that God disrespected womanhood and marriage, he enacted highly moral legislation to protect the rights and privileges of the original wife as well as of any secondary wife and her children. (Deut. 21:15-17) Consequently, even though Jehovah did not forbid polygamy, he definitely urged love and respect in marriage, and forbade sexual immorality. His moral standard was righteous, perfect.

Jesus made a significant point on marriage in Matthew 19:8, 9. About the fact that divorce was allowed under the law that God gave through Moses, Christ said: "Moses, out of regard for your hardheartedness, made the concession to you of divorcing your wives, but such has not been the case from the beginning. I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery." Evidently, just as with divorce, God made the concession of tolerating polygamy, yet bringing it under strict regulation.

This might be compared to God's permission of the "superior authorities," the worldly gov-

ernments. Jehovah did not institute them in the beginning. But they do exist and it is not yet God's time for removing them. So he gives his servants directions as to how they should conduct themselves in relation to this arrangement that he is allowing for a time.—Rom. 13:1-7.

Just what is the Christian stand on polygamy? Is it permitted, or has God's period of tolerating it passed?

Before making the comments quoted above, Jesus drew on Genesis 2:24, saying: "A man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh." (Matt. 19:5) God gave Adam just one wife. The pattern was that the TWO, not three or four, would be one flesh. Plainly Jesus was directing his followers to return to God's original way for human marriage, a man's having only one living wife. Under inspiration the apostle Paul showed that this is the correct understanding. In 1 Corinthians 7:2, he wrote: "Let each man have his own wife and each woman have her own husband." And he directed that an appoint-

ed servant in the congregation was to be "a husband of one wife," demonstrating the standard for Christians.—Titus 1:6; 1 Tim. 3:2, 12.

God thus brought to a close the period of concession as to the marital arrangement. He simply returned matters to what he instituted in the beginning. There was, then, no change in God's morality—it remained perfect. And Jehovah continued to oppose sexual immorality. He consistently viewed it as despicable and deserving of severe punishment.—Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 6:9, 10.

As we have seen, under both arrangements—when he temporarily permitted polygamy and under the Christian system, when he requires monogamy—Jehovah has opposed looseness and sexual immorality, and has encouraged restraint, love and respect in marriage. Moses had spoken of Jehovah as "righteous and upright." Christ and Paul also referred to Jehovah as righteous. (John 17:25; Rom. 3:26) And we today have good reason to concur with them, knowing that God has been consistent and perfect in morality.



ANNOUNCEMENTS



FIELD MINISTRY

Would you be willing to sacrifice something that is precious to you in behalf of a friend? Likely you would. But what about those who are strangers? One of the most precious assets, time, is being sacrificed by over one million of Jehovah's witnesses largely in behalf of those they have not previously known. They delight to do this, for it enables them to offer public declaration to God and his name, bringing praise to Him and blessings to those who listen to the Bible's comforting message. During November they will not only spend time offering the Bible-study-aid book, *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, on a contribution of 25¢, but they will also conduct a free home Bible study with anyone who desires to learn about God and his provisions for salvation.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

November 9: Acquaint Yourself with God and Keep Peace, ¶1-22. Page 649. Songs to Be Used: 72, 22.

November 16: Acquaint Yourself with God and Keep Peace, ¶23-44. Page 653. Songs to Be Used: 2, 8.

November 23: Acquaintance with God Leads to Eternal Peace, ¶1-19. Page 658. Songs to Be Used: 21, 81.