

The WATCHTOWER

When Hunger Will Be No More

A God of Matchless Humility

**True Worship
—A Successful Way of Life**

APRIL 1, 1976

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

April 1, 1976
Vol. 97, Number 7

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

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

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

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

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IT MAY well be that you have never experienced days upon days of gnawing hunger. Yet that is what millions of men, women and children have to face. According to one conservative estimate, 460 million of earth's inhabitants do not have enough to eat. Other estimates would put this figure as high as one billion persons. Especially great is the suffering of children. Their hunger may lead to blindness, stunted growth, loss of resistance to infection and, in fact, a premature death.

Relief from hunger is certainly needed. But will such relief come? Yes, the Creator of man, Jehovah God, has purposed to bring an end to hunger. The prophecy of Isaiah, for example, pointed forward to an earth-wide banquet, with enough food for all. We read: "The LORD of Hosts will prepare a banquet of rich fare for all the peoples."—Isa. 25:6, *New English Bible*.

To the starving millions such a promise may sound unbelievable. They may think that the earth just cannot provide enough for everyone. But this is not the case. In its issue of

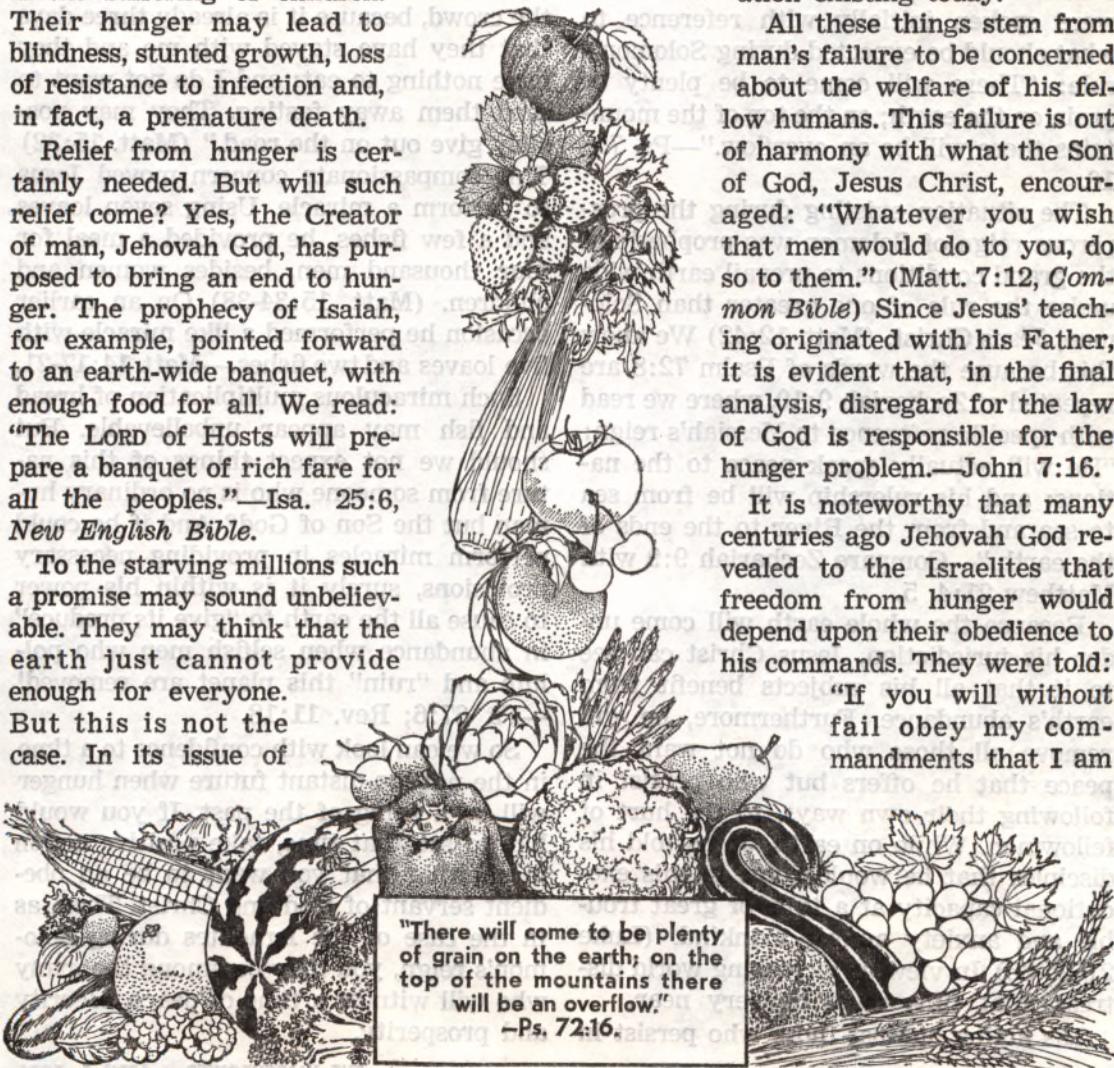
WHEN HUNGER WILL BE NO MORE

September 1974, *Scientific American* said: "The earth and technology can probably provide food for a population of 40 to 50 billion." Why, then, are so many hungry? Lack of cooperation among peoples, economic systems based on making big profits, and mismanagement of earth's resources are among the factors contributing to the sad situation existing today.

All these things stem from man's failure to be concerned about the welfare of his fellow humans. This failure is out of harmony with what the Son of God, Jesus Christ, encouraged: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." (Matt. 7:12, *Common Bible*) Since Jesus' teaching originated with his Father, it is evident that, in the final analysis, disregard for the law of God is responsible for the hunger problem.—John 7:16.

It is noteworthy that many centuries ago Jehovah God revealed to the Israelites that freedom from hunger would depend upon their obedience to his commands. They were told:

"If you will without fail obey my commandments that I am



"There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow."
—Ps. 72:16.

commanding you today so as to love Jehovah your God and to serve him . . . , you will indeed eat and be satisfied.”—Deut. 11:13-15.

The ancient history of the Israelites confirms these words. During King Solomon’s reign, for instance, Israel’s faithful adherence to God’s law resulted in prosperity and security. The Bible reports: “Judah and Israel continued to dwell in security, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree, from Dan to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon.” (1 Ki. 4:25) Fulfilled were the words of Psalm 72 that were spoken initially with reference to what should be expected during Solomon’s rule: “There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow.”—Ps. 72:16.

The situation existing during the prosperous reign of Solomon was prophetic of the grand conditions to prevail earth wide under the rule of one greater than Solomon, Jesus Christ. (Matt. 12:42) We know this because the words of Psalm 72:8 are repeated at Zechariah 9:10, where we read with specific reference to Messiah’s reign: “He will actually speak peace to the nations; and his rulership will be from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”—Compare Zechariah 9:9 with Matthew 21:4, 5.

Because the whole earth will come under his jurisdiction, Jesus Christ can see to it that all his subjects benefit from earth’s abundance. Furthermore, he will remove all those who do not want the peace that he offers but who persist in following their own ways, to the hurt of fellowmen. While on earth, Jesus told his disciples that he would come in this executive capacity at a time of great trouble and anxiety among mankind. (Luke 21:25-36) In view of increasing world distress, that time must be very near.

His acting against those who persist in

selfishly pursuing their own interests and who oppose his rulership will mean an end to greedy commercial systems, to mismanagement of earth’s resources, to unequal distribution of food supplies and to all the other factors responsible for the plight of starving peoples.

Thereafter Jesus Christ will concentrate on helping his subjects to get the very best from life. His great concern for the physical welfare of people, shown while he was a man, assures us of this. There was the time, for example, when he called his disciples and said to them: “I feel pity for the crowd, because it is already three days that they have stayed with me and they have nothing to eat; and I do not want to send them away fasting. They may possibly give out on the road.” (Matt. 15:32) This compassionate concern moved Jesus to perform a miracle. Using seven loaves and a few fishes, he provided a meal for four thousand men, besides women and children. (Matt. 15:34-38) On an earlier occasion he performed a like miracle with five loaves and two fishes.—Matt. 14:17-21.

Such miraculous multiplication of bread and fish may appear unbelievable. But should we not expect things of this nature from someone who is no ordinary human but the Son of God? And if he could perform miracles in providing necessary provisions, surely it is within his power to cause all the earth to “give its produce” in abundance when selfish men who pollute and “ruin” this planet are removed!—Ps. 67:6; Rev. 11:18.

So we can look with confidence to a time in the not-too-distant future when hunger will be a thing of the past. If you would like to see that time, take positive action in showing that you want to be an obedient servant of God and Christ. Then, as in the case of the Israelites during Solomon’s reign, you may be among the many who will witness a time of peace, security and prosperity.

A GOD OF MATCHLESS

INFERIOR to none and in submission to no one, Jehovah God is indeed the Supreme Sovereign. As the all-wise God he does not need counsel from anyone. (Isa. 40:13) He is the supreme standard of all that is good, just and loving. His power is unchallengeable. The position he occupies is unaffected by what any creature may do or fail to do.

There is nothing that we imperfect humans can give to Jehovah God that would profit him. The young man Elihu reminded Job: "If you sin, what injury do you do to God? Even if your offenses are many, how do you hurt him? If you are righteous, what do you give him, or what does he receive from your hand? Your wickedness can affect only a man like yourself; and your justice only a fellow human being."—Job 35:6-8, *The New American Bible*.

Despite the fact that sinful humans cannot affect his position, Jehovah God, in his great humility, is willing to deal with them. The inspired psalmist wrote: "Who is like Jehovah our God, him who is making his dwelling on high? He is condescending to look on heaven and earth, raising up the lowly one from the very dust; he exalts the poor one from the ashpit itself, to make him sit with nobles."—Ps. 113:5-8.

How different Jehovah is from imperfect humans! Often those who are well-educated and of keen mind become impatient with persons who are slow to grasp things. In fact, they may be too proud to associate with those having limited abilities. But Jehovah God condescends to look with favor upon those whom men may even despise—the lowly ones and the poor ones.

The pitiable condition of those finding themselves reduced to the ashpit is illus-

Humility

trated in the case of the man Job. Having experienced the loss of everything, diseased Job sat "among the ashes," possibly like an outcast at a city dump. (Job 2:8) Once he had enjoyed a position of honor as a respected elder and judge in the city gate. But as an afflicted man he was subjected to indignities from base persons. He exclaimed: "I have become even the theme of their song, and I am to them for a byword. They have detested me, they have kept themselves far from me; and from my face they did not hold back their spit."—Job 30:9, 10.

Think of it, Jehovah God has been willing to come to the aid of despised persons like afflicted Job. He has repeatedly exalted those who were quite insignificant from the human standpoint.

One who appreciated this was David. In recognition of what God had done in his behalf, he said: "It is your humility that makes me great." (2 Sam. 22:36) Being the youngest boy, David seemed the least likely of Jesse's sons to be chosen for the kingship over all Israel. His father did not even call him in from pasturing the sheep to introduce him to the prophet Samuel, but presented his seven other sons. Only upon Samuel's urging did Jesse call David from his shepherding. Thereafter Samuel anointed David "in the midst of his brothers." (1 Sam. 16:6-13) So it was Jehovah's humility in taking notice of

young David that made that shepherd boy great.

Similarly, Jehovah's choosing of those to be associate rulers with his Son Jesus Christ has been from among those looked down upon in the world. Calling attention to this, the Christian apostle Paul wrote: "Not many wise in a fleshly way were called, not many powerful, not many of noble birth; but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put the wise men to shame; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put the strong things to shame; and God chose the ignoble things of the world and the things looked down upon."—1 Cor. 1: 26-28.

Especially outstanding is the fact that, in his great humility, Jehovah God put up with repeated rebelliousness on the part of the Israelites. Through his prophet Isaiah, he stated: "I have spread out my hands all day long to a stubborn people, those who are walking in the way that is not good, after their thoughts."—Isa. 65:2.

Such humility is truly remarkable. Jehovah God continued to 'spread out his hands' to the Israelites, entreating them to return to him that he might bestow upon them his blessing. This was despite the fact that their stubbornness hurt him deeply. The Scriptures tell us: "They themselves rebelled and made his holy spirit feel hurt." (Isa. 63:10) Only after having appealed to them for centuries did Jehovah finally abandon the disobedient Israelites to their enemies. Nevertheless, he did not close the door to them as individuals. It was his desire that they repent and come in line for his approval and blessing. His warm appeal to them continued to be: "Return to me, and I will return to you."—Mal. 3:7.

What about today? The apostle Paul's words spoken at Athens still apply: "[God] is telling mankind that they should all

everywhere repent." (Acts 17:30) In his great humility and boundless love, Jehovah God gave his Son for the world. This opened the way for mankind to come into an approved standing before him, with everlasting life in view.—John 3:16.

Since Jehovah is a God of such matchless humility, he cannot tolerate anyone who is proud. The Bible tells us: "Everyone that is proud in heart is something detestable to Jehovah." (Prov. 16:5) "God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones."

—Jas. 4:6.

The fact that Jehovah God is humble assures his modest servants of his unfailing help. Though he rules supreme, the lowliest one of his servants need not fear that he will be overlooked. "Jehovah is high," says Psalm 138:6, "and yet the humble one he sees; but the lofty one he knows only from a distance." The person who might stand out prominently but is dominated by pride is given no recognition by Jehovah. But the humble person is precious in his eyes. Jesus Christ encouraged his disciples with the words: "Five sparrows sell for two coins of small value, do they not? Yet not one of them goes forgotten before God. But even the hairs of your heads are all numbered. Have no fear; you are worth more than many sparrows."—Luke 12:6, 7.

How grateful all of us can be that Jehovah is a humble God. Were it not for his humility, there would be no possibility of our gaining an approved standing before him. Jehovah's humility, in turn, should move us to want to imitate him. We should want to be in full harmony with the wise expression of Proverbs 8:13: "Self-exaltation and pride and the bad way and the perverse mouth I have hated." If such hatred is the attitude we strive to cultivate, we can be confident that the God of matchless humility, Jehovah, will continue giving us his favorable attention.

Insight on the News

- Writing from The Hague, journalist C. L. Sulzberger observes: "It is a dismal truth that

In the Name of God probably half or more of the wars now being fought around the world are either openly religious conflicts or involved with religious disputes. And, since virtually all formally organized creeds

are monotheistic, this means that at this very instant men are killing other men in the name of an identical, if variously named, God."

Among other conflicts, Mr. Sulzberger cites those raging between religious factions in Lebanon and the strife involving Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Men involved in such warfare may believe that they are fighting in the name of God. But is God really with any of the sides in these conflicts?

The answer must be No. That is so even where Christianity is the professed faith of those on both sides of the conflict. Jesus Christ said of his true followers: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) Love is not displayed by fighting, maiming and killing one another. Moreover, those truly acting in God's name have beaten "their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears."—Isa. 2:4.

- While expressing hope for a better future, the "South China Morning Post" said, editorial-

Quest for Peace ly, on December 31, 1975: "The condition of the world as 1975 draws to a close is sombrely reflected in the state of the United Nations at the end of the annual session of the General Assembly. The climate of bitterness, anger, frustration and confrontation that characterised the various debates ominously threatens to make a cynical mockery of the earnest wish for a Happy New Year in 1976."

Highlighting a significant factor blocking world peace, the editorial stated: "For more than a quarter of a century since the disastrous World War II, the quest for world peace has continued without interruption but with only limited success mainly because there are haughty and dogmatic statesmen to whom power is more important than peace."

Peace and tranquillity can never result

solely from the efforts of imperfect humans, regardless of their motives. "Do not put your trust in nobles," says the Bible, "nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs. His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish." —Ps. 146:3, 4.

Any hope for a truly better future rests with Jehovah God, to whom the Biblical psalmist prayed: "Do give us assistance from distress, as salvation by earthling man is worthless." (Ps. 60:11) Permanent peace and tranquillity will be brought to earth only by God's kingdom under the rulership of Jesus Christ, the "Prince of Peace."—Isa. 9:6, 7.

- In a special report on Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa, Ernie Regehr writes in "The Christian Century": "Universally praised

A Danger to the State? as hard-working and morally upright citizens, Jehovah's Witnesses have repeatedly incurred the displeasure of governments by refusing to participate in symbolic expressions of national loyalty and, in the cases of some one-party states, by refusing to join the ruling political party."

Do some leaders consider the Witnesses a danger to the State because these Christians maintain strict neutrality regarding political matters? If so, such leaders could not tolerate Jesus Christ, who stated: "My kingdom is no part of this world." (John 18:36) Making clear the neutral position of his followers, Jesus said: "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world."—John 17:16.

Men in high station need not fear that Jehovah's Witnesses constitute a danger to the State. These neutral Christians have proper respect for governmental "superior authorities." (Rom. 13:1-7) Rather than persecute them, would not men in authority do well to show appreciation for the high moral standards these Christians maintain?

In this regard, journalist Regehr cites remarks appearing in an editorial in the Zambian "Mirror." Significantly, that newspaper said: "Many of those who, contrary to our constitution, persecute them [Jehovah's Witnesses] for abiding by their religious beliefs, would be more useful citizens by following the example of the sect's moral life."

THE central body of elders at Jerusalem gave the apostle Paul, along with Barnabas, the "right hand of sharing together" when Paul was at a council meeting there, and they also entrusted these two men with an authoritative letter to the congregations in Asia. This letter had the effect of breaking down the national barrier between Jews and Gentiles. However, important as this mission was, there was another matter of such concern that the elders felt impelled to impress it deeply upon Paul and Barnabas. This special counsel was that they should "keep the poor in mind."—Gal. 2:9, 10; Acts 15:22-29.

Paul reports that he earnestly endeavored to do this, in addition to his strenuous preaching work. He strove constantly to instill this generous spirit into the congregations. When the Christians in Jerusalem came into need, Paul encouraged the congregations in Europe to share material things to the extent of their ability with their needy brothers in Jerusalem.

—Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:1-8; 9:1-5.

CHRISTIANS GENEROUS TOWARD ALL

Consideration for the poor is strongly emphasized throughout the Christian Scriptures. The apostle John said: "Whoever has this world's means for supporting life and beholds his brother having need and yet shuts the door of his tender compassions upon him, in what way does the love of God remain in him?" (1 John 3:17) James the half brother of Jesus wrote similarly: "If a brother or a sister is in a naked state and lacking the food sufficient for the day, yet a certain one of you says to them: 'Go in peace, keep warm and well fed,' but you do not give them the ne-

cessities for their body, of what benefit is it?" James pointed out that "the form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world."—Jas. 2:15, 16; 1:27.

Paul coun-

seled Timothy, whom he had left in Ephesus, to keep before the minds of wealthy persons in the congregation the need to "be rich in fine works, to be liberal, ready to share," and he told the Christians at Rome: "Share with the holy ones according to their needs. Follow the course of hospitality." These qualities of generosity and hospitality are essential features of the "fine works" that enable the Christian to "get a firm hold on the real life."—1 Tim. 6:18, 19; Rom. 12:13.

In connection with giving material help, most of the Bible's exhortations are with regard to sharing with other Christians. But the generosity of true Christians does not stop there. Rather, generosity should be a constant, characteristic quality of the Christian personality, the person's heart going out to those in need.

Of course, a Christian does not have the resources to give toward helping every needy person. How, then, can he best govern his giving? The apostle said on this point: "Let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Gal. 6:10) Christians should, first of all, be sensitive to the needs of their brothers. At the same time, however, they should not fail to be conscious of others who are suffering.

Christians often have little in a material way that they can give. But they can provide loving services that may be more

appropriate. A neighbor may be sick—he or she may be a person who never showed any interest in the good news when the Christian spoke about it. Nevertheless, the Christian is interested in seeing what can be done—what help he can give. Perhaps a housewife is too ill to cook her meals or do her shopping. Or a sick person may need transportation to the doctor's office. To one who is sick, only a friendly visit, perhaps with a bowl of hot soup, may be greatly appreciated. Older or handicapped persons may be assisted in many ways.

Such acts are a part of the "fine works" for which all Christians should be zealous. (Titus 2:14) Note that the Bible highly commends Dorcas, the Christian disciple of the city of Joppa, because "she abounded in good deeds and gifts of mercy." Doubtless she had little in a material way, but she provided the loving service of making garments for poor widows.—Acts 9:36-40.

So, when it comes to material aid the Christian should be generous, but should also use discernment and good sense. He should not give to others to the extent that he seriously jeopardizes the economy and well-being of his own household. Too, a person would be unwise to give money to someone who would merely squander it or, worse, spend it to perpetuate a bad habit. Also, to help a lazy person could actually be harmful to the individual, contributing to further idleness and leading, perhaps, to other derelictions on his part.

To the Christian congregation at Thessalonica, Paul had to write: "If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat.' For we hear certain ones are walking disorderly among you, not working at all but meddling with what does not concern them. To such persons we give the order and exhortation in the Lord Jesus Christ that by working with quietness they should eat food they themselves earn."—2 Thess. 3:10-12; compare Ephesians 4:28.

Accordingly, Christians will extend material help primarily to persons who love God and who manifest sincere interest in the good news, and who have a genuine need for such help. But when they can they also help others who have a real need, always, of course, offering *spiritual* assistance to all. They have the spirit of Jesus. The apostle Matthew, who accompanied Jesus as he went from village to village doing good works, wrote: "On seeing the crowds he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd."—Matt. 9:36.

GOD LOVES THE GENEROUS PERSON

God is not unmindful of those who give consideration and help to needy ones. He counts it as though done to him. Says the Bible: "He who is gracious to the poor is lending to the LORD; He will repay him for his benevolent action." (Prov. 19:17, *New Berkeley Version*) The truly generous person does not need to fear that his freehearted giving, sometimes even beyond his



actual financial ability, will bring him to poverty. The inspired apostle writes: "God loves a cheerful giver. God, moreover, is able to make all his undeserved kindness abound toward you, that, while you always have full self-sufficiency in everything, you may have plenty for every good work. (Just as it is written: 'He has distributed widely, he has given to the poor ones, his righteousness continues forever.')" (2 Cor. 9:7-9; Ps. 112:9) The Christian giving, when motivated by love, brings glory to God and to the good news that he preaches, for "the one showing favor to the poor one is glorifying [his Maker]."—Prov. 14:31.

In describing a good wife the Bible says that along with her fine qualities of industriousness and trustworthiness, "she reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy.... Her husband is prominent at the city gates [her actions bring respect for him in the community].... Her children rise up and praise her; her husband, too, extols her." —Prov. 31:20-28, *New American Bible*.

POVERTY TO BE ELIMINATED

At the present time, even among Christians, Jesus' words apply: "You always have the poor with you." (Matt. 26:11) This is because of the world's ever-changing economic condition and also due to sickness and persecution. But the Bible promises: "Not always will the poor one be forgotten, nor will the hope of the meek ones ever perish." (Ps. 9:18) Under the Kingdom rule of God's Son, those who exploit the people and oppress the poor and lowly ones will be gone. "He shall de-

fend the afflicted among the people, save the children of the poor, and crush the oppressor."—Ps. 72:4, *NA*.

Just as it would have been in ancient Israel, if they had obeyed God's perfect law, so under Christ's rule over the earth —there will be no poor people. God told Israel just before they entered the Promised Land: "No one should come to be poor among you, because Jehovah will without fail bless you in the land that Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance." (Deut. 15:4) Instead of a mere written law, people under the Kingdom's righteous guidance will have the law of God written in their hearts, for "when there are judgments from [God] for the earth, righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn." (Isa. 26:9) Of such a time, the prophet wrote: "Love and fidelity have come together; justice and peace join hands. Fidelity springs up from earth and justice looks down from heaven. The LORD will add prosperity, and our land shall yield its harvest."—Ps. 85:10-12, *New English Bible*.

How fine it will be when poverty is stamped out forever! Yet this will not eliminate generosity, for everyone will be able to share his abilities and talents and the products of his industrious work for the benefit and enrichment of the entire community. Until that time, let us all engage in an interchange of encouragement, sharing both material and spiritual things, 'considering one another to incite to love and fine works,' among which "works" is to "keep the poor in mind."—Heb. 10:24; Gal. 2:10; Rom. 1:12; Acts 2:42.

'A WAY LIKE A BRIER HEDGE'

◆ Proverbs 15:19 speaks of the lazy man's way as being like a "brier hedge." This may mean that he imagines difficulties and thorny problems in every undertaking and, on this basis, excuses his inactivity.

Let Everyone Take LIFE'S WATER Free



"I PERCEIVE that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." These are the words of the apostle Peter when he saw that God manifested his arrangement to accept the Roman army officer Cornelius, along with his household, into the Christian congregation. (Acts 10:34, 35) Indeed, God's will is that "all men should be saved and come into awareness of truth." (1 Tim. 2:4, *Byington*) Today, over a far more widespread area than in the apostle Peter's day, God is showing favor to men and women "of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." (Rev. 7:9) Moreover, he is drawing people of all walks of life and all kinds of circumstances to walk on the way to everlasting life.—John 12:32.

The African country of Nigeria furnishes a fine example of this gathering of all sorts of men and women to serve God "with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) During the year 1975, 16,291 persons were baptized, and the total of 112,164 active witnesses of Jehovah became the second-largest body of these Christian people within the borders of any one nation. In Nigeria there are scores of tribes and many linguistic groups—the Hausas, the Yorubas and the Ibos, to name a few.

Among these Nigerian tribes, one who desires to conform to Christian standards has numerous barriers to overcome, such as polygamy and fetish worship, occultism, and so forth. Also, as in other lands, people, before coming to a knowledge of Bible truth, have generally been involved in practices that are out of harmony with

the Christian principles of love, peace and morality. They must make changes to serve God acceptably.

For example, there is the Nigerian man who was head of his clan and president of the local Customary Court. By no means a poor man, he supported six wives and thirty-four children. He augmented his authority as chief by membership in a secret order and several occult societies, at the same time being a member of the Anglican (C.M.S.) Church. Then he began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. "I began to realize," he says, "that worldly glory is transitory. I resigned my chieftaincy and terminated my affiliation with occult societies and my membership in the C.M.S. Church."

This man found it difficult to straighten out his marital affairs to conform to Bible principles. But, though it meant considerable cost to him, he brought his way of life into harmony with the Bible's counsel to have but one wife—his original wife, spoken of in the Bible as "the wife of your youth." (Prov. 5:18; Matt. 19:4-9) He registered his marriage with his first wife and separated from the other five, making arrangements so that they and their children would not suffer want. Now, being Scripturally qualified, he got baptized as a true follower of Jesus Christ.

This tribal chieftain's experience is similar to that of another former head of a tribal clan and president of the clan court. On his first contact with Bible truth, in the 1940's, he was too involved in his tribal affairs to give it careful attention, but this truth stayed with him. In 1962 he began to think seriously about his obligations to God. He saw that he had to settle his marital problem (he had eleven wives). Years passed, and then in 1970 he read an article in *Awake!* magazine entitled "My Life as a Polygamist." He says: "I saw that the narrator was quite determined and serious-minded and as such God empowered him to overcome his problems. God could also do the same for me if I would be serious and determined. So I began putting my extra wives away and registered with my senior wife." Then, after bringing the other features of his life into harmony with Bible principles, he was baptized and today is an elder in the Umuelemoha Congregation.

Among Nigerians now serving as Christian witnesses of Jehovah is a business tycoon who had amassed wealth by political manipulation. There is also the former tobacco merchandiser who had enriched himself to the point where he became known as a "money magnate." Another received the truth when he was a humble wheelbarrow pusher in the Emugu market. A young man, the light-middleweight boxing champion of the East Central State, was preparing to seek the world championship title when he learned the truth that "a slave of the Lord does not need to fight." (2 Tim. 2:24) Despite opposition and charges that he was 'letting down his nation,' he gave up his promising boxing career, was baptized as one of Jehovah's witnesses, and is now determined to "fight the fine fight of the faith" in order to "get a firm hold on the real life."—1 Tim. 6:12, 19.

Reminiscent of the Roman army officer Cornelius is the experience of a captain in the defeated Biafran army. He observed the honesty and steadfastness of Jehovah's Witnesses during the civil war, at which time many of them were hated and mistreated. The first week after the war he began attending their Bible-study meetings, and he is now a baptized member of the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Aba.

Likewise, a Biafran army lieutenant, a devout Catholic, was a firm believer in the sincerity of the clergy. 'But,' he says, 'their activities during the civil war shocked me. They came to the war fronts to bless our weapons and used the pulpits as recruiting centers for the army, then turned around at the end of the war to condemn the very cause they had formerly espoused, in order to procure favor from the victorious side. I could not reconcile this shameless hypocrisy with true Christianity. I began to appreciate the neutral course taken by Jehovah's Witnesses.' When the war was over this man took time to learn Bible truth and to take a firm stand for Bible principles.

Similarly in all lands, a good condition of heart toward God overcomes all obstacles and receives His favor regardless of age, occupation or previous way of life. The message in God's Word has power and strengthens one spiritually and morally. (Heb. 4:12; Phil. 4:13) Hundreds of thousands each year, the world around, are saying to those preaching the good news of God's kingdom: "We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people." (Zech. 8:23) They are transforming their lives and making over their personalities with everlasting life in view. (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23, 24) Yes, in this serious time, God's heartwarming invitation to everyone is: "Let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free."—Rev. 22:17.

JEREMIAH MAGNIFIES

JEHOVAH'S JUSTICE

YOUNG Jeremiah was of a priestly family and lived in the village of Anathoth, just a few miles north of Jerusalem. He received his prophetic commission when, because of the great wickedness of his countrymen, it was God's time to uproot, to kill and to break down, with resultant weeping.—Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-4.

As a consequence, much of the book bearing Jeremiah's name is in the form of warning and censure, thus highlighting Jehovah's attribute of justice. Because of this there has been coined the term "jeremiad," defined as "a lamenting and denunciatory complaint." But such a term does not accurately describe the book of Jeremiah, which also tells us of Jehovah's other attributes, his wisdom, power and love.

The book of Jeremiah is the largest book in the Bible aside from the book of Psalms. It deals almost entirely with incidents that occurred and prophecies that were uttered during the last forty years of the kingdom of Judah. Those forty years took in the last eighteen years of the reign of the good king Josiah and

the wicked reigns of Jehoahaz (three months); Jehoiakim (eleven years); Jehoiachin (three months) and Zedekiah, who reigned for eleven years.

Because the book of Jeremiah contains, in addition to inspired prophetic utterances, many historical events, particularly those involving Jeremiah himself, we know more about Jeremiah than about any other Hebrew prophet except Moses. Jeremiah tells of the prophetic actions he was commanded to take, the persecutions he endured and his feelings about the way he was being treated.

His book, however, is not written in a progressive, historical way. This could be because Jeremiah had his secretary write this record during the latter part of Jeremiah's prophetic career. Upon King Jehoiakim's destroying this scroll, Jeremiah dictated another, which he apparently edited later, adding further material at that time.—Jer. 36:32.

JEREMIAH COMMISSIONED

It appears that Jeremiah was a modest young man. When commissioned by Jehovah, he replied: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Here I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy." Jehovah did not accept Jeremiah's excuse, but told him: "Do not say, 'I am but a boy.' But to all those to whom I shall send you, you should go; and everything that I shall command you, you should speak. Do not be afraid because of their faces, for 'I am with you to deliver you.'"—Jer. 1:4-8.

In view of the kind of people to whom he was being sent and the nature of his message, Jeremiah needed further reassurance. And Jehovah gave him such,

adding: "I have made you today a fortified city and an iron pillar and copper walls . . . They will be certain to fight against you, but they will not prevail against you."—Jer. 1:18, 19.

How much Jeremiah needed such assurance! His book tells that on one occasion his message so irritated his listeners that he was struck and put in stocks overnight. On another occasion the priests and the false prophets were so infuriated at the tenor of Jeremiah's prophesying that they clamored for his death. He would have been killed had not the royal princes and older men intervened on his behalf. And shortly before the city of Jerusalem fell, his message so displeased his hearers that they threw him into a miry dungeon. Had not a palace eunuch interceded with King Zedekiah on his behalf it would have meant certain death for him.—Jer. 20:2, 3; 26:8-11, 16-24; 38:1-13.

How did Jeremiah react to all such treatment? True, at times he felt so discouraged that he cursed the day he was born. He tried to stop speaking, but he could not. God's Word within him was like a fire in his bones and he just could not keep silent. As unpopular as his message was, he had to speak it out.—Jer. 20:1-9, 14-18.

Despite occasional discouragement, Jeremiah managed to maintain an unwavering course, not letting fear dominate him. He never compromised. When his enemies threatened to kill him, he stood his ground, saying: "It was Jehovah that sent me to prophesy . . . all the words that you have heard. . . . As for me, here I am in your hand. Do to me according to what is good and according to what is right in your eyes. Only you should by all means know that, if you are putting me to death, it is innocent blood that you are putting upon yourselves . . . for in truth Jehovah did send me to you to speak in your ears all these words."—Jer. 26:12-15.

CENSURE AND WARNINGS

Jeremiah never let his hearers forget that he was speaking, not his own message, but Jehovah's. Jehovah's name appears in his book upward of 700 times. Over 150 times he told them that this is 'what Jehovah has said.' And well over seventy times he reminded them that these 'are the words of Jehovah.'

Chapters two through twenty record nine proclamations he made, mostly during the reign of King Josiah. His people committed two sins: They forsook Jehovah, "the source of living water," and they hewed out for themselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that cannot contain the water." (Jer. 2:13) Yes, "an appalling thing, an outrage, has appeared in this land: prophets prophesy lies and priests go hand in hand with them, and my people love to have it so." Notoriously and wantonly they were breaking God's commandments: "You steal, you murder, you commit adultery and perjury, . . . you run after other gods." —Jer. 5:30, 31; 7:9, *New English Bible*.

Included in those pronouncements are some of the best-known verses of the book: "The wise ones have become ashamed. They have become terrified and will be caught. Look! They have rejected the very word of Jehovah, and what wisdom do they have?" None! (Jer. 8:9) "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom nor the valiant of his valour; let not the rich man boast of his riches; but if any man would boast, let him boast of this, that he understands and knows me. For I am [Jehovah], I show unfailing love, I do justice and right upon the earth."—Jer. 9:23, 24, *NE*.

The next twelve chapters deal largely with special prophecies of judgment. Then the last four kings of Judah are singled out for censure, and judgment is pronounced on the religious leaders, the priests, the prophets and the shepherds. Chapter 25 tells of Jehovah's controversy

with the nations and that they will all come under the power of the king of Babylon and serve him seventy years.

Jeremiah told not only of Jehovah's judgments but also of Jehovah's restoring his people again to their own land. (Chapters 30-33) Jehovah would make a new covenant with his people, and Jerusalem would be healed. Just before the end, Jeremiah was told to buy a piece of land as a sign that Judah would again be restored and teem with men and domestic animals.

The remaining chapters of Jeremiah record further prophecies and tell of events taking place during Jerusalem's last days. A Babylonian siege temporarily lifted is resumed, the king of Judah is taken captive and the city burned to the ground. A governor appointed to rule those that remain is assassinated and so the remaining ones flee to Egypt, taking Jeremiah with them. While there Jeremiah prophesies against such nations as Ammon, Moab, Edom and particularly against Babylon. She and her gods will go into captivity. The last chapter gives the details of the fall of Jerusalem.

A TRUE PROPHET

Jeremiah was indeed a true prophet. He spoke in Jehovah's name. He pleaded with the people to repent and turn to Jehovah. And his words came true. In fact, he himself saw many of his prophecies fulfilled. Among these things foretold were the death of the false prophet Hananiah within a year, the captivity of Zedekiah and the destruction of Jerusalem.—Jer. 28:15-17; 21:3-10; 39:6-9.

Jeremiah accurately foretold the return of the Jews after seventy years. (Jer. 29:10; Dan. 9:2) He also prophesied about the making of a new covenant. Later, God made this with a spiritual Israel, Jesus Christ being the Mediator. (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13) Likewise many of Jeremiah's prophecies against ancient pagan nations

were fulfilled, particularly those directed against Babylon. These find their parallel in the book of Revelation where they are directed against "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion.—Jer. 51:6-8; Rev. 18:2-8.

MAGNIFIES JEHOVAH'S GREATNESS

The book of Jeremiah magnifies Jehovah as the true God, the King to time indefinite. (Jer. 10:10) It reminds us that Jehovah is the "Maker of the earth by his power, the One firmly establishing the productive land by his wisdom, and the One who by his understanding stretched out the heavens." (Jer. 10:12; 51:15, 19) Jehovah, "the God of all flesh," indeed could ask, "Is anything impossible for me?"—Jer. 32:27, NE.

In perusing the book of Jeremiah we should not overlook Jehovah's qualities of love, mercy, compassion and long-suffering. How long He put up with His wayward people! Jehovah "kept sending against them by means of his messengers, sending again and again, because he felt compassion for his people . . . But they were . . . despising his words and mocking at his prophets, until the rage of Jehovah came up against his people, until there was no healing." (2 Chron. 36:15, 16) In spite of all of this Jehovah could say to them: "With a love to time indefinite I have loved you. That is why I have drawn you with loving-kindness. Yet shall I rebuild you."—Jer. 31:3, 4.

Recognizing Jehovah's great qualities and our own sinful tendencies, we do well to take to heart the word he had Jeremiah record: "The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate. Who can know it? I, Jehovah, am searching the heart, examining the kidneys [deepest emotions], even to give to each one according to his ways." May our "ways" be such that Jehovah can give us blessings!

—Jer. 17:9, 10.

The Worship of Jehovah is



THE TRUTH

WHAT should elevate true worship far above all other worship? Is it not TRUTH? It should be founded on reality, be in conformity with the *actual state of things*, rather than being based on the guesswork or imagination of the worshipers. Would not any other form of worship be just a counterfeit, belittling to One known as the "God of truth"?—Ps. 31:5; Ex. 34:6.

² Truth is related to knowledge as much as falsehood is to ignorance. Would it be reasonable for the Creator of man's marvelous mind to allow 'truth and soundness of mind' to cease when it comes to worship? (Acts 26:25) Rather, those practicing true worship should be able to say to other worshipers as did Jesus: "You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know." (John 4:22) Of course, finite men cannot know everything about an infinite God, but what they do know should not be in error, or, worse, a lie. "No lie originates with the truth," says the apostle John. (1 John 2:21) In fact, Jesus went on to say that 'knowing' the truth is a *must* in worship acceptable to God: "True worshipers [“real worshippers,” New English Bible] . . . must worship with spirit and truth." First-century Christianity was even called the "way of the truth." Should not acceptable worship

"True worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, . . . those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth."—John 4:23, 24.

today likewise merit being called "the truth"? Do you think of your worship in that way?—John 4:23, 24; 2 Pet. 2:2; Josh. 24:14.

³ When Jesus said those words about the importance of truth in worship, he added that "the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him." (NW) "That is the kind of worshipper the Father wants." (John 4:23, Jerusalem Bible) If the Father "wants" or "is looking for" those desiring to worship 'with truth,' then he would reasonably provide the means to know the truth. The way he does so attracts only 'such kind' of sincere persons to true worship. How so?

HOW THE FATHER LOOKS FOR TRUE WORSHIPERS

⁴ First, the marvels of creation testify to certain truths, attracting reasonable people to their Creator. (Ps. 111:7; Dan. 4:37) "For all that may be known of God by men lies plain before their eyes . . . His invisible attributes, that is to say his everlasting power and deity, have been vis-

1. What differentiates true worship from the false?
2. Why can a person not worship just as he pleases?

3. How do we know that the truth can indeed be found?
4. What is one way to learn the truth?

ible, ever since the world began, to the *eye of reason*, in the things he has made." The "eye of reason," that inner sense of what is true, can see right there in the obvious wisdom behind creation the evidence of God's existence and qualities. Even so, as the Bible says, some have "exchanged the truth of God for the lie," setting up forms of worship that do not recognize the truth about God's "invisible attributes."—Rom. 1:19, 20, NE; 1:25, NW.

⁵ Even the creation itself gives evidence that *truth* is inherent and necessary to God's way of dealing, and therefore necessary in worship. How so? Because of the way it reflects His changeless standards. God's creations reveal standards in their design that display an essential consistency in their makeup and functioning, while still allowing for a marvelous variety of color and form. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says of these marvelous standards:

"Man's accomplishments [in standardization] . . . pale into insignificance when compared with standards in nature. The constellations, the orbits of the planets, the changeless normal properties . . . in the materials of nature, the orbits of electrons within the atom or the structure of cells, are a few examples of the astounding standardization in nature."—1959 ed., Vol. 21, pp. 306, 307.

⁶ Such standardization, then, represents the actual state of things, the *truth*, as it were, about the things God has made. No guesswork or imagination here. Each created thing follows the established pattern, or truth, set for them. Certainly these sure, dependable standards revealed in creation lead the "eye of reason" to conclude that there are also standards of truth that should govern the conduct of intelligent creatures and their relations with their

5, 6. What do creation's standards demonstrate about the truth?

Creator. But such standards are not "built into" man so as to govern him in the somewhat automatic way that natural laws and instinct govern God's other creations. We can choose to accept God's standards of truth or to reject them.

⁷ This brings us to another way that God "is looking" for true worshipers. He has outlined his standards of truth in conduct and worship in written form in the Bible. Says the psalmist: "The substance of your word is truth." (Ps. 119:160, 142, 151) What it says appeals to the kind of persons who desire to worship 'with truth.' The Bible was inspired "for teaching the truth and refuting error."—John 4:24; 2 Tim. 3:16, NE; John 17:17.

⁸ The Bible alone presents the worship of the God *Jehovah* as the truth. Therefore, those who claim to use the Bible, but who fail to promote the *worship of Jehovah* have missed its purpose—and the truth. (Jer. 10:10, 23-25) Though many have missed the truth in this way, it remains significant that the book that promotes the worship of Jehovah far exceeds all other religious writings in availability to the people. (Compare Philippians 1:15, 18.) It is found in greater quantity, in more languages and in more countries than any other publication in history—by far! Only Jehovah could do this! He is the One that takes the initiative in "looking for" the kind of worshipers who appreciate truth.

⁹ This is even more evident when we consider that, in connection with the worship of Jehovah, his promised Kingdom rule is now being "preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness" in an unparalleled way. (Matt. 24:14) What other form of worship has two million witnesses bring-

7. What is another way to find the truth?

8, 9. (a) Does claiming to use the Bible mean that one has the truth? (b) What proves that Jehovah "is looking for" true worshipers?

ing it personally and directly to the people, in more than 200 lands and islands? The tremendous scope of all these appeals is not rivaled by any other form of worship. This in itself should cause the kind of people who sincerely desire to worship 'in truth' to see Jehovah's hand at work. However, much else demonstrates the truth of the worship of Jehovah.

"THE TRUTH"

IS HISTORICAL, NOT FICTITIOUS

¹⁰ The apostle Peter illustrated the striking contrast between Jehovah's worship and other forms of worship when he related how he was able to convince others of the truth about Jesus: "No, it was not by following artfully contrived false stories," or, as the Catholic *New American Bible* puts it, by "cleverly concocted myths;" rather, "it was by having become eyewitnesses of his magnificence." That is one identifying mark of true worship. It is regularly supported by historical, witnessed facts and events. Other forms of worship are characteristically full of clever stories or just plain myths concocted by men.—2 Pet. 1:16.

¹¹ Among religious writings, the Bible is uniquely accurate and candid in presenting history. That is why many of the facts and events in it are confirmed by secular history, though they are not dependent on that support. Actually, the Bible is bound up with facts and history and these are the threads that weave the fabric of its message, the message of a God who acts in history. Whenever the Bible's narrative deals with points of culture, customs, titles of officials, legal and even scientific matters, it is historically accurate in every detail, and cannot be successfully contradicted.

10. What is an identifying mark of the truth?

11, 12. (a) What relation is there between the Bible and history? (b) What makes the Bible's history so certain?

¹² The Bible writers' care in giving detailed genealogies, exact names of people and places, specific ages, dates and amounts, does not smack of being a 'cleverly concocted myth.' Specific information of this kind would have been open to dispute by contemporaries if it were not accurate. Writers concocting myths would have avoided specifics; mythology and other religious writings characteristically do so. The reasonable conclusion is that the Bible writers must have been writing what they witnessed or knew to be the truth. Archaeologist G. Ernst Wright was moved by his findings to report: "It is exciting and rewarding to find that the Bible is not merely a testament of faith, but a testament that arose in relation to real people and real events."

¹³ The fact that the actual writing of the Bible was done by mere men who witnessed and shared in those events in no way detracts from its being *Jehovah's word of truth*. In fact, this actually enhances the truth of the Bible as God's word. There we read about persons like David, Jeremiah, Paul and Job. We see how they made mistakes and experienced trials and difficulties, and how life is portrayed with a personal touch as it actually is—with its fears, disappointments, sorrows and joys. Thus we become more convinced than ever that these are people who actually lived and underwent the experiences they tell about. These are not the kind of people who would contrive the historical accounts they tell, nor would they contrive their actual dealings with God. Rather, we are irresistibly drawn to conclude, as did people in Thessalonica, that the Bible's message must be viewed, "not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God."—1 Thess. 2:13.

13. Does the fact that men wrote the Bible detract from it? Why?

¹⁴ One of the most telling testimonies in behalf of the worship of Jehovah is that of Jesus Christ. The fact that he lived and that his teachings had a profound effect for good on his early disciples is undisputed. This historical reality has left its mark on most of today's calendars: Jesus' appearing on earth marks the turning point of history. From heaven, he himself witnessed early events in the Bible's historical record, during his prehuman existence. He knew that they were no myth. Thus he used those events to illuminate his own teaching on many occasions, as, for example, on the matter of divorce and the coming end of the system of things. (Matt. 19:4; Gen. 1:27; Matt. 24:3, 37-39; Gen. 6 and 7) Jesus was the greatest advocate of the worship of Jehovah, making that name and its meaning known, as a key part of his 'bearing witness to the truth.' —John 17:4, 6, 26; 18:37.

FALSE WORSHIP AND MYTHOLOGY

¹⁵ Even worship that professes to use the Bible is often characterized by its "cleverly concocted myths" rather than its historical accuracy. Of professed Christians, it was prophesied: "They will stop their ears to the truth and turn to mythology." (2 Tim. 4:4, NE) A dictionary defines the word "mythical" as "1: based on or described in a myth esp[ecially] as contrasted with factual history: IMAGINARY 2a: fabricated, invented or imagined in an arbitrary way or in defiance of facts." (Italics ours)

¹⁶ Christendom has 'turned to mythology,' for example, to support the adoration of Mary and of saints. Typical is the little booklet written by a Jesuit and called "When Mary Walked the Earth," which

14. Who is the primary champion of true worship? How do we know?

15. How does one detect mythology?

16, 17. Give examples of mythology in Catholicism and Protestantism.

also bears an archbishop's imprimatur. The introduction admits: "The episodes related in the following pages do not pretend to be historic. Perhaps they never happened." Of the Catholic "Saint" Patrick, Dr. Joseph F. Kelly of John Carroll University says: "All the stories about Patrick may not be historically true, but that does not mean they have no value." Most of the truth-starved people who are fed these "concocted myths" have not even heard all the *true* accounts in the Bible. How can mythology provide them with any basis for worship 'in truth'?

¹⁷ Protestantism is no less guilty of 'turning to mythology.' Any exhaustive encyclopedia will provide ample proof that much of what they teach about the Trinity, hellfire, the soul, Christmas, the cross, Easter and other beliefs is awash in mythology. In the interest of truth, the Bible says to "separate yourselves" and "quit touching the unclean thing."—2 Cor. 6:14-17.

¹⁸ Even the Jews, with their Biblical heritage, managed to "turn themselves away from the truth" and contrive their own "Jewish fables." These they compiled as the "Talmud." (Titus 1:14) Jewish authority Nathan Ausubel writes in *The Book of Jewish Knowledge* that the Talmud contains "a large assortment of pointless naïvetés, taboos, superstitions, demonic lore, myths," and so forth. As if to justify such mythology, Ausubel argues that the things "which mar the Talmud may also be found in the religious and philosophical writings of the Greeks and the Romans, of the Church Fathers and the medieval Christian Schoolmen." But, rather than justifying Judaism's mythology, does not his argument condemn all the others as well for having "given up

18. Is Judaism free of mythology? Why do you so answer?

divine truth for a lie"?—Rom. 1:25, JB.

¹⁹ Another myth that affects hundreds of millions, both in Christendom and outside, is the claim that images are an aid to true worship. Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus and others use, in all, hundreds of millions of these often very expensive carved figures and pictures in their worship. Yet of these, the Bible says: "Images are nothing but delusion, with no breath in them." How useful to worship are they in God's eyes? "They are a *Nothing*, a laughable production." (Jer. 10:14, 15, Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*) Remember, the dictionary defines a myth as something imaginary, a *nothing*, as it were. Therefore, since the Bible defines images as "a Nothing," they fall into the same category as "concocted myths." Thus God views them as an ironically "laughable production."

²⁰ The fact that legend and myth are also strongly entrenched in most of the world's other "great" religions is no secret. In fact, "Mythology" or "Myth and Legend" is a main heading under each in the 1974 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. For example, under "Hinduism," this heading notes that "There is no aspect of Hindu life that is not entwined in mythology." Of the related philosophy, Buddhism, it says: "Myth has played an essential and all-pervading role in the history of Buddhism." And of Islam, this authority notes concerning the early legends about Muhammad and his family that they are "inconsistent with historical reality," and that though Islam officially disavows such mythology, "Popular legends surrounding the Prophet and the saints are still found among the masses."

²¹ When compared with the Bible's history,

19, 20. (a) What myth affects the majority of false worshipers? (b) Give evidence of mythology in other great religions.

21. (a) How is the Bible's truth superior to men's stories? (b) Why do men avoid the truth?

torical eyewitness view of mankind and the Creator's handiwork, all of men's mythical inventions are weak and shallow, are they not? They show themselves up for what they are—efforts to avoid facing the real *truth* about God and man's responsibility toward him. (John 8:46, 47) On the other hand, the Bible's straightforward account, showing God to be the Supreme Designer of an orderly creation, makes clear our responsibility to Him. (Gen. 1:1-28; 2:15-17) True worshipers rightly have deep satisfaction in knowing that their worship is solidly founded on this truth. As the psalmist exclaimed: "For all the gods of the peoples are valueless gods; but as for Jehovah, he has made the very heavens. . . . Ascribe to Jehovah the glory belonging to his name."—Ps. 96:5, 8.

FALSE GODS DEGRADE MANKIND

²² A revealing aspect of the gods devised by men is that they are remarkably like those humans who devised them. Observing this, psychologist William Sargent writes, in his book *The Mind Possessed*, that man has created gods in his own image, "reflecting his varying imaginings, aspirations and fears." The apostle Paul goes farther. He says that they have "turned the glory of the incorruptible God into something like the image of corruptible man" and other creatures. (Rom. 1:23) Thus mythical gods often reflect human weaknesses and depraved qualities, a sure evidence of their being the "contrivance of man." (Acts 17:29) Various Egyptian gods and goddesses, for example, were believed to suffer internal pains and headaches; they were bloodthirsty, and their numbers included drunkards and masturbators. And the book *Jews, Gods and History* notes that "the Greek gods themselves set the pattern for the un-

22. (a) Describe the main characteristic of invented gods. (b) What is their effect on their worshipers?

bridled lust and perversion which finally weakened the moral fiber of that people." Those who worship such gods take on their degraded characteristics.—Rom. 1: 18, 25-32.

²³ The worship of Jehovah offers a sharp contrast. He is not pictured as weak in any way, nor immoral. He is perfect and everlasting, exercising qualities of principled love, wisdom, power and justice in all his dealings. Thus his faithful worshipers are elevated—never degraded. Even when they were surrounded by the degrading influence of other gods worshiped by all their contemporaries, true worshipers did not succumb. For example, Israel spent much of its history surrounded by degraded pagan mythology as it grew to nationhood. Yet this never influenced the high standards of their sacred writings and of worship of Jehovah God. One authority says: "It is impossible to account for the fact that the history of Israel with more or less the same beginnings as . . . the Moabites, should have such totally different results!" But were the "beginnings" the same? No! Worship in Israel had a *different* beginning. It was not contrived by men. It was a divinely revealed religion. It was the truth!—Neh. 9:13.

²⁴ On the other hand, many today represent themselves as worshipers of the God of the Bible, but they are like the back-sliding Jews of later times, for their worship is "not in truth." (Isa. 48:1) Clergymen have created a god of their own, in their own image. Their pagan Trinity doctrine represents God as a "mystery." Be-

cause of their 'artfully contrived stories,' in practice, He comes through to worshipers as weak and vacillating, lacking any real standards, allowing them to engage in all kinds of immoral conduct. (Jude 4) They present him as a war god at the beck and call of politicians and clergymen alike. During wars, their god fights for whatever political leader the clergy happen to be serving. Is it any wonder that his worshipers have become like their god?—2 Thess. 2:10-12; 1 John 4:5, 6.

²⁵ But true worshipers *know the truth* about their God Jehovah and live by his unchanging standards. They know Him because they have learned the *truth* about him from their study of his Word, the Bible. (Ps. 86:11) This elevating influence makes them work to imitate their perfect Maker, rather than some weak and corrupt man-made god. In their limited way, they learn to conform to his warm, loving and chaste qualities of truth.—Matt. 5: 44-48; Eph. 5:1.

²⁶ In this way, it can be said that God *formed* or *created* those who worship him. They are molded by Jehovah's example and spirit. Therefore Jehovah says at Isaiah 43:7 and 10: "Everyone that is called by my name and that I have *created* for my own glory, that I have *formed*, yes, that I have made . . . You are my witnesses." (Compare James 1:18.) The very existence and way of life of true worshipers 'called by his name' is a witness to the *truth* about the true God. Thus, it can rightly be said that *the worship of Jehovah is the truth!*

23. (a) Contrast Jehovah and his worshipers with invented gods and their worshipers. (b) Illustrate the effect of truth on Jehovah's worshipers.

24. How has Christendom fashioned its own god?

25, 26. (a) What motivates true worshipers? (b) In what sense does God *create* those who bear his name?

NEXT ISSUE—SPECIAL!

Who Is Jesus Christ, so that We All Need Him?

True Worship

-A SUCCESSFUL WAY OF LIFE

MOST religions stress the ceremonial or "sacramental" aspects of worship, while giving little more than lip service to the fact that worship should affect one's way of life. Thus their religious programs are centered around periodic, ceremonially styled "worship services," combined with a plea for the money to finance the expensive paraphernalia that goes with this kind of worship. In contrast, true worship does not emphasize ritualistic ceremonies. Though it does involve regular association with other worshipers, it also embraces every other aspect of one's life. It is a pattern for living, a *way of life*. That is why the Bible speaks of true Christianity as "The Way" and "the way of the truth."—Acts 9:2; 19:9; 2 Pet. 2:2.

² Jesus also implied that true worship is a way of life when he said to a Samaritan woman: "The true worshipers will worship the Father with *spirit* and truth . . . those worshiping him must worship with *spirit* and truth." (John 4:23, 24) Jesus gave "worship with *spirit*" emphasis equal to "worship with truth," indicating another important dimension of worship. What does it mean to "worship with *spirit*"? In the context of his conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus contrasted such worship with the kind that employs vis-

"You must keep [this book of the law] in mind day and night so that you may diligently observe all that is written in it. Then you will prosper and be successful in all that you do."—Josh. 1:8, "New English Bible."

ible things as aids, such as a mountain or a city. (Verse 21) Rather than relying on such things, which require sight or touch, a true worshiper exercises faith and, regardless of the place or things around him, maintains a worshipful "*spirit*," or worships spiritedly or in the spirit of worship. Thus he worships with *spirit*, his heart impulses moving him to serve God in harmony with the ever-present truth in his mind that governs all that he does.—2 Cor. 5:7.

³ This agrees with the way God purposed that worship should be from the beginning. He did not prescribe a particular ceremony or ritual by which the first perfect human creatures could approach him in worship. They were to serve or worship their Creator primarily by faithfully doing his will. God revealed this "will" to them so that they could live in harmony with the existing realities, or truth, about life. (Gen. 1:28, 29; 2:16, 17, 19-25; Matt. 19:4, 5) No doubt, as time went on, God would have advised them of additional truths necessary to the proper expansion of their earthly home, their family and their sphere of activity. Their faithful obedience to these instructions would have satisfied the major requirements of true worship.

1. (a) Around what kind of worship is most religion centered? (b) Contrast this with true worship.

2. (a) How did Jesus indicate that worship consists of more than ceremony? (b) What does it mean to worship "with *spirit*"?

3. How did Jehovah desire to be worshiped from the beginning?

Had the first human pair chosen this course, these truths would have been a *way of life* for them and their descendants. Their way of life would have been successful; it could not fail, because it was in harmony with truth, the actual state of things, including the fact of Jehovah's sovereign position and his life-giving power.

SIN BRINGS ADDITIONS TO WORSHIP

* However, with the advent of sin and disobedience, true worship necessarily took on some new features to accommodate the new realities that faced mankind. These new features of worship, some of which were ceremonial, served a *temporary*, but necessary, illustrative purpose. A barrier had now come to exist between imperfect fallen mankind and the perfect Creator. Consciousness of this new relationship had to be impressed upon Adam's descendants, and God's way of healing the breach had to be made clear. Therefore, sacrifices, a priesthood and a sanctuary were brought in as time went on, to illustrate these "truths," the *actual state of things* that now existed between man and his Creator.

* However, all these provisions were only "a shadow of the good things to come, but not the very substance of the things," writes the apostle Paul. (Heb. 10:1) The ritual and sacrifices in themselves, then, were *not the whole truth*. But they provided a basis for understanding and accepting the truth when the "appointed time" came to make it clear through Christ Jesus. "This very [sanctuary] is an illustration for the appointed time that is now here, and in keeping with it both gifts and sacrifices are offered. However, these are not able to make the man doing sacred service perfect as respects his conscience

4. Why did certain ceremonies become necessary to worship?

5. (a) How does the Bible explain the purpose of the ceremonies under the Law? (b) When and how were they ended?

.... They were *legal requirements* pertaining to the flesh and were imposed until the appointed time to set things straight." (Heb. 9:9, 10) Thus when the purpose of these "legal requirements" was accomplished at the arrival of Jesus, ceremonially styled worship ceased to have merit with God. It had to give way to the realities, "for those things are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ." (Col. 2:16, 17) Jesus himself then became "the way and the truth." —John 14:6; 1:17.

UNCHANGING TRUTHS ALWAYS REQUIRED

* Though these "legal requirements" on the Israelites became necessary for a time, the primary emphasis in the worship of Jehovah has always been on living according to the truths that never change. Faith, righteousness, justice, freedom from blood-guilt, truthfulness and obedience to God's expressed will have always been the most important credentials for approach to God. It has always been true that, not the one simply bearing gifts to God, but the one "innocent in his hands and clean in heart" could ascend into the mountain of Jehovah. (Ps. 24:3-6; 15:1-4; Prov. 3:32) These fundamental principles of truth are a *way of life* that has remained unchanged from the beginning. Micah asks: "With what shall I confront Jehovah? With what shall I bow myself to God on high? Shall I confront him with whole burnt offerings, with calves a year old? . . . He has told you, O earthling man, what is good. And what is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?"—Mic. 6:6-8; Hos. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:22.

* Jehovah is not arbitrary or unreasonable in what he requires of us. He asks of his creatures only what they *should be*

6. What has always been a necessary part of true worship?

7. (a) What does Jehovah really want of us? (b) Why is one 'naturally' attracted to Jehovah's way?

doing toward him and their fellowmen. 'Walking with our God' in the way of truth agrees with the 'law written in our hearts' by Jehovah when he created our first ancestors. (Rom. 2:14, 15) This conscience or inner sense of right and wrong is naturally attracted by the way of the truth. So the truth sounds, feels, *right* to any vestiges of inherited conscience remaining in people. Thus Paul could say: "We have renounced the underhanded things of which to be ashamed [untruths, lies], . . . but by making the truth manifest recommending ourselves to every human conscience in the sight of God."—2 Cor. 4:2; 5:11; 6:4-10.

A SUCCESSFUL WAY OF LIFE

⁸ Those who choose to walk in the truth as a way of life are rewarded with a valuable benefit. The truth succeeds in practice. When scientists discover what they think is a scientific principle, it must first stand the test of *actual practice* in order to be recognized as more than a mere theory. It must succeed in practical ways: in the design of equipment, in the cure of disease, and so on. However, in matters of living, the intellectuals, philosophers and religious leaders who do much to shape the thinking and conduct of people today have themselves failed this test. What they say and write often *sounds* good. It may be couched in persuasive language and backed up with many well-worded arguments. But most of their theories on life fail the test of truth. How so? Such theories do not work! The unfortunate results of their philosophies in practice are all around us.

⁹ In contrast, the Bible's record of the confident, purposeful lives of God's servants in the past, as well as the lives of those who practice the truth today, proves that true worship is the only really suc-

8. What differentiates truth from speculation? Illustrate.
9. What proves that true worship results in a successful way of life?

cessful way of life. Obedience to God's commandments has always set true worshipers apart from their contemporaries. As we considered in the previous article, ancient Israel stood out as superior in its time, so long as it stuck faithfully to "the framework of the knowledge and of the truth in the Law" given through Moses. (Rom. 2:20; Josh. 1:8; Neh. 9:13) First-century Christianity also made a deep impression on the way of life of those who accepted it. The noted historian John Lord in his book *The Old Roman World* observes:

"The true triumphs of Christianity were seen in making good men of those who professed her doctrines . . . We have testimony to their blameless lives, to their irreproachable morals, to their good citizenship, and to their Christian graces."

"The way of the truth" succeeded for them and it succeeds today among those who truly practice it.—2 Pet. 2:2.

HOW THE TRUTH SUCCEEDS

¹⁰ Most modern philosophers and religious leaders try to water down the true standards of the Bible, advocating a "new morality." God's law states that fornication and adultery are bad and wrong in *every* case. (1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3; Ex. 20:14) But typical of clerical thinking is what the Catholic chaplain of St. Mary's Chapel at the University of Michigan wrote in his campus advice column. Advising an engaged couple who had delayed marriage for a number of "considerations," and who "had occasional sexual intercourse," this priest says: "We could call them fornicators and easily dispose of them in that fashion . . . Perhaps in the strict legal sense they have violated the letter of the law, but have they violated the values which that law enshrines? Are they adulterers? Certainly not! . . . Who

10, 11. (a) How do many clergymen view the Bible's moral standards as a way of life? (b) Show why their view does not work.

among us has not indulged himself or herself in some form of satisfaction that was not quite right in order to quiet the screaming loneliness within our hearts?" No doubt many who are under the guidance of this priest and of other clergymen like him are indulging themselves in forms of satisfaction that are "not quite right." But is their way of life successful?

¹¹ The way of truth expressed in God's laws cannot be mocked! Those following the lead of such man-made thinking are reaping a harvest of divorces and broken homes, rampant venereal disease and the host of other problems that come with failure to be faithful to honorable marriage. (Gal. 6:7, 8; Heb. 13:4) Illustrating one aspect of this matter, a physician writing in *Medical World News* warns that liberation from stricter sexual attitudes "does not necessarily lead to freedom, or, if so, only at the expense of other freedoms," such as freedom from disease. "Morality often is a matter of health," he affirmed.

¹² Application of Bible principles on keeping our bodies clean and unpolluted also illustrates how the truth works in a practical way. True worshipers avoid the detrimental effects of the uncleanness that tobacco brings into an addict's system. (2 Cor. 7:1; Rom. 12:1) Their desire to serve God with their "whole soul" and "whole strength" keeps them from giving up years of their life and strength to the slavelike addiction to tobacco. (Mark 12:29, 30; Rom. 6:19) Dr. Robert Dupont, director of the U.S. National Institute of Drug Abuse, recently branded tobacco as "probably the most deadly drug in our society . . . People who use cigarettes have the same problem as heroin users" because of their hard-to-control addiction. The high risk of lung, mouth and throat cancer

12, 13. Show why the truth as a way of life succeeds when applied to (a) the use of tobacco, (b) blood transfusions.

as well as coronary disease is well known. Recent studies have definitely linked smoking to peptic ulcers and strokes. Babies of smoking mothers are significantly shorter, lighter in weight and slower mentally. Their chance of congenital heart defects and of dying near the time of birth is greatly increased. Is not "the way of the truth" far more successful?

¹³ Increasing knowledge about the dangers of blood transfusions and the advantages of bloodless surgery are vindicating the Bible's command to "abstain from . . . blood." (Acts 15:20, 28, 29) The success of such surgery is hailed by two surgeons from St. Barnabas Hospital in New York city, who point out the advantages:

"It is gratifying, moreover, not to have to be concerned about such complications of whole-blood transfusions as allergic or hemolytic reactions, renal shutdown, and hepatitis."—*New York State Journal of Medicine*.

Truly, the way of the truth succeeds in practice!

¹⁴ Another truth that has stood the test of actual practice is that expressed by Jesus: "All those who take the sword will perish by the sword." This truth fits in with the related conclusion: "All will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (Matt. 26:52; John 13:35) But the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967 edition) says there is *another way*, claiming that there is not "any [essential] contradiction between a just war and Christ's command that we love our enemies. A just war expresses hatred of the evil deed rather than of the evildoer. . . . Catholics are certainly free to form their own opinion whether the conditions likely for justification are likely to be fulfilled." How does this kind of guidance work in practice?

¹⁵ Almost to a man, Catholics and Prot-

14, 15. Contrast the success of true and false worship with regard to military conflicts.

estants on both sides during two world wars did 'form their own (opposite) opinions,' contrary to the way of the truth. Results? It did not work. They slaughtered fellow Catholics and Protestants by the millions, proving beyond any doubt that they were not Christ's loving disciples, and were not in the truth. Yet, says historian J. S. Conway in *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches*:

"In contrast to the compliance of the larger churches, the Jehovah's Witnesses maintained their doctrinal opposition to the point of fanaticism [death]. Such opposition was all too rare. . . . Basing their case on Biblical commandment, they refused to take up arms . . . No other sect displayed anything like the same determination in the face of the full force of Gestapo terrorism."

—Pp. 196, 198, 199.

Who only could say that they had followed the way of the truth after these two most vile conflagrations in history?

¹⁶ The Bible's principles respecting the major issue facing mankind today—world government—are also proving to be the truth. "Man has dominated man to his injury," and, "It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step," are truths stated long ago. (Eccl. 8:9; Jer. 10:23) The realities of human living demand a government superior to what men can produce. Thousands of years of human history have proved this beyond doubt. Now, as a recent *New York Times* news analysis laments: "It is obvious that leaders everywhere have lost authority and credibility. . . . governments of all kinds, in all kinds of countries, are in trouble because they do not evoke trust in their ability to solve the problems that are most worrying their people."—May 15, 1974, p. 2.

¹⁷ Yet today there is a government that is succeeding where all others are failing.

16, 17. (a) How is the Bible's truth about government demonstrated? (b) Why is the Kingdom government of God successful? Illustrate.

Why? Because it is not another man-made government. It is God's Kingdom government, now providing administration for the way of the truth on earth. Two million loyal subjects in over 200 lands voluntarily and enthusiastically support its policies, physically, mentally and materially. Its constitution and body of law (the Bible) are implemented through local citylike congregations far more effectively than is true of any laws of earthly governments. Thus the Christian congregation acts as "a pillar and support of the truth," aiding toward obedience or removing any who are unwilling to remain in the way of the truth. (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Cor. 5:6-13) The subjects of that Kingdom government receive an unparalleled education in the truth through textbooks that constitute more than half of the world's top ten all-time best sellers.* This Kingdom government is successful, and is growing more so every day, because it is founded on the truth.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

¹⁸ Those who choose to make the truth their way of life face events and circumstances realistically. Understanding of the truth about mankind's condition aids these Christians to show love for others as humans in need of help. Their families also reflect the benefits of following the Bible's truthful counsel on family headship and the training of children. (1 Pet. 2:12; Eph. 5:33; 6:1-4) Their knowing the truth about the future from Bible prophecy relieves frustration with the present and gives them a confident, joyful outlook, without dread.—Prov. 3:25, 26.

* *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, "Let God Be True," From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained, Did Man Get Here by Evolution or by Creation?, Is the Bible Really the Word of God?, "Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie."

18. What are some advantages of the truth as a way of life?

¹⁹ The success of this way of life is often noticed by others. An observation about these Christians made, in a Washington, D.C., newspaper, during an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses, points to the source:

"Their strong regard for decent personal conduct is a refreshing tonic for a city . . . They are not here to ask for anything, they say, but are 'simply here to champion the Bible and its principles as the only workable solution to solving mankind's ills.'"

There is the key to success! God's Word, the Bible, is "workable." It succeeds in actual practice.

²⁰ Before noting that "the Witnesses give the impression of living their religion daily," an article in the Rochester, New York, *Democrat and Chronicle* stated: "However much people of other faiths may disagree with some of their interpretations of the Bible, the beliefs of the

19, 20. (a) What do others notice about the true Christian's way of life? (b) Why are those who command Jehovah's Witnesses, yet condemn their beliefs, so absurd? (c) What should be our prayer?

Witnesses are deeply and sincerely held." Is it not absurd that often the very ones who commend Jehovah's Witnesses for their conduct at the same time condemn their "interpretations"? What is it that makes the conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses different? They were not born that way, were they? No! It is because of these very "interpretations" that Jehovah's Witnesses are what they are. Their beliefs are the truth from the Bible and are a way of life for them. That is why they are enabled to succeed where others fail. Thus Jehovah's Witnesses have every reason to pray with full confidence as did the psalmist: "Instruct me, O Jehovah, about your way. I shall walk in your truth." "Make me walk in your truth and teach me." Of the person who thus walks, the psalmist says: "[Jehovah] will instruct him in the way that he will choose. His own soul will lodge in goodness itself, and his own offspring will take possession of the earth."—Ps. 86:11; 25:5, 12, 13.

Newspaper Item Aroused Interest in Bible Study

SHORTLY after an article on the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi was published in the Gull Lake *Advance* newspaper, a woman telephoned a Witness family living thirty-five miles away in Swift Current, Canada. She had read the newspaper article about the religious persecution in Malawi and wanted a Bible study. As the parents were not at home, she left a message with the son. When the call was returned, this woman explained that half of her family were Catholics and the other half were Jehovah's Witnesses but that she had no religious affiliation. From observing the Witnesses, however, she had concluded that they seemed to have an inner peace and contentment, which she very much desired. She wanted a Bible study for herself and her fourteen-year-old daughter. Also, if the study could be conducted after school her two younger children could be included. Although not able to find the Witnesses in Gull Lake, where she lived, she was delighted now to learn that there was a Kingdom Hall in her own town.

Thereafter the Witness who received the phone call got in touch with persons in the Gull Lake Congregation, who were going to have a meeting that night. On their way to the meeting, they called on this interested woman. That very evening the woman and her fourteen-year-old daughter came to the Kingdom Hall, and she and her children are continuing to make fine progress in their study of the Scriptures.



"RETURN to me" is the appeal that Jehovah God time and again directed to his wayward people. That appeal added the encouraging promise, "and I will return to you." (Mal. 3:7) Such returning to his repentant people meant that Jehovah God would be giving them favorable attention, that he would be blessing, guiding and protecting them.

God's plea, however, is not extended indefinitely. When the time comes for him to execute judgment, it is too late to seek his favor. That is why unfaithful Israelites were told: "Search for Jehovah, you people, while he may be found. Call to him while he proves to be near. Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will forgive in a large way." (Isa. 55:6, 7) So the time to work at gaining a fine relationship with the Creator is while he is still warmly appealing to humankind to search for him. Might the appeal to "search for Jehovah" be rightly directed to you? This may be the case.

Possibly your parents are devoted servants of Jehovah God and did what they

could to instill in you appreciation for the Bible. It may be that you studied the Holy Scriptures with Jehovah's Christian witnesses for an extended period. Perhaps you have one or more relatives who have told you about what they learned from the Bible through their association with the Witnesses. Or possibly you have accepted literature from Jehovah's Witnesses and enjoyed reading it. Though feeling that what you have heard and read is right, you may have found it hard to do anything beyond that. At heart you may recognize that you have no real relationship with the Creator. If this should be your situation, you have reason to feel that the appeal to 'turn to Jehovah' includes you.

IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES

For a person to act in harmony with God's appeal to search for Him, he must clear away obstacles standing in the way of his doing so. The first step in this respect is to identify the obstacles. An illustration given by Jesus Christ may be helpful to you in determining what may be standing in your way.

This illustration pertains to the effect the "word" or message about God's kingdom has on people. In explaining the illustration to his disciples, Jesus Christ said: "Where anyone hears the word of the kingdom but does not get the sense of it, the wicked one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart; this is the one sown alongside the road. As for the one sown upon the rocky places, this is the one hearing the word and at once accepting it with joy. Yet he has no root in himself but continues for a time, and after tribulation or persecution has arisen on account of the word he is at once stumbled. As for the one sown among the thorns, this is the one hearing the word,

but the anxiety of this system of things and the deceptive power of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful." —Matt. 13:19-22.

In order to develop heart appreciation for the Kingdom message, a person needs time for thoughtful reflection and consideration. But it may be that one's daily routine of life has become like a much-traveled road, with many people passing through and making demands on one's time and energies. When that is the case, there is little opportunity to give heartfelt consideration to the "word of the kingdom." The heart, being subjected to constant traffic, becomes like hard-packed soil "alongside the road."

If you recognize that what you really want is a fine relationship with God, why allow your time to be so taken up by others as to prevent the development of such a relationship? There is no need for your heart to be like unproductive soil alongside a road. Hard-packed soil can become productive after it is plowed up and the flow of traffic over it is diverted. Similarly, your making time for considering God's Word can result in your heart's becoming like fine, productive soil.

Then, again, in your case the "word of the kingdom" may have fallen on shallow soil. You may have become discouraged by opposition from friends or relatives because your heart appreciation for God's truth was not strong enough. But why continue letting others rob you of the joy that you experienced when you first accepted the message about the Kingdom? You doubtless recall the happiness you experienced in learning about the marvelous hope that God holds out for those who love him. How thrilled you must have been to learn that God has purposed to bring about an earth free from sickness and death! Were you not also delighted to find out about how you could share in the blessings

God has in store for those serving him?

If you have allowed "tribulation or persecution" to destroy, till now, your appreciation for the Kingdom message, think seriously about what you have given up. Do not lose sight of the fact that you have thus far exchanged what could have been a permanent relationship with God for something that is very temporary. For example, your friends and relatives cannot give you life nor sustain their own life indefinitely. Even if they are pleased because you have stopped your study of the Bible, are they any better off than they were when you were striving to gain a good relationship with Jehovah God? In actuality, are they not going to be less inclined to take seriously the message about the Kingdom because you yielded to their opposition?

Or, could it be that your striving to get ahead in the world has had the effect of "thorns" that choke appreciation for the Kingdom message? As a result, when you consider your present situation, do you now feel that your pursuit of material things has left you feeling empty? Have you perhaps experienced the pain of seeing your children take a wayward course? Has this caused you to think that it would have been far better to spend more time with them, acquainting them with the fine guidance contained in the Bible? While you cannot make up for lost time, you do not have to continue letting "the deceptive power of riches" bring further trouble upon you. Why not unburden yourself and turn to Jehovah?

As Jesus pointed out, daily anxieties about making a living can be just as destructive as the pursuit of riches. Possibly the worries and cares of life have, like thorns, crowded out the love you once had for the Kingdom message. But has this been to your benefit? Do you not still face the same problems? Are not things

perhaps even harder now? Whereas before you may have had the encouragement of devoted servants of Jehovah and experienced God's loving care, now you are having to do everything in your own strength. So, then, would it not be far better to turn to Jehovah, seeking his help and that of the congregation of his dedicated people?

There is a possibility that you may feel that the way of life you are pursuing is such that Jehovah God could never forgive you. If so, take comfort in this Biblical assurance given to the Israelites: "Learn to do good; search for justice . . . Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet, they will be made white just like snow; though they should be red like crimson cloth, they will become even like wool." (Isa. 1:17, 18) Yes, all who turn to Jehovah in true repentance will be accepted by him.

Surely a person has much to gain by turning to Jehovah. Instead of continuing to struggle to do things in his own strength, he will experience God's help and guidance in answer to prayer. He will enjoy the contentment that only a clean conscience can bring. Real happiness and satisfaction will result from having his spiritual needs filled.

"DO NOT BE SHOCKED"

● Does the fact that there is much oppression in the world surprise or even shock you? Such oppression is nothing new. A keen observer of ancient times wrote: "If you see oppression of the poor, and violation of rights and justice in the realm, do not be shocked by the fact, for the high official has another higher than he watching him and above these are others higher still." (Eccl. 5:7, *New American Bible*; 5:8 in many other translations.) Lesser officials are watched by higher officials, and these, in turn, by those having still greater authority. Being at the bottom, so to speak, the lowly person feels the brunt of the pressure from men who seek their own advantage at the expense of those who are subject to them.

This, however, does not mean that ruthless men are actually getting away with something. In the final analysis, they will have to render an account for their actions to the Supreme Sovereign, Jehovah God. The Bible tells us: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay," says Jehovah."—Rom. 12:19.

BRINGING JOY TO OTHERS
One's turning to Jehovah also brings joy to others. This being in harmony with what both Jehovah God and Jesus Christ desire, the angels rejoice whenever people repentantly turn to Jehovah. Jesus said: "Joy arises among the angels of God over one sinner that repents."—Luke 15:10.

Hence, you need not fear that turning to Jehovah will result in humiliation for you from lovers of God. Devoted servants of Jehovah would never chide you about this. Rather, they very much want to be in harmony with the perfect sentiments of the angels. Like the angels, they will rejoice greatly on seeing you turn to Jehovah.

If you are among those who recognize the Kingdom message as something good, do not delay in turning to Jehovah. There is still time to act as long as the execution of divine judgment is yet future. But it would indeed be unwise to live in a way that ignores the coming of that great judgment. That could mean risking one's prospects of gaining eternal life. In view of the present and future benefits resulting from having an approved relationship before Jehovah God, is it not wisdom on one's part to turn to him now without delay?

Questions from Readers

- How could Ezekiel as a 'watchman to the house of Israel' be responsible for the lives of God's people in Jerusalem when he was an exile in Babylon?—Ezek. 33:7.

Ezekiel was one of the 18,000 Israelites that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, brought as exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon in 617 B.C.E. (2 Ki. 24:14-16) This was ten years before the complete destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E., when many more Israelites were taken captive to Babylon.

Communication by messengers and letters between the capital cities of Babylon and Jerusalem was quite good for the time and distances involved. (Ezek. 21:7; 33:21; 2 Ki. 25:8-10) There were regular caravans on the trade routes of the Fertile Crescent, which could carry news and messages between Jerusalem and Babylon. (Compare Genesis 11:31; 12:1-5; Ezekiel 27:3, 17-24.) What Ezekiel saw in vision and enacted in Babylon (Ezek. 24:24), and even what was said by false prophets in that city, came to be known in Jerusalem. (Jer. 29:20-23) Conversely, what Jehovah's on-the-scene prophet Jeremiah pronounced in Jerusalem became readily known to the exiled ones of Israel in Babylon.—Jer. 29:1.

Therefore, by Ezekiel's faithfully performing the portents of warning to the exiled ones in Babylon, such news in detailed form would reach Jerusalem. There was the graphic vision of the detestable things seen in the temple (Ezek. 8:1-18), the description of the man in linen marking the foreheads of the people sighing in Jerusalem (Ezek. 9:1-11), and the pronouncement against Jerusalem recorded at Ezekiel 12:10-16.

Thus, the Israelites both in Babylon and in Judah were officially warned by Jehovah. Ezekiel, then, not only served as a faithful 'watchman to the house of Israel' but also freed himself from bloodguilt responsibility for the thousands who lost their lives in 607 B.C.E. (Ezek. 3:17-19; 33:9) In a similar way today, Jehovah's Witnesses both of the Ezekiel class of anointed ones and of the "great

crowd" are keeping themselves free from bloodguilt by their serving on the world stage as proclaimers of Jehovah's "day of vengeance," because of their preaching Jehovah's warning message to earth's inhabitants.—Isa. 61:1-3; Matt. 24:14.

Jehovah's wisdom is seen in all of this. By Ezekiel's performing his spiritually rich service in Babylon some of the exiles there would, not only be alerted as to Jehovah's executional judgments upon apostate Jerusalem, but also be kept spiritually alive for future activity. How so? It was Jehovah's purpose seventy years later to bring this spiritually enriched remnant back to the soil of the land of Israel as revitalized 'plantings.' (Isa. 61:3) True, most of the exiles did not pay much attention to Ezekiel. Such ones became stunned when confirmation came that Jerusalem indeed had been destroyed. In their unbelief they were totally unprepared for this terrible shock. However, they were forced to acknowledge that Ezekiel had indeed been a true prophet in their midst. This stunning experience must have spiritually revived many who, along with their offspring, would become spiritually strengthened as the "good figs" Jeremiah foretold that would return to Israel to form a "new earth" destined to be established after 537 B.C.E.—Jer. 24:1-7; 28:4; Isa. 65:17.

- What does Acts 12:15 mean when, in regard to the apostle Peter, it says: "It is his angel"?

We cannot be certain, as the account does not go on to explain what was meant. But the speaker may have had in mind a holy angel representing Peter, what some might call a "guardian angel."

Herod Agrippa I had Peter arrested and imprisoned. The apostle was there "bound with two chains between two soldiers, and guards before the door." At night Jehovah's angel released Peter and he went to the home of Mary, John Mark's mother.—Acts 12:3-12.

"When he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to attend to the call, and, upon recognizing the voice of Peter, out of joy she did not open the gate, but ran inside and reported that Peter was standing before the gateway. They said to her: 'You are mad.' But she kept on strongly asserting it was so. They began to say: 'It is his angel.'"—Acts 12:13-15.

Rhoda, evidently a Christian, was familiar

with Peter. What could the disciples have concluded from her excited, amazing report?

The Greek word they used, *aggelos*, literally means "messenger." While it sometimes is applied to a human messenger, it is the word used in the Bible for a spirit messenger from heaven, an angel. (Jas. 2:25; Gal. 1:8) In view of its two possible applications, some commentators have said that the disciples meant that at the gate was a man that Peter had sent from prison with a message, a human messenger. However, this seems doubtful, for if Peter was under such heavy guard, how could he send a messenger? And this view would not account for Rhoda's having recognized the voice as Peter's.

Others of Christendom's commentators have suggested that the disciples may have thought that Peter died and his "disembodied spirit" was there. This, though, cannot be the true explanation, for those disciples knew that a human does not possess an immortal soul that can survive the body; he is a soul.—1 Cor. 15:45.

What about a spirit messenger, an angel? God had often used angels in dealing with and

guiding his worshipers. For example, Jacob spoke of "the angel who has been recovering me from all calamity." (Gen. 48:16) The Jews knew this. Also, it appears that there was a widespread belief, though not based directly on the Bible, that an angel was assigned to watch over each Israelite, as a sort of guardian angel.

We cannot say to what extent these Christian Jews in Mary's home knew of or accepted this. But definitely they were aware of Jesus' statement about his followers: "See to it that you men do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father." (Matt. 18:10) So, after overcoming their initial amazement, the disciples may have erroneously concluded that Jehovah had sent an angelic messenger who was representing Peter and even speaking with a voice like his.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

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May 16: True Worship—A Successful Way of Life. Page 214. Songs to Be Used: 62, 92.