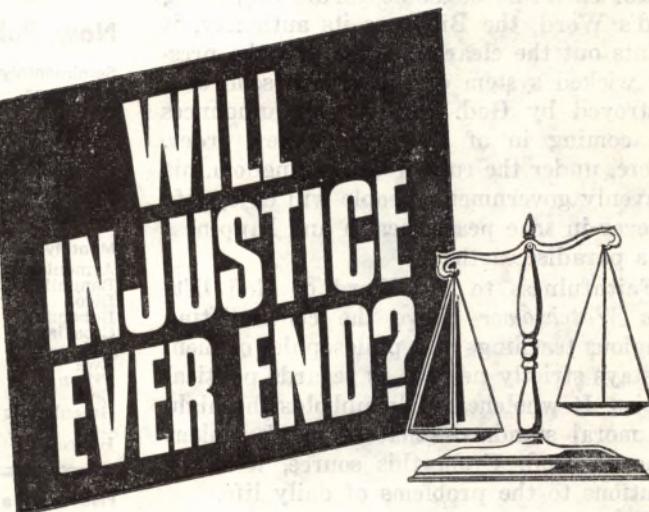


The WATCHTOWER



FEBRUARY 15, 1977

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

February 15, 1977
Vol. 98, Number 4

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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WILL INJUSTICE EVER END?



"THE system of justice that applies to you is different than the one that applies to the people who are influential."

Maurice H. Nadjari, then Special State Prosecutor to investigate the criminal justice system of New York city, made that statement in an interview last summer. When asked: "Do you think there's a double standard in this society; one for the nobles and another for the peasants?" Nadjari replied:

"I think that certainly in our system of justice, there is. There's been a duality of justice. One system of justice for the politically weighted, and another one for you and me."

Do those remarks seem to describe your area too? Probably so, for persons everywhere experience galling injustice. Aside from what you personally may have experienced, you likely have heard of many examples of injustice.

For instance, do you know of cases in which a prominent lawmaker, judge or politician accepted bribes, peddled his influence or broke the law to enrich himself or advance his career? Yet did he receive

just punishment? Or was his punishment much lighter than a person from a minority group might expect for a comparable crime? To bring it 'closer to home': If it were revealed that an influential person in your community defrauded the government of, say \$50,000, do you think that his punishment would be equal to that given to one of your workmates or neighbors if he stole as much money?

The fact is that in many places the "system of justice" is not really just. A national council on crime reported:

"Those caught up in the system are overwhelmingly the poor, the lower class, members of minority groups, immigrants, foreigners, persons of low intelligence and others who are in some way at a disadvantage. Those who have a good chance of escaping the system are the affluent criminals, corporate criminals, white-collar criminals, professional criminals, organized criminals and intelligent criminals."

We can put some flesh on the bones of this generalization. According to one study, 'racketeers were found five times less likely to be convicted of a crime than others.' Another study revealed "that prominent white-collar defendants average about one year [in prison] for every \$10 million they steal. . . . In contrast, bank robbers who got away with a few thousand dollars averaged 11-year sentences, five times longer in [prison] than bank embezzlers who got away with millions."

That was in the United States. But if you live in another country, do you think that the situation is much different there?

Of course, most of us may figure that this particular type of injustice will not directly involve us, for who of us plans to rob a bank or embezzle millions? Still,

injustices may be our lot in other ways.

As an illustration, you may have tried to get some legal matter settled. Perhaps it was obtaining certain travel or family documents or a permit to make alterations on a building. You met all the legal requirements, such as fulfilling the building code. But did you get fair, just treatment? Or, where you are, does justice in such matters depend on "who you know"?

Whatever the sort and extent of the injustice, all of us have experienced too much of it. As a result, probably we have all wondered, "Will injustice ever end?"

HELP WITH THE PROBLEM

Those who have tried to solve some of the more glaring public injustices have learned that this is easier wished for than done. Among solutions that you may hear from the man on the street are:

'Get the leaders to be honest and just; then the rest of the people will be just.' 'Make sure the courts enforce equal sentences for all, not letting the gangsters or politicians get off easy.' 'See to it that the poor have adequate legal help so that they get justice.' 'Increase the punishments for accepting bribes so that those in authority will not be tempted to pervert justice.'

Such views, however, overlook some vital points regarding injustice that are brought into focus in a Bible account found in Luke chapter 18. Our briefly considering that account will give us some historical perspective on the problem of injustice and will present angles of the matter that are often ignored.

The account is an illustration that Jesus gave based on things with which his listeners were familiar. Jesus said:

"In a certain city there was a certain judge that had no fear of God and had no respect for man. But there was a widow in that city and she kept going to him, saying, 'See that I get justice from my adversary at law.' Well, for a while he was unwilling, but afterward he said to himself, 'Although I do not fear God or respect a

man, at any rate, because of this widow's continually making me trouble, I will see that she gets justice, so that she does not keep coming and pummeling me to a finish.'"

Then Jesus counseled:

"Hear what the judge, although unrighteous, said! Certainly, then, shall not God cause justice to be done for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night, even though he is long-suffering toward them? I tell you, He will cause justice to be done to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man arrives, will he really find the faith on the earth?"—Luke 18:2-8.

Jesus gave this illustration to stress the need to persevere in prayer. (Luke 18:1) But we can also learn about justice from it.

First, the parable should have a balancing effect upon us. Why? Because it indicates that even nineteen hundred years ago it often was difficult to get justice from a person in authority, such as a magistrate appointed by the Romans. Yes, injustice is an age-old problem. Who can say how many different human governments and reform movements have tried to end injustice? Yet it is still with us. Recognizing this historical fact can be a safeguard for us. How so? It can protect us from getting quickly swept up in another human effort of some sort to change the situation, an effort probably not much different from what has been tried before.—Prov. 24:21.

Also, the parable should drive home to us that, according to the Bible, mankind's Maker is compassionately interested in justice for all, even for a lowly widow. (Deut. 10:17, 18) This agrees with the description of God given by a psalmist who was aware of His judgments: "He is a lover of righteousness and justice."—Ps. 33:5.

Finally, Jesus' illustration, though not of itself pinpointing when it will occur, does give us reason to believe that God's purpose is to "cause justice to be done." "Yes," some might say, "but *how* will injustice end and *when*?"

JUSTICE FOR ALL

-HOW? WHEN?

WHOMO would deny that "justice for all" is a fine principle? But, being realistic, we know that this is not the case yet.

Over the centuries sincere men and women have struggled to decrease injustice and increase justice. Reform movements have altered political structures. Legal procedures and court systems have been revised and reorganized. Still, injustice remains!

This leads persons to conclude that "justice for all" will never be; some even become cynical or feel concerned about injustice only when it touches them. However, there is reason for optimism. Something can and will be done to bring about justice for all. But how and when? We can better appreciate the answers by considering some causes of injustice and obstacles to justice. Also, we will note how complex the problem of obtaining full justice is.

START AT THE TOP

Noted Jurist Marvin E. Frankel pointed out:

"... we cannot ignore the extent to which the behavior of community leaders determines the attitudes of the people toward law and order. We live in an era during which the candor and the integrity of our highest officials—not excluding judges, but not mainly judges—have been drawn into acute question."

Clearly, corruption among government

and law-enforcement leaders is a major obstacle to full justice. How can justice for all ever be achieved as long as those empowered to enforce justice are open to bribes or show favoritism toward persons of influence? Long ago the Bible correctly stated: "When anyone wicked bears rule, the people sigh. By justice a king makes a land keep standing, but a man out for bribes tears it down."—Prov. 29:2, 4.

If, then, justice for all is to become a reality, there must be honest, just leadership.

ONE LAW FOR ALL

Another obstacle to justice is the fact that, today, how much justice you get may involve who you are or how much you have.

In some places "justice" can depend on a person's ability to hire expensive lawyers. True, sometimes the court supplies able lawyers to defend those who cannot afford such. But these lawyers are often over-worked or are not available for all types of cases. Consequently, a gangster or dishonest businessman who can pay for an elaborate, technical defense may "buy" what passes for justice.

An American lawyer who headed a 175-man legal team defending one person made this revealing observation:

"The first thing you [have] to realize is that the quality of justice in this country is directly related to the pocketbook....

It's poor people who go to jail because poor people cannot get justice in this judicial system. My first week of practicing law, I went over to court to watch a trial, and I saw four poor people get severe sentences for gambling. Then I went to a [lawyers'] association meeting, and they're all sitting around with [gambling] machines."

Even if convicted, punishment may be determined partially by a person's financial or social standing. In some cases of "white-collar" fraud involving millions of dollars a relatively light sentence is given with the explanation that the criminal has been punished with loss of prestige. Yet a newspaper editorialized:

"Any prominent defendant can plausibly argue that public exposure and contempt are sufficient retribution. By that standard, it is only the least favored members of society who would receive the highest penalties, since they cannot claim loss of status. 'Equal justice' is more easily proclaimed than practiced."

Hence, if justice for all is ever to be obtained, there will have to be one law for all persons no matter what their position or wealth. The Bible called attention to this important principle, for the Hebrew law said: "One judicial decision should hold good for you. The alien resident should prove to be the same as the native, because I am Jehovah your God."—Lev. 24:22; 19:34; Num. 9:14; 15:16.

FAIR SENTENCES

Even if the law is clear and it applies to all, rendering just sentences can still be a problem.

The New York Post of May 5, 1976, reported:

"Attorney General Levi criticized the nation's system of sentencing criminals as slow, uncertain and unfair, and said it 'has the attributes of a lottery.' . . . In one federal judicial district, 71 per cent of all convicted defendants go to prison while in another district only 16 per cent are imprisoned if convicted of similar charges, he noted."

How to deal with such disparity is a question. You may have heard the suggestion that there should be a set mandatory sentence for each crime. For example, anyone who steals a car gets a certain fine or length of imprisonment; the person who commits arson must serve a fixed number of years in confinement; and so forth. While such a judicial system might sound simple and fair, would it really be just? For example, should the first-time offender who is sincerely repentant receive the same sentence as a brazen criminal?

At a conference of criminologists and judges in Berlin, Dr. Richard Sturm of West Germany's Ministry of Justice described one attempt to deal with the matter. It involved "social prognosis," that is, analyzing a defendant's life circumstances and past record, then sentencing him accordingly. But Dr. W. Buikhuisen of the Netherlands questioned whether this might not "penalize some offenders twice." He reasoned that if they "already had suffered from disadvantaged circumstances, they were likely to be considered poor risks and given longer sentences."

The problem's perplexity underscores that if there is to be justice for all, wise and fair judges are needed. The Biblical law system given to the Israelites stressed this fact. In it God stipulated: "You are not to pervert the judicial decision of your poor man in his controversy. You are to keep far from a false word. . . . You are not to accept a bribe, for the bribe blinds clear-sighted men." (Ex. 23:6-8) God further said: "You people must not do injustice in the judgment. You must not treat the lowly with partiality, and you must not prefer the person of a great one. With justice you should judge your associate."—Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:15-17.

What would help to keep those Hebrew judges from becoming unjust? Reverentia fear of God. They were told: "It is no

for man that you judge but it is for Jehovah; and he is with you in the matter of judgment. And now let the dread of Jehovah come to be upon you. Be careful and act, for with Jehovah our God there is no unrighteousness or partiality or taking of a bribe."—2 Chron. 19:6, 7.

NEW APPROACHES TO JUSTICE?

Over the years there have been many changes in the systems of justice in various lands. These changes often were made in accord with some new theory or philosophy regarding justice.

For instance, over the last century much attention has been given to efforts to rehabilitate criminals, striving to make social adjustments in them rather than primarily punishing them. This philosophy has also tended to encourage more leniency in sentencing.

While certainly commendable in theory, how has this approach worked out? Alan Dershowitz, professor of law and coordinator of a task force on criminal sentencing, said:

"Rehabilitation simply has not worked. A recent survey of more than 200 studies of rehabilitation came to the discouraging conclusion that we have 'very little reason' to believe that recidivism [recurrent relapse into crime] can be reduced by any of the currently employed rehabilitation techniques."

All too often the liberal, "humane" approach has resulted in returning to the streets persons who are habitual criminals. In *Thinking About Crime* James Q. Wilson, professor of government at Harvard, concluded: "Wicked people exist. Nothing avails except to set them apart from innocent people. . . . We have trifled with the wicked, made sport of the innocent and encouraged the calculators. Justice suffers, and so do we all." How true, for many persons have now lost hope that humans will ever see justice for all.

Of those who are still working to im-

prove the system of justice, many are adjusting their approach. Some are now holding that "Punishment Is a Deterrent to Crime," as one headline stated it. Professor Isaac Ehrlich of the University of Chicago recently completed a study that shows that "essentially, people are deterred by the certainty and severity of punishment." And there may be hope that acting on this view will give the public some reason to think that a measure of justice can come to "the halls of justice."

Another approach that is receiving increased attention is restitution or compensation. The *Toronto Star* (July 22, 1976) reported:

"A law offender should directly pay the victim for the damage or loss caused, the Law Reform Commission said in a working paper yesterday. . . . Restitution and compensation have been chosen for early consideration because they represent means of directing more attention to the victim of the crime, stressing the responsibility of the offender and the state [to] make up for the harm done to the greatest possible extent."

That Canadian paper told also of experiments in Edmonton in which offenders had to "work off fines instead of going to jail."

But, really, is all of this a new method of justice? No, for restitution and compensation were part of God's law to ancient Israel. A man who stole a bull, for instance, had to make double compensation, or more, depending on the case. If he could not, he had to serve as a hired laborer until he paid off what was due the victim. (Ex. 22:1-9) Compensation was also required for slander, injuries and property damage. (Ex. 21:35, 36; Deut. 22:13-19) You can see that this just arrangement protected and recompensed the victim, taught the lawbreaker a powerful lesson and did not burden the community with the cost of supporting prisons.

But, much as a person today might ap-

preciate the wisdom of God's way of providing justice in Israel, he may conclude that such times are past. He might feel that no one can bring justice to all in our complex times.

A PROMISED CHANGE—JUSTICE!

Complicated and distressing as the modern problems with justice are, there is reason for hope. Have you noticed that many of the obstacles to justice could be overcome if God's counsel in the Bible were followed? The same God who provided that counsel promises that justice for all will come and that soon.

That blessing does not depend on our changing the existing governmental and judicial systems to follow ancient Israel's law. Certainly it is true that we can contribute toward there being more justice by personally being just and fair. That is fitting, for the Creator urges persons to "exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with [their] God." (Mic. 6:8) But the real reason full justice earth wide is coming soon is that God himself will take action.

In the previous article we considered Jesus' parable found in Luke chapter 18 that stressed the need to persevere in prayer to God, who will "cause justice to be done for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night." But those prayers are not only about justice. Jesus was urging his followers to pray about the complete end of the entire wicked system of things, which is what he spoke of in the previous chapter. (Luke 17:20-30) This drastic change for the better will be brought about by God's heavenly Kingdom government that will destroy the corrupt human governments with their long history of injustice. And the details of Jesus' prophecy combine with the facts of history in our time to prove that ours is the generation that will see that changeover to rulership from heaven. (Dan. 2:44; Matt. 24:

3-14) However, why should we think that this will mean justice for all?

For one thing, because justice will come from the top down. We are assured that the head of that government will 'establish it firmly and sustain it by means of justice and by means of righteousness.' (Isa. 9:6, 7) What about others who will exercise authority? Isaiah 32:1 descriptively indicates that they "will rule as princes for justice itself." As was true in ancient Israel, under the Kingdom rulership there will be one law or system of judicial decisions applying to all.

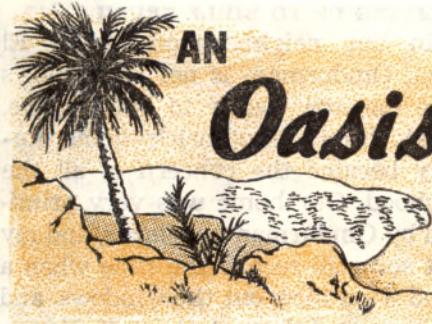
Will unjust treatment still be rife, as it is today? Isaiah 26:9 shows why the answer is No, saying: "When there are judgments from [Jehovah] for the earth, righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn."

'Fine,' some may think, 'but what of those who refuse?' For, as Professor Wilson said, "Wicked people exist." God, who is the "Judge of all the earth," promises to see to it that only those willing to learn and practice justice and righteousness will be let remain alive.—Gen. 18:25; Isa. 26:10; Ps. 37:9-11.

Recently two doctors studying the "criminal personality" said:

"What is needed to stop crime, . . . is not so much better housing or conventional therapy, but an offender's 'conversion' to a whole new lifestyle and a rigorous moral education. . . . Rehabilitation, they concluded, requires . . . 'a total destruction of a criminal's personality'"

That is precisely what former wrongdoers will need to do, in order to qualify for life in God's new order—put on "the new personality . . . created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Eph. 4:24) And that surely will be part of the educational program under God's Kingdom rulership so that all who will can follow his just standards for living. (Isa. 2:3, 4) So there *will be* justice for all!



AN Oasis of Truth IN A Desert Land

MY BIRTHPLACE is Khartoum, which is an Arabic name meaning "Elephant's Trunk." But why should my homeland be called this? It is because of the shape of this narrow tongue of land that divides the White Nile and the Blue Nile just above their junction. From this point they become one mighty Nile River that flows on through the Sahara. Explorers and others have said unkind things about Khartoum, but to me it is "my home."

Naturally there is the oppressive heat from a baking tropical sun. The land here is only 1,200 feet (360 meters) above sea level and the intense heat produces a desert of sand only a kilometer or two from the moist river banks. There is also the incessant fight against flies. And the blowing desert sand seems to penetrate everywhere and into everything. At times it turns day into night. How often, when as a family we have moved our beds outside to allow our warm bodies to catch the faintest breath of air, the violent *haboob* storm has come upon us unawares! In the morning we scraped the sand from our eyes and rose to gaze on the outline that our bodies had left on the sand-dusted mattress.

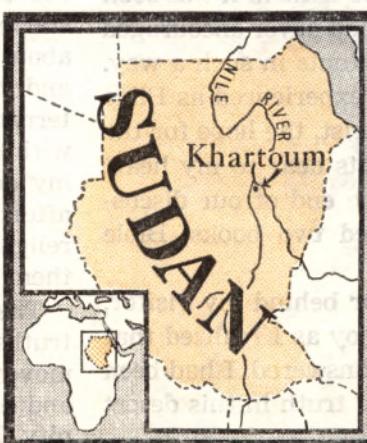
These are the realities of life in Khartoum. And it was here, as a faithful daughter of the Orthodox Coptic Church, that I married

and reared my family of three sons and two daughters.

MY SEARCH FOR GOD

Always, I had been seeking for God. I was not alone in this, as I was reminded each morning. Before the sun rose I would hear the nasal chantings of the *muezzin* from the minarets of many mosques scattered throughout the city—a pattern that was repeated five times throughout the day as the sun arched the sky. The triple city of Khartoum, Khartoum North and Omdurman is predominantly a Muslim community, and, hence, those of us claiming to be Christians as members of the Coptic Church were a minority.

My desire to serve God was so strong that, when I was young, I contemplated taking up dedicated service as a nun in my church. But I was troubled by misgivings about my beliefs and the traditional ceremonies of the Coptic Church. How could I reconcile the ornate processions and elaborate decorations of the church festivals with the simple life of Jesus



Christ? Also, I spent many sleepless nights contemplating the terrors of "hellfire" and the unexplained complications of the Trinity, which I had never really come to accept as part of my Christian faith. After our marriage, my husband showed little interest in religious matters, but I regularly went to church, taking my children with me. Because of this we were "accepted" by neighbors and relatives as we eked out an existence in our house of baked Nile mud, which stood in the shadow of the elegant Coptic church.

In the heat of one August day in 1958, I was at home sewing. In a prayerful frame of mind, I had been asking God to help me to find the truth so that I could worship him. And then—a visitor appeared at my house! She must have seen the crosses and religious pictures that decorated the walls, identifying my religious associations. The lady had come to discuss the Bible with me. I was immediately impressed by the ease with which she located Bible texts to show that such religious appendages were not expressions of true Christianity.

She quickly countered my objections about her Bible as being different from my Arabic version by suggesting that I bring my own Bible for reference. So out came my old and not-so-clean Arabic Bible, and my inability to find the texts in it was soon revealed. The priests had never encouraged me to examine its contents in such a way. But what inner joy I experienced as Bible truths about Jesus Christ, the hope for the dead and other subjects dear to my heart were explained! At the end of our discussion I readily accepted two books, Bible study aids.

As I closed the door behind my visitor, I literally danced for joy as I realized that my prayers had been answered. I had been refreshed by waters of truth in this desert land.

LIVING UP TO BIBLE TRUTH

Life in our neighborhood, called El Masalama, Omdurman, is not really one's own. The unusual visitor to our humble, flat-roofed, brown mud-brick home immediately became the concern of all the neighborhood. Our home was very primitive even by Omdurman standards, and my youngest son still recalls the time when a sand-filled wind blew out the windows, and heavy rain poured through the roof. Nevertheless, I had always tried to find my happiness in seeking for God, and my weekly Bible studies now gave me great joy and pleasure. But such pleasure was not being shared by my relatives and former friends, who now took more than usual critical interest in my Bible student guest.

Early in our discussions the matter of the cross was raised. I had always taught my children to make the sign of the cross as large and prominently as possible, as I considered this to be a protection for them. Each one wore the cross around the neck and this symbol played a large part in our religious life. So I was reluctant to remove these crosses, although my visitor produced convincing evidence that the use of the cross was unchristian. Such information was affecting other members of the family. My husband cautioned me about our new caller, suggesting that we welcome her only as a friend. Then my eldest son started to tell his Sunday-school teacher about the "preacher" coming to our home, and he was informed in very emphatic terms that we should have nothing to do with her as she was 'no good.' However, my desire to please God was strong, and after two months of study, I took all the religious crosses and pictures and threw them into the disposal hole in our yard.

The stimulating joy of learning new truths about Jehovah and his purpose moved me to speak to relatives, friends and neighbors at any and every opportunity. The neighbors responded by throwing

stones into our yard and at the house during our Bible studies. Priests from the church and relatives frequently tried to stop our study.

Each year, our family used to celebrate the Feast of Mary. I would make a special cake, and with our relatives we would mark this special occasion. But now I had found from the Bible that Mary had other children also after Jesus' birth, and this had surprised me very much. When I stated my intention to stop celebrating the Feast of Mary, my eldest daughter strongly urged me to discontinue my studies with the Bible-teaching visitor. I began to think to myself, "Why should I stop having the feast for Mary?" Then I concluded, "When the lady comes next time, I will tell her that she is welcome as a guest, but not to discuss religious matters."

So intense was my concern about the matter that when I fell on the floor in my kitchen the day before the next Bible study, I interpreted this as a punishment from God for what I had been doing. Then, behold! There was my visitor. She had come one day early, and now found me covered with mud from my fall. When she helped me, I told her what I had been thinking, and to my surprise she embraced me with affection and kissed me. After talking about the matter we prayed together for strength to stay firm for the truth of God's Word. That put an end to feasts for Mary!

DEFEATING OPPPOSITION

Interference from the neighbors began to increase, and when they came to my home armed with sticks, intent upon harming my new-found friend, I invited them and the priests to discuss the matter with the Bible student in my house. On the appointed evening when the heat of the day was over, it seemed that all of El Masa-ma, instead of finding their way to the suks, or markets, had found their way to

IN COMING ISSUES

- Marriage—An Arrangement Honored in God's Word.
- Why "Love of Money" Is Destructive.
- Memorializing Christ's Death.

my home. Inside, the house was packed, and others, many in the traditional Sudanese long white garment and turban, were milling around outside in the enclosed yard. The priests themselves had not come, but they took their position at the end of the street, and during the discussion the deacons and their representatives would rush out from time to time to consult with these religious dignitaries.

In the hubbub of that evening, many things were discussed, but I recall the church representative telling the crowd, "Keep quiet, I am benefiting from this." In the end, however, he told me, "Don't leave the religion of your church!" That was indeed a night to remember. The truth remained vindicated as far as I was concerned, and I continued to be spiritually refreshed by it, as from an oasis in a desert.

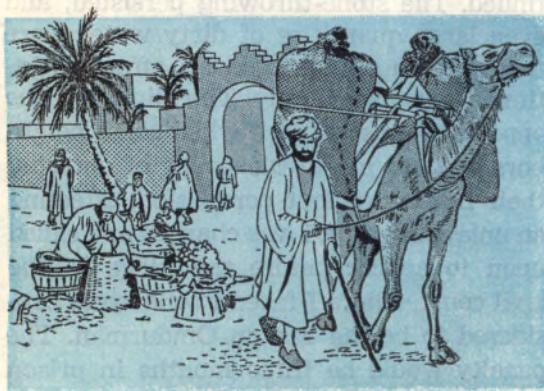
However, the neighbors and the church were not satisfied. Their interference continued. The stone-throwing persisted, and even large quantities of dirty water were thrown into our yard in an effort to intimidate us as a family. The climax of the opposition was reached when some neighbors accused me to the police of entering their homes without permission, effecting an unlawful entry. I was charged and called upon to appear before the judge in the civil court, where I faced two lawyers considered to be the best in Omdurman. The penalty would be three months in prison

and a fine of fifty Sudanese pounds (\$150 [U.S.]). But one of the lawyers began to lose touch with the issue altogether, stating that my activity was "the beginning of Zionism in the Sudan."

In giving his verdict, the judge asked, "Why are all you advocates against this woman?" He ruled that I had the freedom to make known my religion in all Sudan if I wished. Thankful to Jehovah for the result of the case, I did not at that time realize what a formidable task it would be to bear witness to the truth in all the largest country in Africa. But I certainly had the desire to be a full-time proclaimer of the good news as a token of my appreciation for what Jehovah had done for me.

A NEW AND JOYFUL WAY OF LIFE

Each day now, my life was taken up with studying God's Word and with telling others about God's kingdom. I would rise early and get all my household work done before 9 a.m.; then after a meal of *fool*, or what you might call breakfast of beans and bread, I would share in witnessing to the Kingdom until my children returned from school at 1:30 p.m. In Sudan, our days are governed by the heat of the sun, and we have *rahat el zuhr*, or a midday rest period, from approximately 2 until 5 p.m. But by making good use of the mornings I could spend up to ninety hours in witnessing activity each month. My



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eldest daughter accompanied me on many occasions, and meetings for Bible study were held in our home. The group was still small, but with the addition of my family it had suddenly doubled in number. My youngest son, then about seven years old, remembers the tea and cake that we would provide after these meetings. How he looked forward to the end of the meeting to share these unusual good things in our home!

In May of 1959 my husband and I and our two eldest children were baptized in the waters of the White Nile, in symbol of our dedication to Jehovah. A few days later, we enjoyed a visit from the president of the Watch Tower Society, Brother Knorr, who was passing through Sudan on a service tour of Africa.

Those were busy days. I was now a "regular pioneer" publisher of the good news. Almost every day I could be found hurrying through the labyrinth of the sandy, uneven streets of Omdurman—here crossing the path of a milkman seated with ankles crossed over the neck of his donkey, while milk cans dangled loosely from each side, and there hesitating while a camel crossed my path on its way with a load to the market. As a Muslim provision for the thirsty traveler, large earthenware jars of water are located in the shade of trees on almost every street in Omdurman. But I now took little note of these. I had been refreshed by waters of truth, and I was determined to find others who wanted to be refreshed also.

I studied with each of my children separately on different days of the week, giving them individual attention. My youngest son learned how to read Arabic from the book *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, even before entering school.

JEHOVAH PROVIDES DURING HARD TIMES

Then a time of crisis came suddenly upon us. My husband lost his job, and we

had no income. What could we do? I sold some gold jewelry, three carpets and other items. Then we turned to our pigeons, and during this time the pigeons multiplied almost miraculously. My youngest son was able to take two or three pairs to market each day, selling them for 15 piasters (45 cents [U.S.]) a pair. We even had enough pigeons to supply part of our daily food. Jehovah provided for us for almost a year in these circumstances. One day, when I was preparing to go in the Kingdom service, I found that not one piaster remained. What was I to do now? Then my daughter discovered an old tin that we had previously used for saving some piasters and that we had overlooked. There was some money! It was enough to take me to my territory for service and to buy our food for the day.

In the month of March 1962 I was invited to join the ranks of the "special pioneers," who devote 140 or more hours to explaining God's kingdom to people each month. I have enjoyed this privilege ever since.

UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS

A visiting brother came to our home early in 1963 and told me about a Christian convention to be held later that year in Munich, Germany. How much I wanted to go there to be with many more of my Christian brothers, but, of course, it seemed impossible! Then, six days later, my eldest daughter obtained employment as an overseas airways hostess. This opened the way to my obtaining a roundtrip ticket for a nominal sum, and thus I was overjoyed that I could gather with so many of like faith in Munich.

My second son and my younger daughter were baptized in 1962, and my youngest son in 1965. I have been happy to see their zeal for Jehovah. This daughter developed a desire to serve Jehovah full time and has been a "regular pioneer" Witness since

1968. In 1971 she joined me as a "special pioneer," with which privilege she has continued into her married life as the wife of a ministerial servant in our congregation. The youngest of my three sons now has a job that provides for himself and his wife and allows him to enjoy the privilege of serving as a ministerial servant in the congregation.

A wonderful thing to me is the way in which our standard of life has improved during the time that we have put the interests of God's kingdom first. We have always tried to put spiritual matters ahead of the material, and in doing so we have been blessed as a family in helping more than thirty persons to dedicate their lives to Jehovah and get baptized. But we have also prospered in other ways. Since attending the assembly in Munich, members of my family and myself have attended other international Christian gatherings in Europe and various parts of Africa. After passing through our financial crisis, we moved from Omdurman to Khartoum, and we now have a home large enough to accommodate the meetings of an ever-expanding congregation.

My second son decided to follow up a fine educational record at school by taking a university course in Egypt. But after just one year he returned to our home to share fully with the family in contributing his energies to the furtherance of true worship in the Sudan. He is now an elder, and his abilities and devotion are much used and appreciated by the congregation.

What it means to come upon an oasis in the desert when one is parched with thirst can only be fully appreciated by the one whose thirst is quenched. And the happiness of seeing others refreshed is even more pleasurable. Thus have the waters of truth been a blessing to me and my family, and for this we truly thank the Fountain of Truth, Jehovah our God.

Insight on the News

- In early December 1976 a mass absolution service was performed at the Mid-South Coliseum in Memphis, Tennessee.

Is Mass Absolution Effective?

Present in the sports arena were about 12,000 Catholics, who supposedly were thus forgiven by a bishop for their past sins without being questioned or making confession to a priest. Though general absolution has been used at times of "grave need" (as when soldiers have gone into battle), this was the first mass absolution ceremony of its kind in the United States. According to the Associated Press, "the service was designed to lure alienated Catholics, particularly divorcees, back into the fold."

Is general absolution effective? Not according to the Bible. It says nothing in favor of such a rite and does not instruct Christians to make confession to a priest. Also, there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that any imperfect individual can grant absolution from sins. Though Christians needing spiritual assistance are encouraged to seek aid from congregational elders, Jehovah God alone can pardon error. (Jas. 5:13-15) So, King David said to God: "My sin I finally confessed to you . . . And you yourself pardoned the error of my sins."—Ps. 32:1-5.

- The view that there is life after death is held by 73 percent of the American populace, according to a recent Gallup poll. As supposed proof of this belief, proponents have

Life Beyond Death? pointed to feelings described by persons revived from clinical death. These sensations reportedly include calmness, deep peace, euphoria and a feeling of floating free from or out of the body.

Some persons are ready to accept such "proofs," but others look at matters from a different standpoint. For instance, "Science Digest" reports: "Not quite so ready to believe is Dr. Russell Noyes, professor of psychiatry at the University of Iowa, who for years has been studying people who have had close calls with death. He points out that people who regain consciousness after being pronounced clinically dead and those who experience the threat of death report similar feelings of calmness and often eu-

phoria. These and other out-of-body experiences, he says, are most likely fantasy projections—the mind's way of coping with the overwhelming specter of death."

Conclusions drawn by researchers do vary, but not to be overlooked is the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. Rather than supporting the theory of life after death, the Bible says: "The dead themselves do not praise Jah [Jehovah]." Why not? Because they have gone "down into silence," and "as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." (Ps. 115:17; Eccl. 9:5, 10) No, there is not continuous, unbroken life beyond death. But, for the masses of mankind who are within God's provision, there is the assured hope of restoration to life by resurrection during the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

- According to the newspaper "Upsala Nya Tidning" of November 18, 1976, Ulla Barth,

a priest of the Lutheran Swedish State Church, objects to viewing God as a male. "We must get away from personalization: God is a movement, a deliverance, a creating power," she said. Similarly, sometime ago Dr. Leonard Swidler, a Roman Catholic theologian and church historian of Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, prepared a tentative liturgy revision that eliminates sexual classification in referring to God. Swidler suggested prayer that says, "O God, our Father and Mother."

Some may view these ideas as quite desirable. But what does the Bible indicate?

Rather than indicating that God is "a movement, a deliverance, a creating power," the Scriptures say: "Jehovah is a manly person of war." (Ex. 15:3) Also, Jesus Christ opened the Model Prayer with the words: "Our Father [not Father and Mother] in the heavens." (Matt. 6:9) Nowhere does the Bible characterize God as feminine. Rather, it is said, "Jehovah will rejoice in his works," and we are told: "As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him."—Ps. 103:13; 104:31.

However, God is not physically like a fleshly human male. "God is a Spirit," said Jesus, "and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth."—John 4:24.

The Return of a Prodigal

I FIRST came in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses in 1956, when I was thirteen years old. That was when my stepfather started studying with a Witness who worked with him on the same job. When I was about fifteen years of age I was baptized. Then, when I was sixteen years old, I began acting foolishly, as many teen-agers do, and found myself immorally involved with a girl at school. Shortly after that I was disfellowshiped from the Christian congregation, and then I joined the armed forces. After being there two weeks, I decided to take a stand for Bible principles. Two of us took such a stand there at Fort Ord, and we were mentally and physically abused. This abuse included beatings, solitary confinement, starvation rations, and so forth. After three months I was honorably discharged. This I did not understand until years later when I found out that my real father, who is part of the world and very powerful, worked out this honorable discharge.

My real father was very clever and devious, and in a short period of time he gained control of my life. I became involved in the political and power structure, in the gambling interests, in manipulating large sums of money, in other words, what is known as "organized crime." But whenever I saw the Witnesses or their publications I longed for blessings from Jehovah and the association of his people. I felt like telling them, "Watch your spirituality, don't let anything get in the way of your serving Jehovah."

In August 1974, about fifteen years from the time of my being disfellowshiped, my stepfather, now a circuit overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses, called the presiding overseer of the Palm Springs West Congregation and asked that one of the elders call on me and leave with me the August 1, 1974, issue of *The Watchtower*, which featured the article "Divine Mercy Points the Way Back for Erring Ones." By this time I had settled down and had gotten involved in the television industry, and was now the vice-president of a TV station in California. When an elder of the congregation approached and talked to me, bringing this special issue of *The Watchtower*, I thought how much I would like to return, but how naïve this brother must be. I still had the underworld connections and was so deeply entrenched in the world that I felt that I could never get out.

I found out later that the elder felt that there was keen interest on my part. I did attend some meetings, and over the next seven months he regularly called on me at the television station.

In December 1975 this elder again walked into my office. The first thing that came to my mind was, "Where have you been?" I was so glad to see him and felt a spiritual desire rekindled. I was more than happy to help the Witnesses to get air time concerning the Malawi situation. At this time I was determined to do something about the truth, and the elder helped me to see the importance of prayer and leaning upon Jehovah's mercy and loving-kindness.

Over the next few months I began to clean up my life. First, I made changes in business dealings in order to be honest. It wasn't long before it was necessary to find other work. My income was cut more than 60 percent. I severed all connections with organized crime, and gave up a small fortune in stocks that came from gambling money. Then I began to clean up my life morally. My wife responded at first but then she left me. All these things provided an excellent opportunity to give politicians, corporate executives and many others who may not otherwise have had a witness, a chance to hear the truth. The hardest thing was to point them to Jehovah's paradise earth, but then to tell them that I was not at this time able to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Then, in April 1976, after having been reinstated as one of Jehovah's Christian witnesses. To be able to carry that name is the greatest privilege in the world and to be able to tell others about Jehovah's marvelous purposes. To become clean, free and to have Jehovah's blessing again has been an unforgettable experience.

I have been privileged to distribute much Bible literature and to establish some fine interest. But the most outstanding experience concerns my private secretary at the television station. Having been my secretary for some years she was amazed to see the rapid change. This aroused her interest and, in February 1976, she began to study the Bible, along with two teen-age children. And at a circuit assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses, on September 12, 1976, she became a dedicated, baptized Witness.

—Contributed.

Thank Jehovah For His Loving-Kindness

"O let people give thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness and for his wonderful works."

—Ps. 107:8.

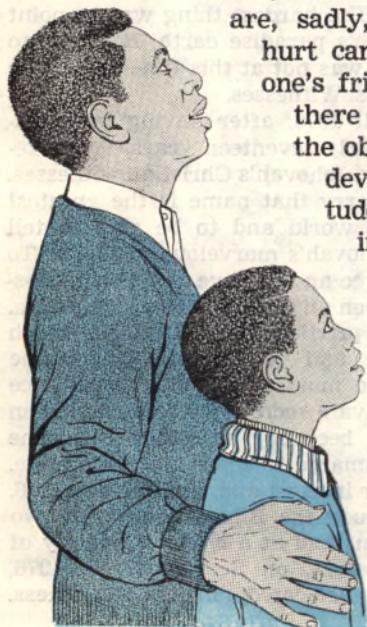
HOW good it is to have someone who will stick loyally by you in times of difficulty! Doubtless you have known occasions when, perhaps due to your own errors or weaknesses, you have gotten into circumstances that left you depressed or that brought you suffering. How much you appreciated it if someone, out of unselfish devotion to you, kindly excused your fault in the matter and came to your aid, bringing you out of your distress.

² As the Bible proverb expresses it: "A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress." (Prov. 17:17)

Such examples of kindness born of unselfish devotion are, sadly, not very common today. Sometimes the deepest hurt can be caused by the very persons that one thought to be one's friends. (Prov. 18:24) And, on the other side of the coin, there are many persons who fail to appreciate it when they are the object of such devoted kindness. Many husbands with loyally devoted wives take these for granted, seldom expressing gratitude for their loving interest, and this is true of many wives in their attitude toward devoted husbands. But what a joy it is when such devoted kindness is shown and is received with grateful thanks!

³ All the examples of loving-kindness expressed by humans are small indeed when compared to that of the One whose friendship is to be sought after and treasured above all others. To that One the psalmist sang: "O give thanks to Jehovah, you people, for he is good; for his loving-kindness is to time indefinite."—Ps. 107:1.

- 1, 2. (a) In times of distress, what do we sorely need? (b) What is often lacking in this regard in today's world? (2 Tim. 3:1, 2)
3. How does the psalmist point us to the greatest friend we could have



A PRECIOUS QUALITY

* What is this "loving-kindness" of Jehovah that is spoken of in Psalm 107? This quality involves love that takes an active interest in others. "Loving-kindness" translates the Hebrew word *hhe'sedh*, which carries the idea of kindness or regard motivated by love. But more is involved. Professor R. E. Perry observes that *hhe'sedh* "signifies an attitude of either God or man born out of mutual relationship," and it "denotes 'kindness' or 'help' received from a superior. . . . The principal connotation of [*hhe'sedh*] is 'loyal love.' " So there is fidelity involved in God's loving-kindness. Thus the *Revised Standard Version* presents Solomon as speaking of God's having "shown great and *steadfast love* [or, "loving-kindness"] to David my father."—2 Chron. 1:8; compare 2 Samuel 9:1-7.

⁵ Jehovah's loving-kindness, then, is not a casual thing such as the favor of a capricious human king might be. Rather, there is solidarity and loyalty inherent in it. This quality is precious to Jehovah, something that he delights to display, particularly toward faithful individuals. It should also be precious to those who receive of it. Well could David write: "How precious your loving-kindness is, O God! And in the shadow of your wings the sons of men themselves take refuge."—Ps. 36:7.

⁶ A fundamental law of the physical universe is that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. However, this is not automatically the case in spiritual matters. Each of us can ask: What is my reaction to God's displays of loving-kindness? Many might find that question hard to answer, for the expression "loving-kindness" may seem rather abstract. Have you, though, ever reflected on concrete

examples of how you have been affected by God's loving-kindness? Doing this may greatly increase your appreciation for this loving-kindness, drawing you closer to him.

A GOD WHO IS KIND TO ALL

⁷ While Jehovah's loyal love, or "loving-kindness," is expressed toward those who have come into an approved relationship with him, this certainly does not mean that he is unkind to those outside such a relationship. When on earth God's Son said: "The Most High . . . is kind toward the unthankful and wicked. Continue becoming merciful, just as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:35, 36) The apostle Paul could say to idol-worshiping people in Lystra that God "did not leave himself without witness in that he did good, giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts to the full with food and good cheer." (Acts 14:17) All of this is an *undeserved* kindness on God's part, an expression of his great mercy toward all mankind in general.

⁸ How easy it is to take what we have for granted. Ask yourself: How would you describe the color of the sky or the beauty of a flower to a person born blind? If a person had never been able to hear, could you explain to him the sensation of hearing, being able to hear the birds, to converse, to listen to pleasant music? The abilities to see and hear, capacities that almost all of us have, are truly a blessing, are they not? Yet how often do we express gratitude to God, the Creator, for these? (Prov. 20:12; Ex. 4:11) There are, nonetheless, far more powerful reasons for thanking and praising Jehovah. These reasons are found in his wonderful works that make it possible for us to enter into

4, 5. (a) What is implied by the expression "loving-kindness"? (b) How is loving-kindness a mark of Jehovah? (Ps. 86:15)

6. Why do we need to examine ourselves in relation to Jehovah's loving-kindness?

7. Does God limit his kindnesses to those in an approved relationship with him?

8. (a) How does creation offer reason for us to thank Jehovah? (Ps. 33:5) (b) What more powerful reasons do we have?

an approved relationship with him. Thereby not only can we be objects of his general kindness to all mankind but we can become the objects of his *loyal* love, his loving-kindness demonstrated to those of the "sons of men" who have responded to his merciful provision and who gratefully serve him.—Ps. 107:8.

⁹ The apostle Paul wrote that Gentile Christians in ancient Ephesus had once been "without Christ, alienated from the state of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, and [they] had no hope and were without God in the world." (Eph. 2:11, 12) Because it was God's will that both Jews and Gentiles have the opportunity to accept Christ, the message of reconciliation went to those Gentiles. (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:21, 22; 2 Cor. 5:18-21) That was an outstanding reason for them to thank God for his mercy.

¹⁰ Is it any less so with you? Think of all the millions of persons on earth who are yet blinded by erroneous religious teachings. (2 Cor. 4:3, 4; Matt. 15:8, 9, 14) Whereas you too might have 'had no hope and been without God in the world,' you now know the truth of God's Word and can serve him. Do you regularly thank God for allowing you to learn the truth and become his friend?

¹¹ Let us make the matter even more personal. When the truth reached those Ephesians many of them probably were like persons in ancient Corinth, 'fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, men kept for unnatural purposes, thieves, greedy persons, drunkards, revilers and extortioners.' (1 Cor. 6:9-11) But mercy could be shown to them because Jehovah had sent his Son to provide a sacrificial basis for forgiving

sins. Thus Paul reminded the Ephesians of "the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his undeserved kindness." (Eph. 1:7) Was not God's willingness to forgive their sins a marvelous display of undeserved kindness? What of us?

¹² Each of us is aware of our own past. Likely we know of many sins that we committed for which we needed forgiveness, not to mention numerous sins that we do not recall. It should touch our heart to think: God in his mercy and love is willing to forgive us. That is a display of his kindness toward us as a result of our accepting Christ's sacrifice and exercising faith. Imagine if you had a new suit that you especially liked, but the first time that you wore it you spilled something on it. Anxiously you take it to a clothes cleaning shop, hopeful that the stain can be removed. Then you go back to get the suit. Look! The spot is gone! Would you not be happy, yes, thankful? How, then, should we feel in response to Jehovah's forgiving us the sins that stained us in the past—a marvelous display of God's undeserved kindness?—Ps. 103:3, 12-14; Num. 14:19.

¹³ There is no question but that we have reason to thank and praise God for such undeserved kindness. However, since we have become part of his people, his Christian worshipers, there are many ways that he has demonstrated loyalty to us, coming to our aid with his marvelous loving-kindness.

TO HIS PEOPLE AS A GROUP

¹⁴ Jehovah's worshipers have long recognized manifestations of God's loyal love in his dealings with them. By examining

9. What had been the situation of Gentiles in Ephesus, and how did some of these become Christians?

10. Similarly, why can you be thankful for God's undeserved kindness?

11. How did Jehovah display great kindness toward individual Gentiles in ancient Ephesus?

12, 13. (a) We each know what about our past, as suggested by Titus 3:3-5? (b) What personal reason do we have, then, for thanking Jehovah?

14. How else can we discern reasons that we have to thank Jehovah?

some of the Biblical instances of this, you likely will be aided to discern additional reasons that you have for thanking him.

¹⁵ The book of Exodus relates how Jehovah led his people from Egyptian bondage to the western shore of the Red Sea. Then he miraculously parted the waters so that the millions of Israelites and their associates could cross safely. When the Egyptians tried to thwart Jehovah's deliverance, he used the same waters to destroy them all, including powerful Pharaoh. (Ex. 14:21-30; Ps. 136:1, 10-15) How would you have reacted had you been with God's people?

¹⁶ Safe on the other shore, Moses and the sons of Israel thanked Jehovah in song, saying: "Who is like you, proving yourself mighty in holiness?... You *in your loving-kindness* have led the people whom you have recovered; you *in your strength* will certainly conduct them to your holy abiding place." (Ex. 15:11-13) God's leading and delivering them instilled in them confidence that he would continue to do that right on into the Promised Land. (Ex. 15:17) God's act was a display, not merely of his power, but also of his loving-kindness, for which they thanked and praised him.

¹⁷ Do you respond in a similar way? Perhaps, though, you may feel that God has not specifically intervened with such deliverances at this time. Yet what of the many modern-day instances where true worshipers have been freed from restraints or relieved of persecution? When you hear *such reports*, do you tend to show only mild interest before you are occupied again with the cares of daily life? For instance, after many years of teaching and meeting

"underground" because of government ban, Jehovah's Witnesses are now free to carry on their Bible educational work in Spain, Portugal and Greece. Is this not reason for rejoicing? Is it not evidence of Jehovah's loving-kindness? God could have let conditions continue as they were. Instead it was his will that these changes occur. Do you respond as the Israelites did, thanking and praising Jehovah for such displays of his loving-kindness? Have you specifically mentioned these deliverances to others, as it were, singing praises for God's loving-kindness?—Col. 3:16.

¹⁸ Furthermore, you may have had experiences that similarly are reason to thank Jehovah for his loving-kindness. Have you, for example, been the object of ridicule because of upholding Christian principles? Maybe it was for refraining from dishonest practices on your job, refusing to cheat at school or declining to share in neighborhood gossip. (Eph. 6:5-8; Heb. 13:18; 1 Tim. 5:13) Or pressure may have been applied to force you to compromise on your worship. (Dan. 3:16-18; Rev. 18:4, 5) That abuse or opposition was not pleasant, was it? Yet in time it may have stopped. The opposers may have grown tired or come to respect your sticking to Bible principles. But the point is that you upheld the issue of God's sovereignty by doing what was right in Jehovah's eyes, and he aided you to remain firm until relief came. Is that not a manifestation of his loving-kindness for which to thank and praise him?—Ps. 22:22, 25; 23:6.

¹⁹ The Bible contains many other historical examples of God's loving-kindness. Often these were cases when he caused or aided advances in true worship. One in-

15. How did Jehovah deliver the Israelites from Egyptian slavery?

16. Israel responded in what appropriate manner?

17. What parallels can we find in God's modern dealings with his people?

18. How have many of us on an individual basis experienced similar displays of loving-kindness? (Ps. 22:4, 7, 8)

19. When King David finally succeeded in having the Ark of the Covenant brought to Jerusalem, what expression of praise did this occasion?

cident involved the sacred chest called the Ark of the Covenant that represented Jehovah's presence in Israel. (Ex. 25:10-22) After the Israelites entered the Promised Land the Ark remained for years, not in its tent at Shiloh, but at Kiriath-jearim. David wanted to bring it to Jerusalem where he sat on Jehovah's throne. His first attempt to do that failed. (1 Chron. 13: 1-14) Finally, he brought the Ark, properly carried by Levites, to Jerusalem. (1 Chron. 15:1-28) This grand occasion prompted the following expression of praise: "Give thanks to Jehovah, you people, for he is good, for to time indefinite is *his loving-kindness*."—1 Chron. 16:1, 8, 34-36.

²⁰ Do you respond likewise when a progressive step is taken that elevates true worship? (Isa. 2:2, 3) Perhaps a new provision is made so that additional persons can learn of Jehovah. It might be a new book used in teaching Bible truths. Or it could be a special issue of *The Watchtower* or *Awake!* designed to convince a certain type of person of the need to serve God. Or there may be an improved arrangement involving the spiritual elders in the congregation. Do you find yourself responding as David did, thanking Jehovah for the loving-kindness of such progressive steps in true worship? Certainly there is ample reason to do so.

²¹ With your own situation in mind, consider one more Bible example. Back in the second lunar month (April-May), 536 B.C.E., the Jews who had returned from exile in Babylon began to reconstruct Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem. They personally had not freed themselves from Babylon nor had they originated the idea of rebuilding the temple. The credit went to Jehovah. (Ezra 1:1, 5) Was the building

20. What might be recognized as similar evidence of loving-kindness today?

21. In 536 B.C.E., true worshipers recognized what construction to be an example of God's loving-kindness?

program to be taken lightly? We read: "The builders laid the foundation of the temple.... And [the observing priests and Levites] began to respond by praising and giving thanks to Jehovah, 'for he is good, for *his loving-kindness* toward Israel is to time indefinite.' As for all the people, they shouted with a loud shout in praising Jehovah over the laying of the foundation of the house of Jehovah."—Ezra 3:10, 11.

²² Now, what about today? Your congregation may formerly have rented a place in which to meet but now has built a Kingdom Hall. Or maybe your congregation has recently expanded or refurbished the Kingdom Hall. Or your meeting attendances may be building up, with new families of interested persons appearing at your hall. Or many in the congregation may have been stirred to share in auxiliary pioneer service. In such things, do you sense Jehovah's hand in the matter, recognizing that it is he who has promoted it and who has poured out his spirit and blessing? Yes, do you realize that such accomplishments are displays of Jehovah's abundant loving-kindness? Does it move you to rejoice also?

²³ Unquestionably Christians have numerous reasons to thank and praise Jehovah for his loving-kindness: For the expressions of it in connection with his declared purpose that benefit all humans dwelling among his creative works. For the displays of it that involve us as individuals. And for the loving-kindness we have experienced as part of God's people. However, in practical terms just how will you go about giving thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness? These are aspects to consider in the following discussion.

22. What correspondencies can be found in our own experiences, leading to what response? (Ezra 3:1; Ps. 149:1)

23. We can conclude what about God's dealing with us? But what aspects of this matter yet merit consideration?

HOW WILL YOU GIVE THANKS

For His Loving-Kindness?

WHAT could be more precious than your life? Without it you could not enjoy or benefit from any possessions. With this in mind, note that the psalmist David, in melody, said to Jehovah God: "Your loving-kindness is better than life." —Ps. 63:3.

² David was saying that he would rather lose his life than lose Jehovah's favor. All that David might possess or enjoy in the everlasting future depended on God. Also, David knew of the many instances when Jehovah had shown him compassion and loyal support. This was all evidence of God's loving-kindness. So to David that loving-kindness was more important than present temporal life as a human. (1 Chron. 29:14, 15) Is this how it is also with you? Is not the loving-kindness, or loyal love, of the One who can give you eternal life more precious than mortal life that is 'here today and gone tomorrow'?

³ David, though, did not merely sense the value of Jehovah's loving-kindness and leave it at that. Notice how he responded: "Because your loving-kindness is better than life, my own lips will commend you. Thus I shall bless you during my lifetime." (Ps. 63:3, 4) Yes, his deep gratitude for that loving-kindness moved him to utter praise and thanks to God. As the previous

article discussed, we personally have many reasons to thank Jehovah for his loving-kindness. Hence, thanking and praising him should be an integral part of our lives. Is it with you? May a whole day or more go by without your thinking of God and bringing him up in conversation? Or do you often speak about Jehovah, spontaneously praising him for what he is and for what he does? Do you find that you daily reflect the sentiment of Psalm 107: 21, 22?

⁴ Unquestionably, one way in which to thank Jehovah for his loving-kindness is by speaking to others who are not yet worshiping him. (Acts 14:1-3; 20:24) The message of the good news can be lifesaving for them. Rightly, then, we are pleased to preach the good news widely.—Rom. 10:9-15.

⁵ True Christians know that what most persons have learned about God and the Bible consists of false doctrines and corruptions of the Bible's teachings. Hence, we could unwittingly allow our witnessing to be dominated by negatives. Ask yourself how common it is in your witnessing to dwell on what the Bible *does not teach*—that it does not teach a triune God or a burning hell, that man does not have an immortal soul and that the earth will not

1, 2. (a) How valuable is our life, but what did David say in Psalm 63:3 about life? (b) In what sense was that so? (Job 14:1, 2; Jas. 4:14)

3. What action did David take in response to Jehovah's loving-kindness, and what can we fittingly ask ourselves?

4. How is our proclaiming the good news necessary in this regard?

5. (a) Why might we be witnessing about negative matters? (b) Why is some of such information nevertheless appropriate?

be burned up. (John 14:28; Ezek. 18:4; Eccl. 9:5, 10; 1:4) True, persons to whom we witness need help in correcting their wrong beliefs. And our pointing out error may aid them to distinguish between true religion and the false. But we should take care that we do not talk about almost nothing but negatives.

⁶ Our "public declaration" ought to include many positive things about Jehovah, for we are offering a "sacrifice of praise." (Heb. 13:15; compare Psalm 107:21, 22.) For instance, we can stress what Jehovah IS. We can show that 'he alone is the Most High.' (Ps. 83:18) We can explain that truly knowing him and his Son can bring eternal life. (John 17:3) And we can focus on some of his superb qualities that can draw persons to him—his mercy, unsurpassed wisdom, understanding, generosity, faithfulness and, certainly, his loving-kindness.—Deut. 32:4; Jas. 1:17; Ps. 84:11.

⁷ Each of us should examine his own "public declaration" to see how he might give more emphasis to these positive aspects. For example, as you conduct a regular Bible study with your family or others, could you somehow highlight God's loving-kindness? In discussing some Bible incident or an aspect of God's purpose, you can, just briefly, explain what is illustrated about our God. Or you might ask the student what the point being discussed helps *him* to understand about Jehovah. Doing so will bring the student closer to Jehovah, making God more real and personal for him, stimulating him to learn more about this wonderful God and to praise him.—Ps. 147:1, 11.

GIVING THANKS IN OUR CONVERSATION

⁸ Talking about Jehovah and his loving-kindness is not just for occasions when we

6. Why should our public declaration include many positives?

7. How can we highlight God's loving-kindness, and with what result?

8. At what other times can we thank Jehovah for his loving-kindness?

are trying to teach persons Bible truths. What about daily conversation? Jesus said: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matt. 12:34) If we truly appreciate God's loving-kindness, that ought to show up in our daily speech. This was so with the psalmist who wrote: "It is good to give thanks to Jehovah and to make melody to your name, O Most High; to tell in the morning about your loving-kindness and about your faithfulness during the nights."—Ps. 92:1, 2.

⁹ You may have noticed that most persons, even churchgoers who claim to worship God, are not inclined to speak of him or his purposes. And they are particularly reluctant to express any personal involvement with God; to do so is viewed as unsophisticated or embarrassing. In part, this tendency may be due to the fact that they are, indeed, not personally involved with God. Yet, in view of how widespread this disinclination is, we can ask ourselves, 'Have I been influenced by the world's reluctance to speak about being involved with God or to show in conversation that he is part of my life and thinking?' Jehovah certainly is part of our lives and should be in our thoughts. We regularly seek his blessing and guidance. So we should not hesitate to speak of him, referring to him in our conversation and indicating our interest in his acts and purposes.

¹⁰ Of course, we want to avoid giving a self-righteous impression. Remember, it is not difficult for persons to sense artificial or affected religiousness. Jesus condemned hypocritical Jewish religious leaders for displaying piety merely to be seen and heard. (Matt. 6:1-5) Yet the Bible does urge us to praise and thank Jehovah constantly. So, while heeding the counsel of Matthew 6:1-5 and taking care not to sound

9. (a) What is the common view about mentioning God? (b) How is this in contrast with our attitude? (Ps. 107:31, 32)

10. What Scriptural counsel bears on our speaking about God regularly?

self-righteous, we speak about him. With modesty and conviction we can mention his dealings and ways, which include how he has dealt with us or how we are involved with him.

¹¹ During the day you probably talk about many subjects with your family, Christian friends and others either in school, at work or in the neighborhood. Perhaps the situation lends itself to speaking of God in a sincere and natural manner. Are you talking about a trip to relax at the seashore or mountains and to enjoy Jehovah's creation? You appreciate the natural beauty and restfulness of what he has made, so why not mention that?

¹² Even if you are conversing with an unbeliever, with discretion you may be able to speak of God, briefly mentioning, for example, the pleasure you derive from the things that *your Creator* has made. (Acts 4:24; 14:15) No one should be surprised that God comes up in your general conversation, for is he not on your mind as to what you do or refrain from doing? Someone might speak with you about how you train your children, noting your success. Could your reply include a brief expression of thankfulness to God for his counsel that enables a person to be wise in this field? (Ps. 19:7) Perhaps a workmate comments on your spending vacation time to attend a Christian convention instead of using it all for "pleasure." You could sincerely reply that you enjoy learning more about the loving-kindness and will of your Maker. (Ps. 100:3-5) We never know the good effect such brief remarks might have, perhaps starting someone thinking about God. But we do not mention God only because a listener might be helped. We speak of God and his deeds because it is in our hearts and thus on our tongues.—Ps. 45:1.

1. What opportunities do we have to bring God into our conversation in line with Psalm 34:1?

2. How can we speak about God when conversing with persons who are not true worshipers?

¹³ If, as good taste and modesty permit, we mention God often in conversing with unbelievers, how understandable it is that we do so frequently when talking to those who serve God. We feel greater ease in speaking with fellow Christians about our activities, plans, impressions, and so on. Accordingly in such conversation should we not be inclined to mention God and his dealings, as Psalm 92:1, 2 says? Perhaps work is being done on the Kingdom Hall. You could express your appreciation for God's blessing on the congregation. We receive a new Bible study aid. If you sincerely view it as evidence of Jehovah's loving-kindness, why not mention that in conversation. What about the interesting new explanations in it? Happily speak of these with your brothers, doing so with a modesty that avoids giving a self-righteous impression. Interspersing spiritual matters in your conversation will buildup all.

ALERT TO SEE REASONS FOR GRATITUDE

¹⁴ What if someone gave you a dish of sand with some tiny iron particles mixed in? It would be hard to pick out the iron specks. But you could easily collect them with a magnet. A heart that is full of gratitude to Jehovah is like that magnet. With such a heart, every day we can easily pick out numerous examples of his kindness and generosity, more valuable than iron, more precious even than gold. Being alert to evidences of God's goodness will make it easy and natural to praise him and express thanks for these.—Prov. 3:3, 4, 13-18.

¹⁵ Jehovah's creation that we see daily is simply full of things that can remind us of his kind provisions for mankind in general. Perhaps you see two kittens tum-

13. (a) Why should mentioning God be even more natural when we converse with fellow worshipers?
(b) What are some ways to do this?

14. We need to cultivate what outlook regarding God's goodness?

15. What are examples of things for which we can thank Jehovah? (Eph. 5:20)

bling in the grass. You cannot help but chuckle over their playful antics. Does that lead you to think of Jehovah and the delight he must have with his creation? The Bible says he is a "happy God." (1 Tim. 1:11) So when watching kittens, otters or other animals play, will you call to mind God's sense of pleasure and humor? What about the refreshing taste of a crisp apple or a delicious melon on a hot day? (Ps. 145:8, 15-17) As to delightful scents, do you recall the fragrance of certain flowers or the aroma of freshly cut hay or clover? When enjoying such things, is it not appropriate to utter thanks to Jehovah for his thoughtfulness in providing us with our senses and such wonderful things to enjoy?

¹⁶ A family in upstate New York was in the middle of a meal when the four-year-old son spoke up on his own, saying: "Mommy, isn't it good that Jehovah put our face on the front so we can eat." While that lad was speaking out of his youthful innocence, he certainly was not taking things for granted. His open and sincere comment helped all around him to think about Jehovah and appreciate more what he has done. Our comments about God's loving-kindness that we experience while serving him can do the same.

BROADENING OUT IN SONG AND PRAYER

¹⁷ Another avenue for giving thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness is that of song. Singing has long been a feature of true worship. (Ex. 15:1-21; Ps. 1-150; 2 Chron. 29:27; Rev. 15:3, 4) At the temple in Jerusalem certain Levites were privileged to play music while others sang. The content and objective of their efforts is noteworthy. The Bible says that they were

16. Being alert to and mentioning God's goodness can have what effect on others?

17, 18. (a) How did the Israelites use song in giving thanks? (b) What does Mark 14:26 indicate that Jesus and the apostles did? (Acts 16:25)

"to call to remembrance and to thank and praise Jehovah the God of Israel." Why? "Because 'to time indefinite is his loving-kindness.'"—1 Chron. 16:4, 41, 42; 9:33.

¹⁸ In this connection, have you ever thought of Jesus and the apostles as singers? They were, and they enjoyed it. Mark 14:26 tells us that on their last night together on earth they sang praises. Customarily Jews sang Psalms 113 through 118 during the Passover meal. So it is probable that Jesus and the faithful eleven apostles concluded that meal by singing Psalm 118, which both begins and ends: "Give thanks to Jehovah, you people, for he is good; for his loving-kindness is to time indefinite."

¹⁹ Christians today, too, have opportunity to express through song their praise and thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness. Is that how you view the songs based on Bible themes that you sing at the local meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses? Or do you find that during the singing you are doing other things? Or are your lips saying the words while your mind is on other matters? It is easy for this to occur. But how fine if, instead, we view these Christian songs as a means of giving thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness!

²⁰ Prayer is another way in which we can thank Jehovah for his loving-kindness. Likely you pray regularly. But could you broaden out as respects thanking and praising God in prayer? It is so easy to get into the practice of just asking him for things, for ourselves, our family, our congregation and others. If you are a parent you are pleased, no doubt, when your children seek your advice and help. Yet how would you feel if your child said: "Dad, I want to tell you how very much we children love you. You are firm, and

19. What should our attitude be toward congregational singing? (Eph. 5:18, 19)

20. (a) What part should prayer have in thanking God for his loving-kindness? (Col. 1:9-12) (b) According to Daniel 6:10, how is Daniel a good example of this for us?

we respect you for that, but you are also loving. You are our best friend." Knowing how pleased you would be to hear such a sincere expression, how do you think God feels when we include thanks and praise in our prayers? The prophet Daniel set us a fine example in this. The Bible pointedly mentions that he praised God in prayer.—Dan. 6:10.

²¹ It is good in our prayers to be specific about God's goodness toward us. Have you ever listened to a child pray and heard him thank God for the chocolate ice cream, the boat ride he enjoyed or for his school vacation? Can we not be specific, too, rather than thanking God simply in generalities? If you have had a fine experience in the preaching work, specifically thank God for it. If you received a gift, you likely thanked the person who gave it to you. But what about thanking the One who has made all things? Have you discerned the Bible's counsel on some weighty problem? Express your thanks in prayer. And when you are privileged to represent others in

21. How can our prayers express more than generalities?

prayer, why not mention distinct, specific examples of God's blessing for which all of you are thankful.—Ps. 42:8.

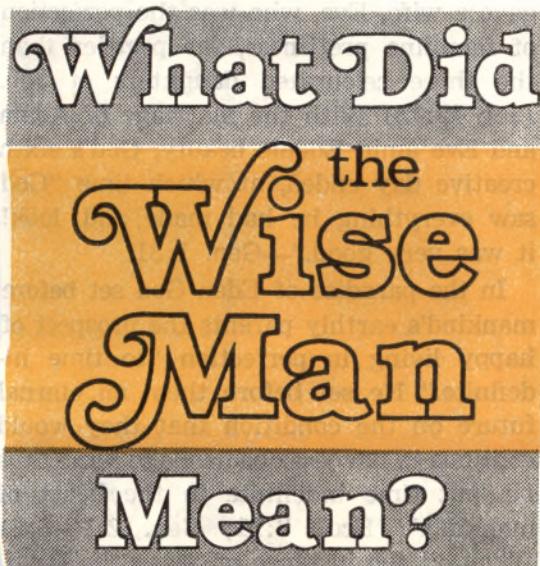
²² Undeniably there are many evidences of God's loving-kindness shown us as his approved servants. We can observe them daily if we are alert to them. (Ps. 107:43) And each of us can gratefully respond by speaking of our God. How? When? In our preaching and teaching work. In general conversation with fellow Christians and others. And in song and prayer. Yes, though we are yet awaiting the time when all creation will unitedly praise Jehovah as Psalm 150 describes, we personally can have a full share in doing that right now. Thus we will reflect the sentiments David expressed in Psalm 59:16, 17: "As for me, I shall sing of your strength, and in the morning I shall joyfully tell about your loving-kindness. . . . O my Strength, to you I will make melody, for God is my secure height, the God of loving-kindness to me."

22. By way of a review, in what ways can we thank Jehovah for his loving-kindness, reflecting what sentiments?

God Gives to the Righteous One and the Wicked One

Regarding what God gives to the righteous and the wicked, Ecclesiastes 2:26 says: "To the man that is good before him he has given wisdom and knowledge and rejoicing, but to the sinner he has given the occupation of gathering and bringing together merely to give to the one that is good before the true God."

The good man, because of applying the guidelines provided by the Creator, becomes wise and knowledgeable. He is enabled to use his assets and abilities in harmony with wisdom and knowledge, and this contributes to his happiness. Were it not for his relationship with God, he would not have this genuine wisdom, knowledge



and joy. So it can indeed be said that Jehovah God has given him "wisdom and knowledge and rejoicing."

On the other hand, the wicked man or sinner ignores the counsel of God. Therefore, the Most High allows him to go ahead with his selfish schemes and to suffer the consequences. The sinner toils and struggles, trying to amass possessions. But he never gains contentment or satisfaction, lacking the wisdom and knowledge to derive joy from all his work. He misses out on the happiness that comes from using possessions to aid those in need. (Acts 20:35) Furthermore, he may attain his ends through lawless means and, in time, be caught in his own devices. Eventually all that the sinner has acquired may pass into the hands of the good man. Thus it was with the Canaanites. Though a morally depraved people, they prospered for many years. But, then, as Jehovah God had decreed, their vineyards, olive groves, houses and other possessions became the inheritance of the Israelites.—Deut. 6:10, 11.

'An Appointed Time for Everything'

King Solomon noted that on the earthly scene things are ever subject to cycles and change. Just as the time comes for a pregnant mother to give birth to a baby, so the time eventually comes when old age or sickness brings the end of life. As with birth and death, so, too, there is 'a time for planting and uprooting, for killing and healing, for breaking down and building, for weeping and laughing, for keeping quiet and speaking, for love and hate, and for war and peace.'—Eccl. 3:1-8.

Often the time for such things comes about through circumstances that are beyond human control. That is why, right after discussing these things, Solomon went on to raise the question: "What advantage is there for the doer in what he

is working hard at?" (Eccl. 3:9) Yes, in view of the fact that major things take place in life over which a person has no control, how wise would it be to try to secure happiness from hard work alone? Because of life's uncertainties, all one's labor and struggling for some material goal may quickly come to nothing.—Matt. 6:27.

Solomon continues: "I have seen the occupation that God has given to the sons of mankind in which to be occupied." (Eccl. 3:10) He could speak of himself as 'seeing' this because of having personally made a thorough examination of human labor. Based on his keen observation, what conclusion did Solomon reach about the framework in which man must carry out his activities? We read: "Everything he [God] has made pretty in its time."—Eccl. 3:11.

In agreement with this, at Ecclesiastes 7:29, Solomon wrote: "See! This only I have found, that the true God made mankind upright." This occurred at an appropriate time in God's program of creation, when he created the first human creature perfect. To this man, Adam, God gave a wife, Eve, who was the perfection of feminine prettiness, far prettier than the three celebrated daughters of Job. (Job 42:15) With the marriage of Adam and Eve amid Edenic beauty, God's sixth creative day ended, at which time "God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good."—Gen. 1:31.

In the paradise of Eden God set before mankind's earthly parents the prospect of happy living in perfection "to time indefinite." He set before them an eternal future on the condition that they would continue in flawless obedience to him. Thus he 'put time indefinite in the heart of mankind.' (Eccl. 3:11; Gen. 2:16-3:3) When, at the instance of Satan the Devil,

this first human pair began to seek out many plans of their own in disobedience to their Creator, then, at a most crucial time, God did a "pretty" thing, for he made his promise of producing a seed that would bruise the head of the Great Serpent for God's vindication and the blessing of all mankind. (Gen. 3:15) The producing of this precious seed was set in the indefinite future. So, thereafter, men and women who exercised faith in God's promise looked forward expectantly to the future for the coming of the promised seed and to benefits for themselves from that seed. Thus God set a bright future before them, something for which to live, no matter how far in the future it might be.

After preserving Noah and his family through the global flood, God set a righteous future before mankind, beautifying his peace-inspiring covenant with a pretty rainbow. Timing his purposeful acts thereafter, God made his loving covenant with Abraham for the blessing of all families and nations of the earth through his seed. This confirmed the Edenic promise of the seed of God's "woman."

At the due time in the line of descent from Abraham onward to the promised seed, there arose David, king of Israel at Jerusalem. Further narrowing down the line of descent to the promised Seed, God did a "pretty" thing in making with faithful David a covenant for an everlasting kingdom in his family line. By God's special choice, David's young son Solomon became his immediate successor and built Jehovah's temple at Jerusalem. During his peaceful reign, "Judah and Israel continued to dwell in security, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree, from Dan to Beer-sheba." (1 Ki. 4:25) With good reason Solomon could write: "Look! The best thing that I myself have seen, which is pretty, is that one should

eat and drink and see good for all his hard work with which he works hard under the sun for the number of the days of his life that the true God has given him, for that is his portion."—Eccl. 5:18.

On considering the "pretty" things that God has made at the fitting time for them, we can appreciate how true are the additional words of Solomon regarding Jehovah God: "Even time indefinite he has put in their [the sons of mankind's] heart, that mankind may never find out the work that the true God has made from the start to the finish." (Eccl. 3:11) In due time God sent forth the Greater Solomon, the Principal One of the promised Seed, Jesus Christ. God also used this Messiah to put into the heart of the sons of mankind "even time indefinite." This Son of God proclaimed the Messianic kingdom that is to be more glorious than that of Solomon, under which the obedient sons of mankind could gain life to time indefinite, yes, everlasting life. This kingdom will be one of the prettiest of the works of God. Eternal life will not become a bore, for this life-saving kingdom will open the way into endless ages of time during which redeemed mankind will find out the further works that God will make without their ever getting to the finish of them. But we can be sure that each one of these as yet unrevealed works will be "pretty in its time." So what a grand future portion is reserved for mankind!

Rejoice in What God Provides

What, then, is the advisable course that one should pursue? Solomon recommends getting wholesome enjoyment out of life, seeing good from hard work, instead of vainly trying to alter what God has provided. We read his further words: "I have come to know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good

during one's life; and also that every man should eat and indeed drink and see good for all his hard work. It is the gift of God. I have come to know that everything that the true God makes, it will prove to be to time indefinite. To it there is nothing to add and from it there is nothing to subtract; but the true God himself has made it, that people may be afraid on account of him."—Eccl. 3:12-14; 5:18.

Human affairs, including birth and death, take place within a humanly unchangeable framework. For as long as it serves God's purpose this will continue. So it is evidently with reference to there being "a time for every affair under the heavens" that Solomon said: "I have come to know that everything that the true God makes, it will prove to be to time indefinite." (Eccl. 3:14) Man simply cannot do anything about the state of affairs that exists on earth either due to God's allowance or direction. Mighty King Nebuchadnezzar, for example, was forced to acknowledge: "All the inhabitants of the earth are being considered as merely nothing, and he is doing according to his own will among the army of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth. And there exists no one that can check his hand or that can say to him, 'What have you been doing?'" (Dan. 4:35) No efforts at addition or subtraction will succeed, as the general pattern of life on earth continues due to God's permission and purpose. The fact that the whole scope of God's work in this area cannot be humanly comprehended should fill mankind with fear or reverential awe.

At the same time, human history shows that in the events on earth there are repetitious cycles of birth and death, war and peace, laughter and weeping, and so forth. These repetitious cycles link the past, present and future. Hence, Solomon could say:

"What has happened to be, it had already been, and what is to come to be has already proved to be." His next words, however, are not so readily understood. Solomon stated: "The true God himself keeps seeking that which is pursued." (Eccl. 3:15) This may refer to the fact that righteous persons are often pursued by the wicked. God 'seeks' the good of his servants and, since he has full control of past, present and future, he can cause the wrongs of the wicked pursuers to catch up with them and can execute justice for the righteous. Or, it may mean that, even though repetitive cycles continue and there seems to be nothing really new, we can be sure that God is, nevertheless, working out his good purpose. So while man may be powerless to control certain circumstances, the Most High can always work out matters in the best interests of his obedient servants.

This is comforting, for in this imperfect world, a person should not expect that men will render justice in each case. Solomon well described the situation: "I have further seen under the sun the place of justice where there was wickedness and the place of righteousness where wickedness was." (Eccl. 3:16) A person rightly expects justice from a court of law. But bribery and partiality may prevail, making it impossible for many persons to receive their just due. How can all these injustices be rectified? Solomon answers: "The true God will judge both the righteous one and the wicked one, for there is a time for every affair and concerning every work there." (Eccl. 3:17) So instead of getting disturbed about what happens in the world, the wise person patiently waits on God, who will act at His appointed time and for the lasting good of His faithful people.—1 Sam. 26:7-10; Ps. 37:12, 13.

Should You



Cover Your Head During Prayer?



IT WAS a cold, windy day when the friends of the deceased widow stood in the snow around the open grave. The balding minister offered some brief, comforting words and then prayed.

Had you been there, would you have felt that during the prayer all present should remove anything covering their heads? The question might be especially pertinent in such wintry weather. But, really, do you feel that whenever you pray you should uncover your head? Or, might you believe that during prayer you definitely should have your head covered?

Prayer is important. God wants us to pray. (Ps. 145:18; 50:14, 15) Understandably, ours should be proper prayers, offered to the right One, on fitting matters and in the correct manner. While the Bible does not list endless rules about prayer and praying, it does offer specific counsel about having one's head covered when one is praying.

That counsel is not in the pre-Christian Scriptures, for God did not require that all Israelites cover their heads when praying, though some may have done so out of reverence. He did, however, direct the Israelite priests to wear headgear, the high priest even having a special turban. (Lev. 8:13; Ex. 28:40; 39:27-29) They evidently wore head coverings as a sign of submission to God all the time that they were serving at the temple, not just when praying.

'But do not Jewish people today cover their heads when praying?'

some may ask. Yes, now most do. Yet the ancient Jewish Talmud shows that covering the head for prayer was optional. Thus Professor Jacob Lauterbach said: "The custom of praying bareheaded or with covered head is not at all a question of law. It is merely a matter of social propriety and decorum."

For Christians, though, this matter is much more than a mere local or religious custom. The Christian Scriptures (or, "New Testament") give pointed advice on the subject, saying: "Every man that prays or prophesies having something on his head shames his head; but every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered shames her head, for it is one and the same as if she were a woman with a shaved head. For if a woman does not cover herself, let her also be shorn." —1 Cor. 11:4-6.

What is the reason for that? And when does it apply?

WHY COVERED OR UNCOVERED?

As to understanding what the apostle Paul wrote about head covering and prayer, consider the verse before: "I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ; in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God." (1 Cor. 11:3) Yes, Paul was discussing the divine principle of headship,

and particularly its application in public worship.

As the apostle explained, the Creator assigned to the man, whom He created first, headship and authority over his wife, who was made from the man's rib. *In respect to headship*, the man was "God's image and glory" for he was not assigned another head on earth. His wife and children, though, do have an earthly head to whom they are in relative subjection.—1 Cor. 11:7-10; Eph. 5:22-24; 6:1.

The principle of headship also applies in congregational activities. Paul wrote that women should respect and strive to co-operate with the men who are to do the teaching and praying. (1 Cor. 14:33-35; compare 1 Timothy 2:11, 12.) Therefore, in most instances, a woman back in the first century C.E. would not preach or pray in the congregation.

Why, then, did Paul discuss head covering? When was such appropriate and when inappropriate? And how does that apply today?

Paul wrote that when praying a woman ought to wear a head covering—be it a hat, scarf or head veil—as "a sign of authority." (1 Cor. 11:10) It was to be an evidence that she recognized the principle of headship. But when would she need to cover her head? Consider these three situations:

In Paul's day Jehovah's holy spirit gave miraculous gifts to some Christians, such as the ability to prophesy or to speak in tongues. For example, at a meeting in the first century the spirit might have impelled a Christian woman to prophesy. (1 Cor. 12:4-11; Acts 21:8, 9) Or, it might have been that only women were in attendance at a congregation meeting. With no baptized male to take the lead in prayer or in teaching, a Christian woman might have to do so. Then again, a Christian wife might have an unbelieving husband

and on occasion be expected to pray or teach the Bible in his presence. In any of these situations a woman would have worn a head covering, "a sign of authority," thus manifesting her recognition of the headship principle.

YOUR "HEAD"—WHO?

We can better appreciate the need for Christian men as well as women to comply with God's directions about head covering by noting what could be the effect if they did not.

Recall that the apostle wrote that a man who prays "having something on his head" is doing something. What? The original Greek text says that he "is shaming the head of him," or, "*shames his head*." Similarly, a woman who "prays or prophesies" with her head uncovered "shames the head of her," or, "*shames her head*." Who or what is being referred to as "head" in each case?

This may be understood in the light of the verse before. There Paul said that "the head of every man is the Christ" and "the head of a woman is the man." (1 Cor. 11:3) Hence, it may be reasoned that a man who prays with his head covered in a sense dishonors Christ. By wearing a head covering when praying a man would be acting as if he were a wife with a visible head on earth rather than being accountable to Christ as his head. Correspondingly, a woman who prayed with her head bared may be said to be shaming her "head" in the Christian arrangement, her *husband* (if she is married), her father or the headship of Christian men in the congregation.

Some commentators offer another viewpoint. They call attention to the fact that First Corinthians 11:4, 5 states that every man who prays or prophesies with something "*on his head*" shames "*his head*"

and a woman who prays or prophesies with "her head uncovered" shames "her head." In both instances the person's own physical head is mentioned immediately before referring to the "head" as being shamed. So, they express the thought that Paul may have meant that a Christian man or woman who acts inappropriately as to head covering shames himself or herself.

In the Hebrew Scriptures we read of persons being given back or bringing on their own head reproach, badness, trouble, violence, bloodguilt and injury. (Neh. 4:4; 1 Sam. 25:39; Ps. 7:16; 2 Sam. 1:16; 1 Ki. 2:32, 44) In these cases the head represents the person himself, being that part of the body most responsible for his actions.

Additionally, when discussing the matter of head covering, Paul said that if a man has long hair, "it is a dishonor to him." And he wrote that "it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn," as if she were a slave or had been caught in immorality; the one disgraced is the woman herself. —1 Cor. 11:14, 6.

In view of Paul's introducing this whole subject by emphasizing the divine arrangement of headship, it seems clear that when a Christian man flouts this headship principle, he definitely dishonors Christ; similarly, a woman might dishonor her husband, her father or the males in the congregation. However, at the same time it is true that the person who disregards God's arrangement of headship and subjection simultaneously brings shame upon his or her own head.

HEAD COVERING DURING PRAYER

Paul was primarily discussing what was proper in "the congregations of God," par-

ticularly at meetings. (1 Cor. 11:16, 20-34) Hence, his directions about head covering during prayer basically relate, not to prayer when a person is alone, but to prayer in a group, in public worship. This is borne out by the inclusion of prophesying along with prayer. It is not likely that a person back then would prophesy alone in his room where he might be saying his personal prayers.—Matt. 6:6.

Accordingly, neither a man nor a woman would Scripturally be obliged to apply the directions about head covering when saying a private prayer to God. If a woman with head uncovered were doing housework and paused to pray, she would not need to cover her head. Similarly, a Christian man walking down the street with a hat on might offer a prayer to God. If his own personal feelings urged him to remove his hat, he should do so. But God's counsel about head covering does not specifically require it.

What about prayers in congregational activities or in the family? In line with the principle of headship, if a baptized man is present, he should offer prayer with his head uncovered. That is true in the family even when just husband and wife join in prayer.

There might be occasions, though, when a Christian woman would have to cover her head to pray. As in the first century, a sister might have to pray aloud at a meeting because no brothers are present. Or, an unbelieving husband may ask his Christian wife to pray aloud for the family at a meal. In such situations a sister would be handling a function that normally would be cared for by someone having headship over her, a brother in the congregation or her husband. Consequently, she should wear a head covering. In doing this she would show her respect for the divine

principle of headship and avoid 'shaming her head.'—1 Cor. 11:5.*

Finally, what about head covering when you are part of a group but not personally voicing the prayer? Consider, for example, the prayer at the graveside that we mentioned. Would a woman present during the prayer have to cover her head? No, for she would not be taking the lead in public worship or performing a function that a male member of the congregation would normally be expected to handle. She would be listening to the prayer and saying "Amen." Hence, whether she covered her head or did not would not reflect on her respect for the principle of headship. Likewise, a man listening to the prayer at the gravesite would not Scripturally need to

* For more details regarding a woman's teaching in the congregation or in the presence of a brother or her husband, see *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1972, pages 446 and 447.

have his head either uncovered or covered. He could do either, but likely would consider his own feelings and what would be inoffensive to others. If a man felt that he should take his hat off when represented by another's prayer, he, of course, can follow the dictates of his personal conscience.

How fine it is that, without setting down an encyclopedia of rules, Jehovah has provided in his Word some guidance about prayer! By having this in mind we can approach the Supreme One of the universe and at the same time manifest our respect for one of his fundamental principles, that of headship.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

March 20: Thank Jehovah for His Loving-kindness. Page 112. Songs to Be Used: 37, 61.

March 27: How Will You Give Thanks for His Loving-kindness? Page 117. Songs to Be Used: 50, 110.