

The WATCHTOWER

*Looking ^{to} the Future
WITH CONFIDENCE*

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

WHAT THE CHURCHES

Do Not Tell You

JUNE 15, 1975

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The **WATCHTOWER**

June 15, 1975
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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.

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

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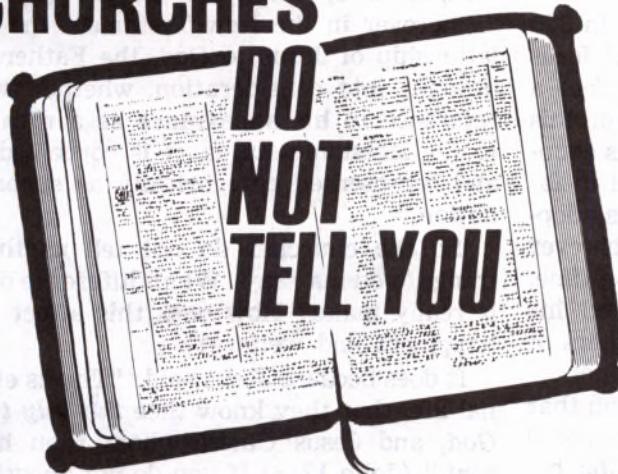
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WHAT THE CHURCHES



AS A person familiar with the churches, you know that they often speak to their members about God, about Jesus Christ, and about life after death. Perhaps, too, you have heard them speak out on various social and political issues, as well as on the need for world change.

But did you know that there are vital things—things that affect your happiness and welfare—that the churches do *not* tell you? A look at certain church teachings will reveal what some of these things are.

GOD AND JESUS CHRIST

You, perhaps, have heard clergymen say that Jesus is the Son of God. But have you, at the same time, heard them speak of "the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit"? Since that expression is included in the basis for membership in the World Council of Churches, many church members have heard God spoken of in such terms.

Commonly, churches use the word "Trinity" when giving their view of the rela-

tionship of Christ with God. The way that churches define the Trinity doctrine may vary. Why not ask your minister what your church teaches about it? The Athanasian Creed, thought to be of the fifth century C.E., presents it in this way:

"The Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, is all one: the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. . . . The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal. . . . So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty."

Is this what you believe—that God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are the same in substance, power and eternity? Most churches teach this, including the Roman Catholic Church.

John J. Moment wrote regarding the Athanasian Creed in his book *We Believe*: "Its stereotyped definitions have continued to be accepted in Protestantism, more or less consciously, as the norm of orthodoxy."

Likely, if you ask him, your minister will say that your church believes in the Trinity. But has the church ever told you where the doctrine originated? You may be surprised to know.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says of the Trinity: "It is not, as already seen, directly and immediately word of God." (Volume 14, page 304) No, neither the word "Trinity" nor even the Trinity doctrine is mentioned in the Bible. It was conceived long after the death of Jesus and his apostles. When?

It was centuries later at Church councils. Church theologians know this. For example, Lutheran seminary professor N. Leroy Norquist, writing in *The Lutheran*, explained: "The men who framed [the Trin-

ity] designed it as a tool to be used against heretics. In fighting heresy, they experimented with words, sharpened phrases, until they had defined the relation of the three 'persons' of the Trinity." Did you know that?

At the Church council at Nicaea in 325 C.E., one supporter of the belief that Jesus had existed eternally struck in the face a Church delegate who did not accept this newly framed concept. It was at this council that Emperor Constantine ruled in favor of this view, making possible its adoption by the Church. Did your church ever tell you that Constantine was, at the time, an unbaptized pagan who murdered his son, his second wife and several others of his relatives? This is a historical fact.

Also, has your church ever told you that Christian believers in the Bible opposed the Trinity doctrine? These early Bible believers would quote Mark 13:32, which says, "Of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* They would ask: 'How can the Father and Son be of one substance yet the Father know things of which the Son is ignorant?' The framers of the Trinity, historians tell us, were completely helpless when confronted with this scripture.

But Mark 13:32 is not the only scripture of that kind. Jesus Christ over and over again acknowledged his subordination to the Father. Do you ever hear these words of his read in church? For example, Jesus said: "The Father is greater than I." (John 14:28) And further showing submission to his Father, he prayed: "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless *not my will, but thine, be done.*" (Luke 22:42) Also, the Bible says that God is "from everlasting to everlasting," but calls Jesus "the first-born of all creation" and "the beginning of God's

* The Revised Standard Version Common Bible. This Bible edition, approved by both Catholic and Protestant authorities, is used throughout this article.

creation."—Ps. 90:2; Col. 1:15; Rev. 3:14.

Theologians know about such scriptures, even though these may not be emphasized in churches. Thus, Professor Martin Werner of the University of Bern states in *The Formation of Christian Dogma* (1957): "Wherever in the New Testament the relationship of Jesus to God, the Father, is brought into consideration, whether with reference to his appearance as a man or to his Messianic status, it is conceived of and represented categorically as subordination."

'So the churches do not tell us these things,' you may say. 'What difference does it really make? How does this affect my happiness and welfare?'

It does because Jesus said: "This is eternal life, that they know thee *the only true God*, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3) If you do not know the true God—that He is superior to and separate and distinct from Jesus Christ—you cannot worship God in the way that he approves. And our gaining eternal life in happiness in His new system of things is dependent on our accurately knowing and properly worshiping the only true God.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Consider another teaching of your church. What does it say about death and the resurrection?

Commonly churches teach that we have an immortal soul, and that at the death of the body the soul departs to carry on a conscious separate existence. So, they say, death is "transition," or, as one clergyman put it: "Death is merely an enlarged continuation of life." Resurrection, they say, occurs when the separated soul is eventually reunited with the body. But if that is what your church teaches, it has not been telling you what the Bible says.

Please go and get your own copy of the Bible. Open now to Ezekiel 18:4, which reads: "The soul that sins shall die." Has

your minister ever read that scripture to you, or verse 20 of the same chapter that says the same thing? Now turn over to Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, and read: "The dead know nothing . . . there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol [the grave], to which you are going." Did you ever hear this read in church?

But do clergymen know that the Bible teaches that the soul is not immortal? Yes, many do. For example, Catholic priest Anthony Kosnik explained: "In the Bible, man is never presented as a 'body-soul' combination. In both the Old and New Testament, man is always thought of as a single totality. . . . What is more—this body-soul totality was regarded as being essentially mortal. . . . There is no immortal soul to survive or continue on." Yet the churches generally teach the immortality of the soul.

The Bible, on the other hand, holds out the comforting hope that those in God's ransom provision who are unconscious in death will be raised to life again. "There will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust," the Bible promises. (Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29) Really, to know the truth about the dead and the resurrection is vital. It can set us free from dangerous misconceptions.—John 8:32.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF POLITICS

These Bible doctrines, however, are not the only area of vital concern to you. As a Christian, what should be your view of involvement in the affairs of the world?

Many priests and ministers encourage their congregations to become involved. For example, not long ago a Catholic priest, who himself holds a political office, said: "The churches ought to constantly exalt the role of politics." Is that what your church encourages? Do you personally agree with that viewpoint?

Has your church told you about Jesus Christ's viewpoint of this matter? Has

your clergyman explained, for example, how Jesus reacted when certain men, recognizing his miraculous powers, tried to get him to rule over them? We read in the Bible: "Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself."—John 6:15.

Interesting, too, is what Jesus said in prayer about his true followers: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." When questioned about his kingly authority, Jesus replied to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate: "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world."—John 17:16; 18:36.

Has your minister shown you these statements and example of Jesus? Has he explained the principle found at James 4:4, which states: "Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God"?

HAS YOUR CHURCH TOLD YOU THAT JESUS IS ALMIGHTY GOD?

If so, it has not told you the truth. The Bible says:

"The head of Christ is God." "The Son himself will also be subjected to [God]." —1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28.

Jesus himself said:

"The Father is greater than I."—John 14:28.

HAS YOUR CHURCH TOLD YOU THAT THE SOUL CANNOT DIE?

God's Word says: "The soul that sins shall die."—Ezek. 18:4, 20.

And of Jesus Christ the Scriptures prophetically said: "He poured out his soul to death."—Isa. 53:12.

How did early Christians view the matter of mixing religion with politics? The book *Christianity and the Roman Government* points out:

"The Christians were strangers and pilgrims in the world around them; their citizenship was in heaven; the kingdom to which they looked was not of this world. The consequent want of interest in public affairs came thus from the outset to be a noticeable feature in Christianity."

Thus, if your church, while professing to be Christian, urges you to become involved in politics, you have not been told the position of Jesus Christ and his original disciples in this regard. 'But how can man's problems be solved if people do not "get involved"?' you may ask.

A WICKED SYSTEM TO END

Perhaps your priest or minister encourages involvement in social and political issues because he believes that God has left it up to man to solve his own problems. If so, here too there is something vital that your church is not telling you. Consider what the Bible says at Daniel 2:44:

"The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever."

Does that sound as if man is going to straighten out his own affairs? What it really means is that all earthly political systems will be 'brought to an end' by a heavenly Kingdom government that God himself sets up.

But what happens after the removal of human political systems? Will there be a fiery destruction of the earth and all life on it? If that is what your church has led you to believe, there is something else that they have not told you. What is that?

A RIGHTEOUS NEW SYSTEM OF THINGS

At Daniel 2:34, 35, the kingdom of God that destroys the earthly political systems

is symbolized as a "stone" that thereafter "became a great mountain and filled the whole earth." Therefore, the earth will not only survive God's execution of judgment against human governments, but enjoy a global extension of God's rule. That is what Jesus taught his disciples to pray for in the "Lord's Prayer," saying: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10) Did you know that? The Bible, at Revelation 21:3-5, gives a glimpse of what conditions will be like when 'God's will is done on earth':

"I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; and he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.' And he [God] who sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.'

Would you like to live in that delightful new system of things? Bible prophecy shows that it will become a reality in this generation. (Matt. 24:3-14, 34; compare Revelation 6:1-8.) Has your church explained what you must do to survive the destruction of the present wicked system into that new one? God's requirements for this are found only in the Bible.

If you are genuinely interested in what the Bible teaches, Jehovah's witnesses will be glad to help you. They will arrange to study your own Bible with you, free of charge, in your home or at another convenient place. Also, you are welcome to visit their Kingdom Hall, where real Bible discussions take place several times each week. No collections are taken at these meetings. We invite you to see for yourself whether there exist among these people the warm fellowship and love that Jesus said would identify his true followers. (John 13:35) Do it soon!

Why Be Hospitable?

"**N**O STRANGER ever had to sleep outside, my door was always open to the traveller." (Job 31:32, *Jerusalem Bible*) This kind of hospitality shown by faithful Job was an identifying mark of God's devoted servants in ancient times.

Extending hospitality was really a loving response to a stranger's need for refreshment and shelter. Many centuries ago travelers would commonly stop at a village or city and there go to the public square. This gave the inhabitants an opportunity to invite the stranger to lodge with them for the night.

The Bible account about a Levite in the period of the judges in Israel illustrates this. On his way from Bethlehem, he, his attendant and his concubine turned aside at Gibeah of Benjamin to stay overnight. We read: "They proceeded to go in and sit down in the public square of the city, and there was nobody taking them on into the house to stay overnight."—Judg. 19:1, 2, 14, 15.

Such an inhospitable attitude was most unusual for an Israelite city. The Levite had especially avoided a non-Israelite city, feeling that he would be treated better by Israelites. (Judg. 19:11, 12) Finally, however, an old man not of the tribe of Benjamin extended hospitality, saying: "May you have peace! Just let any lack of yours *be upon me*. Only do not stay overnight in the public square."—Judg. 19:16-20.

The unwillingness of the people of Gibeah to show hospitality to strangers was an evidence of a serious moral flaw. They selfishly went about their own business, refusing to seize the opportunity to show kindness.

The depth of their selfishness became even more apparent after the old man received the travelers into his home. A mob of men surrounded the house, demanding that the Levite be turned over to them for immoral purposes. The old man, however, did not yield to their demands. Nevertheless, circumstances developed in such a way that the Levite's concubine was delivered into their hands. They abused her all night to such a degree that she died. —Judg. 19:22-28.

Centuries earlier a like inhospitable spirit prevailed in Sodom. One evening two handsome strangers entered Sodom. Catching sight of them, Lot invited them to his home, and urged them not to spend the night in the public square. The strangers accepted, but before they could retire, a mob surrounded Lot's house, "from boy to old man." They cried out to Lot that he turn over his guests for immoral purposes, but he firmly refused. (Gen. 19:1-11) This was an evidence of the righteousness that contributed to Lot's escaping the destruction that Jehovah brought upon Sodom and three other nearby cities.—Deut. 29:23; 2 Pet. 2:6-9.

Unknown to himself, Lot had entertained angels in his home. His and like examples of hospitality are pointed to at Hebrews 13:2 as an encouragement to Christians. We read: "Do not forget hospitality, for through it some, unknown to themselves, entertained angels."

Truly, the spirit of kindness and generosity prompting genuine hospitality is a valuable possession. Its absence, as illus-

trated in the case of the inhabitants of Gibeah and Sodom, can give rise to acts of extreme selfishness. This is so because true love for fellowmen moves one to work in their interests and restrains one from violating their rights. The apostle Paul pointed this out when he said: "He that loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. For the law code, 'You must not commit adultery, You must not murder, You must not steal, You must not covet,' and whatever other commandment there is, is summed up in this word, namely, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does not work evil to one's neighbor."

—Rom. 13:8-10.

Only if we cultivate and maintain the spirit of love that prompts genuine expressions of hospitality can we gain God's approval. This is so because love for God and fellowmen is the very foundation of true worship. Jesus Christ said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."—John 13:35.

As in ancient times, among God's people today there are many opportunities to take the initiative in extending hospitality. There are times when natural disasters, persecutions, sickness or the like result in plunging fellow believers into need. How fine it is when their spiritual brothers and sisters do what they can to help! Then, too, there may be occasions for extending hospitality to visiting or traveling elders, providing meals and/or lodging for them or in some way assisting them with expenses. Also, right within the congregation there are ever so many opportunities to share meals, companionship and the like with fellow believers. Such showing of hospitality can result in mutual encouragement and upbuilding.

Should you be extended hospitality, what should you keep in mind? There is wisdom in being careful not to come under any accusation of taking advantage of any-

one, becoming a sort of 'social parasite.' The apostle Paul and his fellow workers set a fine example in this regard. The apostle reminded the elders of the Ephesus congregation: "You yourselves know that these hands have attended to the needs of me and of those with me." (Acts 20:34) This does not mean that Paul and his companions turned down all offers of hospitality. That they accepted genuine hospitality is evident from what happened at Philippi. In that city Lydia and her household embraced Christianity. Thereafter she entreated Paul and his associates: "If you men have judged me to be faithful to Jehovah, enter into my house and stay." Such open-hearted hospitality simply could not be refused. The writer of Acts, Luke the physician, adds: "She just made us come."—Acts 16:14, 15.

Once a person accepts the hospitality of another he comes under obligation to conduct himself as an appreciative guest. Jesus Christ called attention to this when he told his disciples: "Stay in that house, eating and drinking the things they provide . . . Do not be transferring from house to house." (Luke 10:7) In saying what he did, Jesus was making it clear that his disciples should not unappreciatively leave the home of one who extended hospitality to go to another place where the householder could provide more comfort and better food. Applying the principle of Jesus' admonition, we can see that it would be unkind to cancel an invitation simply because later something better in a material way was offered to us.

In view of what the Bible says, we should all want to be hospitable because of deep love for Jehovah and fellow humans. Even if we have little, we are not deprived of showing the spirit of hospitality—genuine concern for others' welfare. And when true hospitality is extended to us, we should accept this appreciatively as an expression of love.

STABILITY EVEN THOUGH NATIONS SHAKE

THIS century has been remarkable in that it has seen the dissolution of the great colonial empires. A strong upsurge of independence on the people's part, with a weakening of the colonial powers, has ripped the colonies away from their "mother" governments. Today the giant powers such as the United States and Russia use a different method. Instead of the colonial style of control, they endeavor to keep the smaller states tied to them in economic and political ways.

This practice, known as "neocolonialism," has brought problems. And, even though many of the smaller states generally have more political independence, the living conditions of the people under their independent governments are, in many cases, about the same as before. Even these nations are shaken.

NATIONS 'ROCKED' OVER ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY

The big issue with the nations is sovereignty: Who will dominate either the local country or a large part of the earth, even all of it?

Therefore, the thing that shakes the nations most severely is any challenge to their sovereignty. They jealously guard it against other men and nations, and even against God. They do not want to acknowledge God's sovereign right to rule the earth, because they do not want to conform to the principles set down in the Bible.

Consequently, the proclamation that it is time for the kingdom of God to rule shakes the nations. This may sound like

an unfounded statement. But consider a few comparisons of Bible prophecies with actual world events.

In the year 1914 the "appointed times of the nations" ran out. That is, the time ended for man-made governments to rule without any challenge or interference from a government by God. God had no representative government ruling in his name from the time that the last king of the line of David was taken off the throne in Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. (Luke 21:24; Ezek. 21:26, 27) But he had foretold a kingdom to rule from the heavens in the person of the heir of David, Jesus Christ. (Isa. 11:1, 2; Dan. 7:13, 14) In 1914 the time came for Christ to accept invisible Kingdom power over the world. (Dan. 4:32)* This fact was widely announced by Christians at that time. This notice of interference with men's sovereign rule of earth by God's heavenly kingdom 'rocked' the nations.—Hag. 2:6.

Someone may say, How could a mere announcement like that, though it was and still is being widely proclaimed, "rock" the nations? Well, we are acquainted with the fact that World War I started in midsummer of that year, a war for world domination. We cannot see all that goes on in high worldly circles, but the Bible gives us insight into some of these things. It tells us of the announcement due to be made

* See the book *True Peace and Security—From What Sources*, pp. 72-85 (1973), also "Your Will Be Done on Earth," pp. 94-103 (1958), by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, Brooklyn, New York.

when the "appointed times of the nations" ended. It prophetically depicts those in the heavens seeing what is going on, and observing how the nations are affected, saying: "We thank you, Jehovah God, the Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and begun ruling as king." What do those heavenly voices say was the result on earth of this action on God's part in heaven? "*But the nations became wrathful.*" They expressed this wrath by using wartime conditions to suppress those making announcement of God's kingdom. (Rev. 11: 17, 18) In many nations, the Kingdom announcers were falsely charged with sedition, with trying to overthrow existing governments.

But there is a "behind the scenes" reason as to why the nations were shaken. The nations themselves do not see it. The vision in Revelation goes on to explain. It describes the 'birth' of God's Messianic kingdom in the hands of his Son Jesus Christ. It shows that war in heaven followed and that the Devil, who has all along been the chief challenger of God's sovereignty, was hurled out. As a consequence, says the account: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time."—Rev. 12: 5-12.

The Devil, who is called "the ruler of this world" and "the god of this system of things," stirred up the nations to go into global warfare. (John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4) If he could get rid of the proclamation on earth, and the proclaimers, his domination would be unchallenged (as he calculated) by any earthly proclamation. And if Satan could be successful in this effort, then, when the kingdom of God would finally take complete control at the end of Satan's "short period of time" at the earth, it would have no earthly subjects, no persons standing firm for God's sovereignty.

NATIONS TO BE THOROUGHLY SHAKEN

So Jehovah God 'rocks' the nations, and he will continue to make the 'rocking' more severe. The proclamation about the Kingdom is constantly increasing in volume and expanding to wider areas. The more dictatorial nations manifest drastic reaction to the 'rocking' by their taking strong action to silence the proclamation about the Kingdom.

How far will the 'rocking' or 'shaking' of the nations go? And, in the meantime, will those opposed to the Kingdom proclamation get the proclaimers stopped? It may appear that, with all their power and political machinery, the nations could do it. But even with the tight control exercised by Communist governments the good news of the Kingdom is still heard in their domain. What will be the outcome?

THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE CHRISTIAN'S POSITION

The writer of the letter to the Hebrew Christians, generally thought to be the apostle Paul, answers the question for us, showing that the shaking and the continued announcement of the Kingdom will not stop. But first he points out to Christians the seriousness of their situation, saying:

"You have approached a Mount Zion and a city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and myriads of angels, in general assembly, and the congregation of the first-born who have been enrolled in the heavens, and God the Judge of all, and the spiritual lives of righteous ones who have been made perfect, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling, which speaks in a better way than Abel's blood."

—Heb. 12:22-24.

Paul had just commented on the awe-inspiring experience of the Israelites at Mount Sinai when the Law covenant was made. (Heb. 12:18-21) The mountain shook and smoked, causing even Moses to tremble. But Christians now stand, not only before an assembly of tens of thousands of angels, but also before Jehovah

God and, at his right hand, Jesus Christ, whose sacrifice validated the new covenant. He having been a perfect man and giving his life as the atonement sacrifice, his blood is more valuable than that of any imperfect man, including righteous men such as Abel. Besides this, the spiritual brothers of Jesus Christ on earth are not condemned sinners, as were those ancient Hebrews at Mount Sinai, but are those who have been cleansed and declared righteous. Indeed, a more awesome position and responsibility. Will these Christians be able to continue standing before God? (Luke 21:36) The apostle next says to them:

"See that you do not beg off from him who is speaking. . . . At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, saying: 'Yet once more I will set in commotion not only the earth but also the heaven.' Now the expression 'Yet once more' signifies the removal of the things being shaken as things that have been made, in order that the things not being shaken may remain. Wherefore, seeing that we are to receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us continue to have undeserved kindness, through which we may acceptably render God sacred service with godly fear and awe. For our God is also a consuming fire."—Heb. 12:25-29.

The "things that have been made," by hands other than God's—this system of things with its false religion that has misled millions, its selfish commercialism and its governments, symbolized in the Bible as beasts—will not be able to withstand the shaking. Even the wicked "heavens" will vanish. What will stand? The apostle tells us: God's kingdom.—Dan. 8:20-25.

Since the Messianic kingdom of God will remain, its adherents and proclaimers also will remain, and the proclamation will never be stopped before this present system of things is shaken completely out of existence.—Dan. 2:44.

Since only those who adhere to the King-

dom during all this shaking will remain alive, the apostle warned Christians as to what their course of action should be, saying: "Pursue peace with all people, and the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord, carefully watching that no one may be deprived of the undeserved kindness of God; that no poisonous root may spring up and cause trouble and that many may not be defiled by it; that there may be no fornicator nor anyone not appreciating sacred things."—Heb. 12:14-16.

True Christians, accordingly, must truly represent Jehovah's name before all the people. Not only must they announce the Kingdom, but they must also *live* by its high principles. They receive favor and blessings, their godly devotion holding fine things for them in "the life now" and the promise of "that which is to come." (1 Tim. 4:8) What a serious thing it would be to do anything unclean, disgraceful, and to fall into condemnatory judgment by the living God, who burns up all uncleanness as by fire!

So Christians certainly do not want to "beg off" from "him who speaks from the heavens." (Heb. 12:25) And those who are not now true Christians, giving God their devotion, should listen to the good news, because it can also offer them great happiness in the life now and that which is to come for faithful persons.

IN COMING ISSUES

- Mideastern Events—
Do They Fulfill Prophecy?
- The "Holy Year"—Is It
Pleasing God?
- Coming to the Hearer
of Prayer.

Insight on the News

● In 1929 Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini and Pope Pius XI entered into an agreement known as the Lateran Treaty, but commonly referred to as the "Concordat." Now negotiations are under way between the Italian government and the Vatican to revise the 46-year-old treaty. Pressures in this direction have been strong. They began building up after World War II, and the issue of divorce has more recently added force to the move for change. The Concordat grants Church law the same status as civil law. Therefore, a clear contradiction now exists. The Italian legislature made divorce allowable under civil law but the Church law still prohibits it—yet the Concordat says that both laws are of equal force.

Last year the Church waged a major campaign to overturn the government's divorce law but suffered overwhelming defeat. As a Reuter's dispatch from Rome says, this "was the clearest sign possible that the population was ready for change—and that the time was now ripe for an overhaul of the Concordat." Italy's leading political party, the Christian Democrats, backed the Church in its antidivorce campaign and has since suffered some election losses. They, too, feel the need for a change if they are to regain some of their losses. Heightening their concern is the specter of a growing Communist party, looming ever larger on the Italian scene.

● A year ago "U.S. News & World Report" magazine took a survey among leading Americans to rate the influence on national decisions and actions that eighteen major organizations and institutions exercise. In that survey, "Organized religion" placed last. This year in a similar survey "Organized religion" placed next to last—but only because the list of institutions included was expanded from eighteen to twenty-four. Actually, "Organized religion" dropped down from eighteenth to twenty-

Religion's Influence

third in its rating among American institutions as an influence on the national way of life.

In a similar vein, the periodical named "Bunte" describes the way many Germans are trying to cope with the financial impact suffered as a result of tax reform. Large numbers are severing themselves from membership in the churches and thus freeing themselves from the tax that such membership requires. According to "Bunte," "the Catholic dioceses and the evangelical state churches combined expect to receive 1.2 billion DM [Deutsche mark] less in 1975 from church taxes."

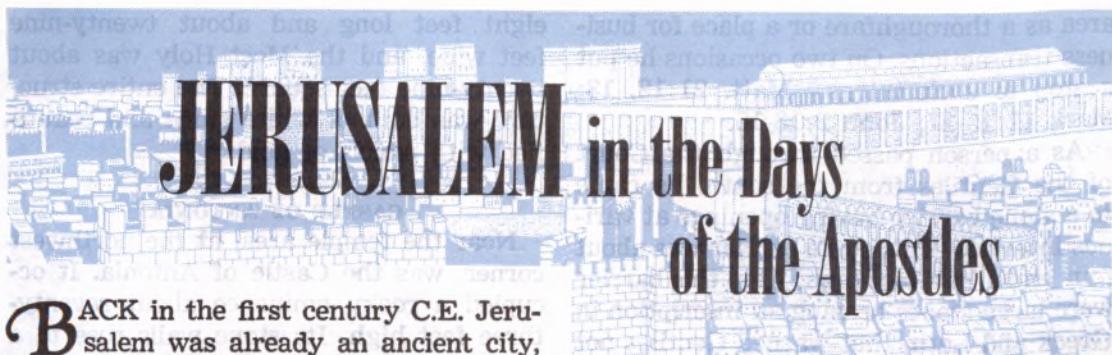
● "The range of medical conditions connected with homosexual acts is broad indeed," says the April 15, 1975, issue of "Modern Medicine."

Homosexual Dangers

Pointing to the most frequent consequence, the article says: "There is no question that venereal disease is extremely prevalent among homosexually active males. The prevalence among homosexually active females is not quite so high, but it is still higher than among men and women whose activity is exclusively heterosexual."

The list of ailments occurring stretches far beyond the usual venereal diseases, such as gonorrhea and syphilis. Among frequent conditions, doctors find that, in the genital organs, there may be inflammation of the prostate gland; inflammation and constriction of the urethra; swelling and ulceration of the lymphatic tissues; ulceration and formation of granulation in the groin, spreading to the buttocks and genitals; in the anal region there may develop a weakening of the anal muscles with resultant loss of sphincter control; enlargement of hemorrhoids; perforation and laceration of the colon; amebic dysentery; and cancerous tumors.

All of which points up the accuracy of the Bible's statement that those who 'change the natural use of themselves into one contrary to nature receive in themselves the full recompense due for their error.'—Rom. 1:26, 27.



JERUSALEM in the Days of the Apostles

BACK in the first century C.E. Jerusalem was already an ancient city, with a recorded history from around 1943 B.C.E. That this city (also called Zion) existed in the days of the apostles of Jesus Christ was not a matter of chance. It was essential in order for the Messianic prophecies to be fulfilled.—Isa. 28:16; 52:7; Zech. 9:9.

Though situated over 2,500 feet above sea level, Jerusalem does not stand out from the surrounding hilly terrain. Only when one is quite close does one get a full view of the city.

Located on Israel's central mountain range, Jerusalem has a pleasant climate. The nights are cool and the average temperature is about 63 degrees Fahrenheit. Mainly between November and April, Jerusalem gets a rainfall of about twenty-four inches.

In the days of the apostles the city of Jerusalem was less than a square mile in area. The steep valley walls on the east, south and west served as a part of the city's defensive wall system. Only the north side lacked a natural defense, but there the constructed walls were especially strong.

THE TEMPLE

The most important structure in Jerusalem was the temple, rebuilt by Herod the Great. Including all the courts, the temple area encompassed fifteen to twenty acres. The area could be entered through one of eight or ten gates. Four or five were on the west side, two or three on the south, and one each on the east and north. The

eastern gate may have been the same as the "Beautiful Gate," where Peter healed a man lame from birth.—Acts 3:1-10.

Colonnades occupied the outer perimeter of the temple area. The most impressive of these, the Royal Colonnade on the south, consisted of 162 tremendous pillars with Corinthian capitals. It took three men with outstretched arms to reach around one of them. The pillars were arranged in four rows, with three aisles, and supported a carved wooden ceiling. The outer walkways were about fifty feet high, but the middle one was higher, for the roof was raised in the center. The colonnades on the east, north and west consisted of two rows of marble pillars that likewise supported a ceiling. It was in the sheltered area of the colonnade of Solomon, on the east, that Jesus and his disciples on various occasions made known God's truth.—John 10:22-24; Acts 3:11; 5:12.

The immediate area surrounded by colonnades was the Court of the Gentiles. Being readily accessible through a number of gates, it became a thoroughfare. Instead of going around the temple area, people would pass through the Court of the Gentiles, carrying vessels as they went about life's daily routine. Also in this court or in the Royal Colonnade, money changers set up their tables and others sold sacrificial animals. Jesus Christ, however, did not approve of using any part of the temple

area as a thoroughfare or a place for business transactions. On two occasions he put a stop to such things.—Matt. 21:12, 13; Mark 11:15-17; John 2:13-16.

As a person passed through the Court of the Gentiles from the south, he came to a stone barrier having openings at various intervals. This stone barrier was about four and a half feet high. Atop this barrier were large stones bearing an inscription in Greek and Latin that warned Gentiles not to pass, on pain of death. Thus this wall fenced off Jew from Gentile.—Compare Ephesians 2:14.

The next court, the Court of Women, was fourteen steps higher than the Court of the Gentiles. This was the court that Jewish women could enter for worship. Here were the treasury chests, into which were dropped contributions for the sanctuary.—Luke 21:1-4.

From the Court of Women, ceremonially clean Israelite males entered the Court of Israel. Fifteen large semi-circular steps led up to this court, with its storage chambers against the outside wall.

The court having the greatest sanctity was the Court of Priests, encompassing the temple sanctuary itself. Here were found the molten sea and the altar of burnt offering.

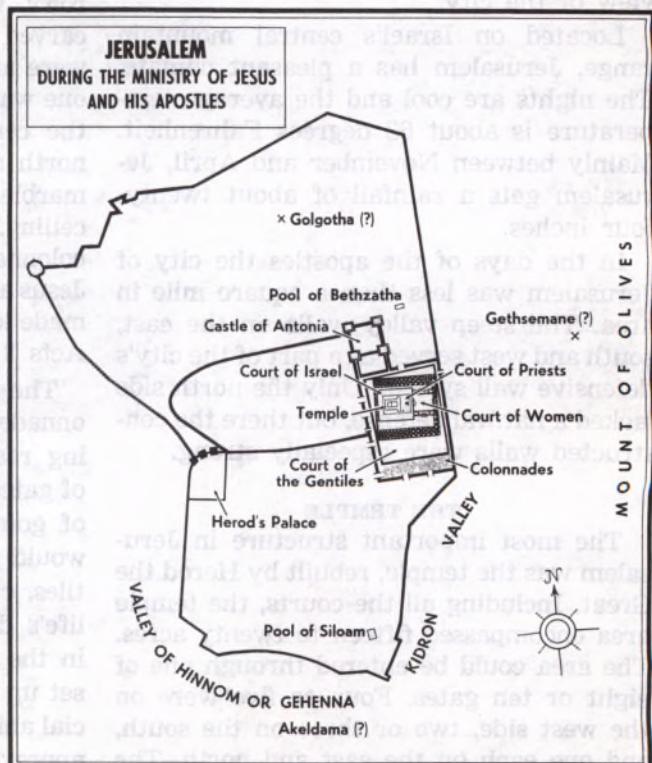
The sanctuary itself was situated twelve steps above the Court of Priests. Golden doors, measuring some eighty feet high and twenty-three feet wide, closed the entrance. The front of the building was wider than the back, with wings extending approximately twenty-nine feet on each side. Chambers were built on the sides of this structure, and an upper chamber was located over both the Holy and the Most Holy. The inside of the Holy was about fifty-

eight feet long and about twenty-nine feet wide, and the Most Holy was about twenty-nine feet square. The entire structure was built of white stone and beautified with panels of gold.

CASTLE OF ANTONIA

Near the temple area, at the northwest corner, was the Castle of Antonia. It occupied a rocky eminence about seventy-three feet high. Its stone walls rose to a height of more than fifty-eight feet. At each of the castle's four corners there was a tower. Three of these were about seventy-three feet high. The fourth, located at the southeast corner, rose to a height of over one hundred feet and overlooked the entire temple area. The Roman garrison was stationed at the Castle of Antonia.

A passageway connected the castle with the temple area. This enabled Roman soldiers to act quickly in putting down dis-



turbances there. That evidently explains why Claudius Lysias and a group of his soldiers were able to rescue the apostle Paul from an enraged mob just "outside the temple."—Acts 21:30-32.

Some believe that within a central court of the Castle of Antonia, Jesus Christ appeared before Pilate for judgment. A stone pavement in this area may have been the *Gabbatha* referred to at John 19:13. But it could be that an open area in front of Herod's palace, west of the temple area, was the site of Jesus' judgment.

POOL OF BETHZATHA

Near the Sheep Gate, likely to the north of the temple area, was the pool of Bethzatha with its five colonnades. It was there that Jesus Christ healed a man afflicted with sickness for thirty-eight years. (John 5:2-9) Archaeological evidence about the existence of such a pool came to light in 1888. Excavators found a double pool divided by a rock partition and having an overall area of about 150 feet by 300 feet. They also discovered a faded fresco showing an angel moving the waters, and evidence of five colonnades.

POOL OF SILEOAM

South of the temple area was the pool of Siloam, where Jesus Christ had a blind man wash in order to receive sight. (John 9:6, 7, 11) The spring of Gihon, which has its fountainhead in a natural cave in the Kidron Valley, supplied the water for this pool through a tunnel cut in the hillside.

MOUNT OF OLIVES AND GETHSEMANE

Along the eastern side of Jerusalem stretches a chain of rounded limestone hills. Anciently this ridge was covered with olive trees and was therefore known as the Mount of Olives. In part, it lies more than 400 feet above the general elevation of Jerusalem and enables one to view the entire temple area.—Mark 13:3.

Somewhere on or near the Mount of Olives was the garden of Gethsemane. In this garden Jesus Christ often met with his disciples. (John 18:1, 2) On Passover night of 33 C.E., Judas Iscariot, with a kiss, betrayed him there.—Matt. 26:36, 48, 49.

GOLGOTHA, GARDEN TOMB AND THE POTTER'S FIELD

The site of Jesus' impalement was Golgotha or "Skull Place." It may have been situated to the north of the Castle of Antonia. About 250 yards northeast of the Damascus Gate lies a cliff having prominent holes that make it resemble a skull. Not far from this cliff there is a large garden, bounded on the north by a hill. A tomb containing one finished grave is cut out of a huge stone protruding from a side of this hill. The site fits the Bible's description of the place of Jesus' impalement and burial. (Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:22-24; Luke 23:33; John 19:38-42) Whether it is the actual site, however, cannot be determined today.

Tradition places the "potter's field to bury strangers" on the south side of the Hinnom Valley near its junction with the Kidron. Many tombs are situated in the area. The "potter's field" was the plot bought with the "thirty silver pieces" for which Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. It came to be known as *Akeldama*, "Field of Blood."—Matt. 27:5-8; Acts 1:18, 19.

NO SPECIAL SANCTITY TODAY

Today many of the sites associated with the public ministry of Jesus and his apostles are not precisely known. This is evidently in harmony with God's purpose, for true worship does not now depend upon any particular geographical locations. (John 4:21-24) The truly important thing is the message that Jesus and his apostles proclaimed. That message has survived in the Sacred Scriptures, and the work that Jesus and his apostles began in the first century C.E. has reached to the ends of the earth.

KEEP YOUR SENSES IN ALL THINGS

HOW refreshing it is to associate with persons who keep their senses and stay balanced in situations that create tension and pressure! Especially is this true today, with conditions such as they are throughout the world. Even in remote places people are being influenced by problems so staggering that world leaders despair of finding ways of coping with, much less conquering, them. Faced with these conditions, many persons have tried to forget them by turning to alcohol or drugs in an effort to dull their senses to the realities of life. But in so doing they merely create more problems for themselves.

—Prov. 23:29-35.

² In the first century, Christians, too, were beset by conditions that would ultimately test them to the very limit. Were they advised to dull their minds so that such would become more bearable? To the contrary, though it may have been unpleasant to face the prospects of persecution and considerable apostatizing from the faith, steadfast ones needed to know what was ahead so that they could successfully overcome it. Therefore, the overseer Timothy was straightforwardly warned of this incoming apostasy, by the apostle Paul, who

1. To what do many people turn to escape the problems of life, and with what results?
2. What conditions that were coming upon first-century Christians required them to keep their senses, and how did Paul describe this?

"Keep your senses, be watchful."

—1 Pet. 5:8.

said: "There will be a period of time when they will not put up with the healthful teaching, but, in accord with their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves to have their ears tickled; and they will turn their ears away from the truth." Owing to the imminence of that danger, the apostle declared further: "You, though, keep your senses [‘be sober-minded’—*Kingdom Interlinear*] in all things." (2 Tim. 4:3-5) Being thus armed, Timothy would be able to counteract those subtle deceptions.

³ In the more than nineteen hundred years since Paul wrote those words, that apostasy has come to full flower and is identifiable as modern-day Christendom. Though Jehovah God has separated his true Christian congregation from her, there is still the same urgent need to keep one's senses because her apostasy is nearing its zenith and is enveloping the entire earth. Furthermore, her hostility toward Christ's true followers may, at any time, take the form of intense persecution, even as in the first century. Are congregation elders, therefore, spiritually strengthening their Christian associates to withstand such increased pressures and to remain

3. (a) Why is it urgent to keep one's senses today? (b) As explained by Peter, why must elders be watchful, and why does Paul encourage wakefulness?

loyal? It is with good reason that the apostle Peter admonished elders to "shepherd the flock of God in your care," adding this warning: "Keep your senses, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (1 Pet. 5:2, 8) The gravity of the danger from that adversary has increased during these times of worsening world conditions and must be viewed soberly lest the fast-moving times and rapidly changing world scene confuse us. It puts to the test the ability of elders to safeguard the Christian congregation with sensible, sound guidance. Neither is it a time for dullness of mind. Paul warned that "Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night" and then gave the exhortation not to "sleep on as the rest do, but... stay awake and keep [your] senses." (1 Thess. 5:2, 6-9) What must you do, then, as an elder, to show that you have taken to heart the admonition to 'keep your senses in all things'?



An elder needs to apportion his time to be able to care for family responsibilities . . .

DEVELOPING A SOBER-MINDED VIEW OF RESPONSIBILITIES

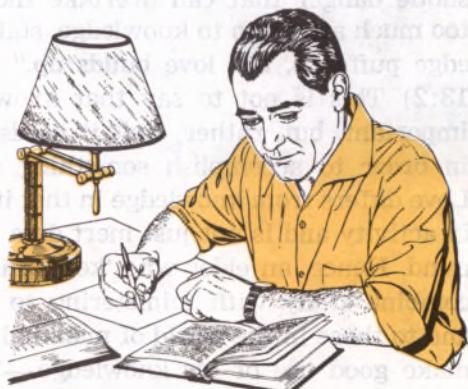
* That oft-repeated warning to "keep your senses" should alert elders to the need to keep in clear focus their many responsibilities if they, like Timothy, are to 'accomplish their ministry' fully. Personal preference might tend to make an elder "go overboard" and

4. In what ways must an elder 'fully accomplish his ministry'?

direct most of his attention to only one or two aspects of his overseership. Such, however, would not be a sound viewpoint. Rather, as he considers his available time, it should be with an eye to how he can apportion it so that he is able to care for family responsibilities, for shepherding, for teaching, and for preaching and disciple-making. To care for all of these successfully calls for clear thinking, balance and sensibleness so that due attention is given each one and none suffers neglect.

* Take, for example, an elder who is a family man. He certainly has strong reason to be sober-minded as he considers the severe tests and pressures that those close to him must face almost daily. For him to remain an elder he must show genuine concern for his own family and set a good example as a father before the congregation. Paul detailed the qualifications that the elder should meet, stating that he should be "a man presiding over his own household in a fine manner, having children in subjection with all seriousness." (1 Tim. 3:4, 5) Nevertheless, if he spent all his time with his family he would not

5. Should an elder who is a family man devote all his time to his family? Why?



. . . for preparing talks and personal study

set a good example even to them. Why not? Because it would encourage them to develop a self-centered attitude, one of exclusiveness from others. Instead, they should be encouraged to show interest in others, both those in the congregation as well as persons in the world of mankind. They should be invited to share in proclaiming the wonderful hope of everlasting life, even as they had been given that hope. This broadened view, then, will instill in them a compassionate understanding of others and a fuller appreciation of the purpose of the Creator.

⁶ Similarly, elders should be "qualified to teach"; so they need to be serious students of God's Word. (1 Tim. 3:2) Depending upon their education, the number of years they have been studying the Bible, and other

factors, some may feel that they must devote a considerable portion of their time to study, to research in the Scriptures and to talk preparation.

However, here again an elder can go to extremes unless he is careful to keep his other responsibilities in good focus. Paul points to a subtle danger that can overtake those who give too much attention to knowledge, stating, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." (1 Cor. 8:1; 13:2) This is not to say that knowledge is not important, but, rather, that it needs love with it in order to accomplish something worth while. Love differs from knowledge in that it is expressed in activity and is not just inert data stored in the mind. Hence, an elder who 'keeps his senses' will combine study with ministering to his brothers and to those in the world of mankind; thus he will make good use of his knowledge.—1 John 3:18.

6. How should an elder view the need for taking in knowledge?

⁷ Paul placed much emphasis upon shepherding, exhorting the Ephesian overseers to "shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son." (Acts 20:28) There is no doubt that this is an urgent work, in view of these dangerous times when the very lives of Christians may be at stake. (2 Tim. 4:2) Moreover, effective shepherding takes time. Many hours must be spent in preparing for meetings and talks, in visiting and encouraging those who need aid or who are ill. Yet this vital work, too, must be viewed in relationship to other aspects of an elder's responsibilities. Jesus showed that, while love for one's Christian brothers is a principal sign of true discipleship, it does not excuse his followers from extending love to those of the world of mankind. Indeed,

7. (a) How urgent is the work of shepherding? (b) How can an elder make sure that his love is complete?



Shepherding calls are part of an elder's responsibility . . .



. . . and so is sharing in field service

their love would be incomplete unless it included even opposers, as Jesus states: "You heard that it was said, 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' However, I say to you: Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you." (Matt. 5:43-48) So, as important as shepherding is, it, too, must be balanced with the other responsibilities of an elder.

⁸ One responsibility that the entire association of Christians can share in is the urgent one of preaching the good news and making disciples. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) This work acquaints people with the love and compassion that Jehovah God has for mankind, a love so great "that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) If they are to receive the light of truth it will be from God's servants that they will get it, for Jesus said of them: "You are the light of the world." What are they to do with that light? Not hide it, but, he said, "let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens." (Matt. 5:14-16) "Fine works" identify individuals as fine people—works such as those that produce fine families and orderly homes, honest employees and congregations of Christians who have genuine love for one another. Yet, would most people ever see the real meaning of these "fine works" if we never spoke out the truth, preaching the good news from house to house? Likely they would view us only as 'good people.' If, however, we speak out, they will discern why it is that we are different, what it is that makes us fruitful in fine works, and then, instead of giving *us* the credit, they will 'give glory to our Father who is in the heavens.' Elders, especially, should sober-mindedly strive to

share fully in declaring the good news and to 'be examples to the flock' in this, personally encouraging their brothers to join with them in this important work, even as the apostles shared in the preaching work.—Matt. 4:19, 20.

READJUSTING ERRING ONES

⁹ In addition to the aforementioned responsibilities of elders, there are times when they must try to readjust those of their Christian brothers who err and come into sin. Here, again, they must strive to 'keep their senses' and take a balanced approach. It is not their responsibility, for instance, to take it upon themselves to try to live the lives of others. Nor should they make an issue out of a minor matter or impose some personal view or standard on others. Rather, Peter counseled: "Let none of you suffer . . . as a busybody in other people's matters." (1 Pet. 4:15) Nevertheless, they should be alert to the needs of their brothers and be ready to give them aid if it is needed.

¹⁰ Additionally, their attitude toward erring ones is very important. Logically it should not be one that is harsh or scolding. Such an attitude may only drive a truly repentant one away, whereas kindness may assist in the recovery of even those who are somewhat stubborn. Note, please, the way that Paul advised treating erring ones: "Brothers, even though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness." (Gal. 6:1) So Paul makes the point that if an elder really wants to assist such a person, he should adopt a "spirit of mildness" as he lovingly endeavors to readjust his

9. What balanced approach governs the way elders will treat those who err?

10. (a) When dealing with erring ones, why is the elder's attitude important? (b) How does the erring one who is treated with mildness differ from one who deserves a severe rebuke?

8. (a) What work reveals Jehovah's love and compassion, and how do people become acquainted with this? (b) How only will our "fine works" glorify God?

brother and win back his heart. The one Paul speaks of does not merit a severe rebuke such as those whom he called "unruly men, profitless talkers, and deceivers of the mind." (Titus 1:10, 13) The one who will listen is not a hardened practitioner of sin, but, rather, one who took a 'false step before he was aware of it.' So he does not deserve to be treated like an enemy. In truth, both he and the elder have a common enemy, Satan; so it would be wrong for an elder to add a crushing burden to one who is already remorseful over his sin. What should be hated is, not the erring one, but the wrong act he committed.

—Jude 22, 23.

¹¹ Illustrating the situation of the erring one for us, Paul likens him to a hapless animal caught in a hunter's snare. However, this is no ordinary hunter; such ones get caught in "the snare of the Devil, seeing that they have been caught alive by him for the will of that one." (2 Tim. 2: 24-26) True, roughly jerking a trapped animal out of a snare might free it, but it would surely do it serious injury. Would it not be much better to use gentleness and mildness so that, when released, it can more easily heal from the wounds it has brought upon itself? Likewise, erring ones must be treated compassionately; however, also with a measure of firmness in order to make clear the danger of their wrong course. Such ones need to learn really to hate the wrong that they committed and to see how detestable it is. It is vital that they understand why Jehovah's view of the matter is sound and for their good and happiness, and to cleave to his Word, even as it is written: "For the commandment is a lamp, and a light the law is, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life."—Prov. 6:23.

11. How does Paul illustrate the situation of the erring one, and what is needed to make plain his wrong course to him?

¹² Those elders who have genuine love for erring ones will never timidly hold back from giving needed reproof or readjusting erring ones. Instead, they will act in harmony with Proverbs 27:5, 6, which says: "Better is a revealed reproof than a concealed love. The wounds inflicted by a lover are faithful, but the kisses of a hater are things to be entreated." (Prov. 27:5, 6) In fact, failure on the part of an elder to give due warning or correction, when it is evident that a wrong course is being pursued, could lead to bloodguiltiness on his part. Paul made sure that no stain would come upon him, and so he fearlessly discharged his commission, saying: "I call you to witness this very day that I am clean from the blood of all men, for I have not held back from telling you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:26, 27) If, like Paul, elders keep their senses and courageously shoulder their responsibilities, they will see lasting good come to those whom they have helped to recover from a wayward course.

NOT SIDESTEPPING RESPONSIBILITIES IN MAKING DECISIONS

¹³ From what we have just discussed it is apparent that elders may at times find it necessary to make serious decisions, some even affecting, perhaps, the lives of their brothers. This weighty responsibility to act as overseers and shepherds comes from no earthly source but is conferred upon them by God's holy spirit, making them his representatives. Paul explained it to the elders in the Ephesus congregation in this way: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God."

12. How could timidity in reproofing or readjusting wrongdoers bring bloodguiltiness upon elders?

13. What is the source of the responsibility laid on elders, and why are they qualified to make right decisions?

(Acts 20:28) So, like Timothy, they should view themselves as responsible to God and to Christ to carry out the work that has been assigned to them. (2 Tim. 4:1, 2) In most situations elders are well qualified to make right decisions, because Jehovah God has given them a spirit of "power and of love and of soundness of mind." (2 Tim. 1:7) They are given "power," or ability, so that they will be able to use the spiritual gifts they possess. They have the 'spirit of love' so that they will aid others with the proper motivation, and with "soundness of mind" they are guided in the proper direction as they strive to carry out their responsibilities.

¹⁴ Despite this help from God and his written Word, occasionally elders ask the Watch Tower Society's branch office or the governing body to make decisions for them, such as those relating to the recommendation for appointment as elders and similar matters. Despite a willingness and sincere desire on the part of the branch office to help, often the matter must be referred back to the elders who have the facts, to make the recommendation themselves. The elders can ask questions, get answers, get more facts relating to the matter in question, if necessary, before making a final decision. Neither are they at a disadvantage spiritually speaking. Besides, they have the *responsibility* from God to make such decisions and not unnecessarily place it upon others. So they should prepare themselves by study and prayer to make right decisions in harmony with the will of God. Paul emphasized to Timothy the need for wholehearted reliance upon the Scriptures, since they are "inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness." If the elder based his

decisions upon them, he would prove himself a man of God "fully competent, completely equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) The assistance of other elders, too, may prove helpful. The Bible states that "there is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk, but in the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment." (Prov. 15:22) If the circuit or district overseer is visiting the congregation, this overseer too may be consulted.

¹⁵ If, however, after a thorough study has been made and the Scriptures have been carefully searched, no answer to a particular matter or problem is found, what course should the elders take? Surely it would be most unwise for them to proceed independently to decide the matter, perhaps guessing at the answer or just making an arbitrary decision based upon their own judgment. Rather, in such a case their best recourse is to communicate with the Society's branch office that cares for their country and ask it for assistance.

¹⁶ Never should elders fail to take action because of the fear of man. It may be true that at times they will have to deal with some who are popular or respected or influential. However, this should not influence their decisions in favor of that person. The standard of God's Word is very plain in this regard. It states: "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; Jas. 2:1-9) From this it is very evident that a show of favoritism is unjust and violates the law of God.

14. (a) Explain why many matters must often be referred back to local elders for decisions. (b) How can elders prepare themselves to handle matters locally, and to whom can they turn for assistance?

15. When should matters be referred to the Society's branch office by elders?

16. What principle should be followed when elders must deal with those who are popular, respected or influential?

BASE YOUR DECISIONS ON THE BIBLE

¹⁷ Above all else, elders should demonstrate a deep respect for the Word of God by basing all their counsel on it. (2 Tim. 2:15) This means that they will studiously avoid expressing their own ideas as the authority on matters but, instead, faithfully pass on the teaching they have received from the Scriptures and from Jehovah's servant class, the "faithful and discreet slave." (Matt. 24:45; 1 Tim. 4:6, 16) Their Christian brothers should recognize, too, that elders do not merely *talk* about the Bible, but are living examples of the power of God's Word as demonstrated by the application of godly principles in their lives. This will help the entire association of Christians to appreciate the guidance and direction of the elders and to imitate their example of faith.—Heb. 13:7.

17. How can elders demonstrate deep respect for the Scriptures?

¹⁸ Finally, it must be remembered that all servants of God need to 'keep their senses,' not elders only, because every one of us must face the same dangers from the world. The critical conditions of today are bringing real tests of faith on each Christian. Most assuredly it is a time for sober thinking, a time to develop a clear view of matters in the light of God's Word, so that each of us will be able to make wise decisions. Only in this way can we all together aid one another to "stay awake and keep our senses" so that Jehovah's day of judgment does not catch us as a thief. Then, as "sons of light and sons of day," we will be preserved through the coming world destruction and enter the new order of God's making to His eternal praise and our everlasting salvation!—1 Thess. 5:5, 6.

18. Who, besides elders, must keep their senses, and with what assured expectation in view?

Looking TO THE Future

"Make fast our hold on
the confidence we had
at the beginning firm
to the end."—Heb. 3:14.

WITH CONFIDENCE

MOST people will summarily dismiss any attempted description of a future brightened by a righteous "new order" by stating: "That will never be!" Since they lack any confidence in the future, it is not surprising that most become self-centered and choose to live only for "today." Jehovah's Christian witnesses, however, do not share this disheartening outlook on the future. Instead, their hearts overflow with confidence as they eagerly anticipate a future that is controlled, not

by selfish nations or greedy power blocs, but by the living God, Jehovah. Nevertheless, a person's view of the future could become blurred. But how?

The danger lies in becoming too involved with the present system of things. Yet you may have heard someone defend such an involvement by saying, "Look, you have to be practical, after all." Were you inclined to agree with him? What may happen, however, if people continue to enlarge their involvement? You may have

1. Do all persons have the same viewpoint about the future? Explain.

2. What danger is there to a confident outlook for the future, and how does the apostle Paul warn us in this regard?

seen the results yourself. Perhaps a whole family—parents and children—become so enveloped in present pursuits that their vision of the future is no longer real to them. Only what they have gained by so-called “practical” means has any reality in their eyes. Unwittingly they have let their hearts be changed into faithless ones that desire wicked things. A strong statement? Well, that is how the apostle Paul put it: “Beware, brothers, for fear there should ever develop in any one of you a wicked heart lacking faith by drawing away from the living God.” (Heb. 3:12) Did you notice how all-inclusive Paul’s statement is? He says it can happen to “any one” of us, yes, even those of us who have served God faithfully for years! Lest that happen, however, let us review what lies ahead of us in the future with the purpose of confirming in our hearts that what Jehovah has promised will really happen. With our confidence in the future thus bolstered, we will “make fast our hold on the confidence we had at the beginning firm to the end.”—Heb. 3:14.

WHY CONFIDENCE NEEDED FOR FUTURE

³ What is revealed by that unerring guide, the Bible, respecting our immediate future? It pictures a drawing of the nations, duped by demons, into battle formation against God. We are told: “They [expressions inspired by demons] go forth to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty,” to the place called “Har-Magedon.” (Rev. 16:14, 16) So thorough is the deception worked upon the nations that, instead of showing alarm at this impending showdown with God, they self-confidently proclaim a secure future, crying out, “Peace and security!” However, no sooner is this boastful proclamation uttered than “sudden de-

struction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape.” (1 Thess. 5:3) Is this, perhaps, still a long way off? Not if present peace moves by the nations are any indication. However, even more startling developments are about to take place. What are they?

⁴ With surprising suddenness the beastly political element will turn upon “Babylon the Great,” the world empire of false religion. Her disgusting tactics finally prove to be too much for the political rulers so that not even her harlotrous services will save her from their wrath. Their disdain for her supposed dignity is revealed by the fierceness with which they expose her and devour and burn her up. (Rev. 17:5, 16; 18:8, 21) So begins the “great tribulation” upon the Devil’s visible system of things upon the earth. As for the worshipers of Jehovah, they are seemingly in an unprotected position, “dwelling without wall, and they do not have even bar and doors.” (Ezek. 38:11) But they “say to Jehovah: ‘You are my refuge and my stronghold.’” (Ps. 91:2) This is too much of an opportunity for the devilish “Gog of the land of Magog” to ignore. With a great horde, “like clouds to cover the land,” he attacks these apparently defenseless servants of God. (Ezek. 38:2, 16) This cowardly, unprovoked attack causes Jehovah to become righteously indignant and he rises up to the rescue of his servants with the mightiest attack weapons ever forged: an outpouring of pestilence, flooding rain, hailstones, fire and sulphur upon the visible enemy hordes. (Ezek. 38:18, 21, 22) Because the enemy forces deny the existence of any gods whatsoever, they eagerly attack Jehovah’s people. Too late, they realize that they are fighting against the living God!

3. How does the Bible describe the impending world showdown, accompanied by what boastful proclamation?

4. (a) How does the “great tribulation” begin? (b) What attack upon His people moves Jehovah to rescue them?

⁵ How thorough is the victory? Is it merely a decimation? Far worse than that for these haters of God's servants! Not even one tenth remains. The victory is total! Jehovah has preserved his faithful worshipers through the final part of the "great tribulation" and they now stand on an earth cleansed of all opposers. Not once have they had to raise a hand in their own defense. Through the Messianic kingdom and angelic forces under the command of his Son, Jehovah has seen to it!—Rev. 19: 11-15, 19-21.

⁶ One thing yet remains to be done after the war at Armageddon, and with swiftness it is accomplished! The would-be predators, Satan the Devil and the legions of his unseen demon hordes, are abyssed; they are thrown into the abyss and the lid is clamped on and sealed for a thousand years! (Rev. 20:1-3) Now the Messianic kingdom under Christ begins an uninterrupted rule over the survivors of that great devastation, and in God's due time a great multitude of resurrected ones join them in filling the earth. Applying the same powers of recuperation that he used while on earth to cure sick persons and to raise the dead, the glorified Christ will bring obedient mankind to perfection during that thousand-year reign of righteousness.

⁷ How thrilling the account of the future is! It is true that we do not have every detail, but neither do we need such. What we do have is more than enough to follow the fast-moving events that, even now, are beginning to unfold all around us. It may be that some become concerned, though, about such questions as whether all the religious clergy will die with Babylon the Great or whether all parts of that great religious empire will go down simultaneously all over the earth. How-

5. How thorough is Jehovah's victory over his opposers?
6. What final action against Satan and his demons will then occur, and what conditions will mark the rule of the Messianic kingdom?

7. Why need we not worry about not having every detail about the future, and yet what advantage do we have?

ever, such things need not worry us, as if that kind of information were necessary in order for us to maintain our faith in the grand promises of God. Instead, we should think of what an advantage we have over a world that does not have even one detail of what tomorrow will bring, much less a vision extending a thousand years into the future! How grateful we should be that, if we confidently trust in Jehovah, we have every reason to look forward to what lies ahead! As He himself stated it: "Blessed is the able-bodied man who puts his trust in Jehovah, and whose confidence Jehovah has become." (Jer. 17:7) In addition, there is still another grand reason for confidence on our part.

CONFIDENT DUE TO JEHOVAH'S PROTECTION

⁸ From what we have already discussed it should be evident that a foremost reason for confidence on our part is the knowledge that Jehovah is backing up faithful Christians. Unlike the fainthearted spies who brought back a disheartening report about the land that Jehovah had promised to the Israelites, Joshua and Caleb were confident He would lead them to victory, declaring: "Do not you fear the people of the land, for they are bread to us. Their shelter has turned away from over them, and Jehovah is with us. Do not fear them." (Num. 14:9) Christians today, too, should share that same confidence, since it is written, "If God is for us, who will be against us?" (Rom. 8:31) In fact, the writer Paul is so convinced of the unbreakableness of the bond of love between Jehovah God and his faithful worshipers that he declares that *nothing* and *no one* can separate them from God's love. (Rom. 8: 35-39) What an outstanding reason for confidence!

8, 9. (a) What is another outstanding reason for confidence in the future? (b) Why do we know that things will take place as Jehovah has stated?

⁹ So servants of God have ample reason to look forward to a future that is bright and inviting. They have no reason to believe that things will develop differently from what Jehovah has stated in His Word. He is not like men who fail to keep their word, but has always proved loyal to his friends. Paul believed that, and his confidence in God and the promised future was not misplaced. If he were on earth today he would be eagerly looking forward to the fulfillment of the promises of God. So should we.

¹⁰ Should we expect, moreover, that because Jehovah is on our side he will miraculously intervene to protect each one of us personally from death or injury during the "great tribulation"? Both Psalm 91:7-12 and Proverbs 3:25, 26 have been mistakenly cited by some as supporting this view. The psalm says: "A thousand will fall at your very side and ten thousand at your right hand; to you it will not come near."* Lest we read into this text more than it states, we must ask ourselves if Moses is here talking about the coming "great tribulation" and is declaring a blanket protection for individual servants of God then. This would hardly be so when we remember that centuries later Paul showed that up to his time the devoted followers of Jehovah had undergone mockings, scourgings, prisons, tribulations and many other persecutions, even violent death. However, we can be assured that, as a group, Jehovah will protect them from being exterminated by their enemies during

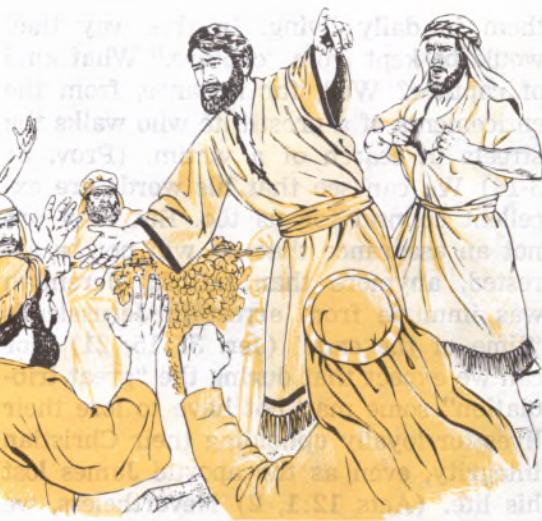
Unlike the fainthearted ones, Joshua and Caleb brought back a good report, in full confidence that Jehovah would give them the Promised Land

the "great tribulation," and He, himself, will not touch them during his executing of adverse judgments.—Heb. 11:36-38.

¹¹ Does Solomon, the writer of the aforementioned proverb, give us reason to expect divine protection from all physical harm? He said: "You will not need to be afraid of any sudden dreadful thing, nor of the storm upon the wicked ones, because it is coming. For Jehovah himself will prove to be, in effect, your confidence, and he will certainly keep your foot against capture." Does that not seem to be evidence that Jehovah God will not permit his loyal followers to be kidnapped or arrested during the "great tribulation"? We must not forget that Solomon wrote what he did, not with us of today in mind, but more pertinently for the benefit of those living under his kingdom. (Prov. 1:1-4; 3:25, 26) Viewing his words in that way, we appreciate that he was giving the Israelites advice that would help them to live upright lives and benefit

* See *The Watchtower* under date of December 15, 1974, pages 757, 758.

10. (a) Does Psalm 91 support the idea of individual protection during the "great tribulation"? (b) What kind of protection will God provide?



11. (a) Does Proverbs 3:25, 26 prove that no individual loyal follower of God will be kidnapped or arrested? (b) In this regard, what examples do we have?

them in daily living. In this way they would be kept from "capture." What kind of capture? Well, for instance, from the enticements of a prostitute who walks the streets in search of a victim. (Prov. 5: 3-14) We can see that his words are excellent counsel for us too. But they are not an assurance that we will not be arrested, anymore than faithful Jeremiah was immune from arrest in Jerusalem's "time of the end." (Jer. 37:15, 21) Nor can we expect that during the "great tribulation" some may not have to lose their lives for loyally upholding their Christian integrity, even as the apostle James lost his life. (Acts 12:1, 2) Nevertheless, we do have divine protection. How?

¹² We have evidence that God is protecting us now *as a class*. For instance, if such were not the case, we would have been wiped from the face of the earth long ago by Satan. Still, *individually*, some may die of old age and sickness during the "great tribulation" or, like our brothers in Malawi, from persecutions. Can we, in the face of such possibilities, still look to the future with confidence? Most assuredly! Jesus declared that the dead will hear his voice and will come forth in a resurrection. (John 5:25-29) This, then, nullifies, cancels, the effects of death. No, the Bible does not promise that Satan will let up on his testing of each one of us during the coming "tribulation," but are we not comforted to know that Jehovah God will not forget us if we fall into death because of our faithful service to him then?

¹³ The protection of us, *as a group*, will continue right on through the destruction of Babylon the Great and the war at Har-Magedon into the New Order. What a cause for confidence in Jehovah God as a ful-

12. (a) How do we know we are being protected as a class? (b) Will Jehovah forget those who, though faithful, lose their lives? What provision has he made?

13. (a) At the time of the destruction of Babylon the Great, will God's people as a whole also be destroyed? (b) This calls forth what response on the part of God's servants?

filler of his promises it will be when Babylon lies powerless, her ability to control world affairs reduced to nothing! No wonder God's servants are told to exult at her overthrow, the cry going forth: "Be glad over her, O heaven, also you holy ones and you apostles and you prophets, because God has judicially exacted punishment for you from her!" (Rev. 18:20) So these can be confident that they will receive protection during God's execution of the wicked and that they will be ushered into his new order of righteousness.—Matt. 25:46.

ADJUSTING NOW FOR NEW-ORDER CONDITIONS

¹⁴ However, in order to have a confident outlook for the future we must also begin *now* to adjust our lives and thoughts to the standards that Jehovah God is revealing to us through his Word and organization. True, it is hard to correct long-entrenched bad habits and attitudes, but we must not excuse ourselves by saying: 'Well, I'll wait until the new order arrives to change my ways. It will be easier then.' Such a willful slighting of God's purposes could constitute a sin in his sight and might lead to forfeiture of our right of entry into his new order altogether.—Jas. 4:17.

¹⁵ Such adjustments are not necessarily limited to a mere intellectual acquiescence to doctrinal or prophetic understandings as explained by the 'faithful slave.' They may involve a change of heart, requiring us, for instance, to uproot prejudices or attitudes that act as restraints to our wholeheartedly loving all persons regardless of their race or social status. (Acts 10:34) Or, it could be some old-world taint that has been exposed as repugnant in the sight of God that must be corrected. Out of his

14. What possibility presents itself to those who neglect to make necessary changes in order to conform to righteous standards now?

15. Are doctrinal and prophetic understandings the only areas wherein we need to make adjustments? What assistance are we given to make adjustments in our thinking and actions?

unbounded love for us, Jehovah God has given us capable congregation overseers to help us to make these needed adjustments. Our willing acceptance of their assistance is encouraged by Paul, who wrote: "Have regard for those who are working hard among you and presiding over you in the Lord *and admonishing you*; . . . give them more than extraordinary consideration in love because of their work." (1 Thess. 5:12, 13) A positive response to their considerate direction will not only make their work easier but also serve to mold our lives in harmony with God's arrangement for new-order living, causing us keenly to anticipate the future because of recognizing the superiority of Jehovah's way of dealing with His people.

¹⁸ Nor is there any doubt that in the New Order there will be plenty of work of all kinds that will need to be done. Will our attitude be one of willingness to serve, to work, at whatever we are assigned to do? God's servants in the past showed such willingness, regardless of whether the responsibility given them was exalted or lowly. Isaiah eagerly agreed to accept the difficult work of a prophet, declaring, "Here I am! Send me." (Isa. 6:8) Jesus, though acknowledged as "Lord" by his disciples, showed his willingness to serve even in a slave's position by washing their feet. (John 13:3-17) What a fine example he set for us!

¹⁷ True, it may be that the job assignment we are given will be one we would not personally have chosen. We may not, initially at least, enjoy the hard work necessary to bring the earth to a paradise condition. It will require unselfishness on our part, too, since much of our effort will be directed, not toward our personal interests, but toward the preparation for and

16. As exemplified by Isaiah and Christ Jesus, what attitude should we show regarding assignments of work? 17. What will be required on our part to fulfill assignments that are not to our preference? What other adjustments may we need to make?

care of a multitude of resurrected ones, most of whom will have no knowledge of Jehovah God. Can you imagine the magnitude of work involved just in transforming the minds and hearts of these persons to new-order thinking? Any with lazy tendencies will not fare well then, for the warning of the proverb is: "The very craving of the lazy will put him to death, for his hands have refused to work." (Prov. 21:25) So it may require us to readjust our thinking now, in regard to our attitude toward the work that Jehovah gives us to do at present and in the future. In that way we can look to the future with joy.

¹⁸ As to where we will live in the future paradise, it is quite possible that we will be assigned places to live rather than be left to choose them for ourselves. How well we will adjust to such an arrangement may be indicated by whether we presently are willing to go to the congregation or book study we are asked to attend. If we adapt to our assigned location in the New Order, it will quickly become "home" to us and we will learn to love it. This is the way missionaries come to feel about their preaching assignments even today.

¹⁹ It is comforting to know, too, that Jehovah God will see to the choosing of "princes" to serve and guide us. Again, he proves that he understands our real needs, what is best for us, and this is another reason for confidence because we know that we will not be left on our own, but will have faithful, proved men who will look after our interests.

THRILLING PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

²⁰ As we look to the future we have many inviting prospects ahead of us.

18, 19. (a) What possibility exists as to the place where one will live in the paradise earth? (b) How should we view our assigned location in the New Order, and why will we not be left on our own there?

20, 21. (a) Why do we not need to speculate about the future? (b) What are some of the thrilling things the Bible does tell us about the future?

Therefore, we have no need to speculate about details that are not supplied by the Scriptures, but, rather, to be willing to wait upon Jehovah instead of fretting or becoming disturbed over such matters. Why speculate about who will be resurrected, how children will be cared for, what type of houses will be built, whether we will use machines, and suchlike questions. If we really needed to know these things, Jehovah would have provided the answers.

²¹ Rather than speculating on the unknown, how much better it is to concentrate on the thrilling things the Bible *does* say. Foremost of these is the prospect of life with the approval of God. An earth teeming with life is what the Bible envisions. What a joy it will be to welcome back the dead! How tears of happiness will

flow as loved ones are reunited! And imagine meeting firsthand the faithful servants of God mentioned in the Bible! How thrilling, too, to see our bodies 'return to the days of our youthful vigor'! (Job 33:25) What a pleasure it will be to live in paradise with perfect food, satisfying work, companions with whom we delight to associate and, best of all, complete freedom to worship our God, Jehovah!

²² Can we really be sure that this is what the future will be like? Indeed we can, for it is promised by Jehovah God. He will not fail to bring it to pass, for "it is impossible for God to lie." (Heb. 6:18) Eagerly, then, we look to the events ahead with full confidence in the One who is shaping the future!

²². What assurance do we have that we can look with confidence to the future?

GIVING GOD *The Exclusive Devotion*

HE MERITS

JEHOVAH GOD deserves an exclusive place in our affections. The reasons are many. He is the Source of life. Because he willed it, creature life exists. His way of ruling is based on love, and his commands serve to promote the happiness and welfare of those obeying them.

(Ps. 19:7-11) Truly, as the Creator, Source of life and Lawgiver, Jehovah God is worthy of our devotion, strong attachment and ardent love. (Rev. 4:11) Our love for him should be superior to our love for anyone else.

Your giving Jehovah God the exclusive devotion he merits is not always an easy

thing. Loyal service to God as a disciple of Jesus Christ may lead to reproach and physical abuse. Even close family members may turn against you. Jesus Christ said:

"Do you imagine I came to give peace on the earth? No, indeed, I tell you, but rather division. For from now on there will be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." (Luke 12:51-

53) What causes this division? It results from the way family members react to the good news of God's kingdom. (Matt. 28: 19, 20) Some accept that "good news," while others reject it and perhaps even oppose it bitterly.

Against this background, we can understand these words of Jesus Christ: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26) Was the Son of God thereby saying that those who became his followers should feel hostility or loathing toward their families or themselves? Not at all. Rather, he was making it clear that love for family and self should be placed in a *secondary* position. If a person failed to love God even more than he loved his relatives, he would be unable to withstand family opposition. Also, if he did not put God's will ahead of his own desires, he would do everything within his power to follow a course that would seem most advantageous even if that meant going contrary to God's commands. Clearly, then, one can be a disciple of Jesus Christ only if one is willing to give God the first place, a unique place, in one's affections, regardless of what obstacles one might have to face as a result.

What Jesus Christ said on this matter was similar to the principles set out in the Mosaic law. Of family members or friends who refused to give Jehovah God exclusive devotion and tried to influence others to be unfaithful to him, the Law said: "In case your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or your cherished wife or your companion who is like your own soul, should try to allure you in secrecy, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' . . . you must not accede to his wish or listen to him, nor should your eye feel sorry for him, nor must you feel compassion, nor cover him protectively; but you should kill him without fail. Your hand

first of all should come upon him to put him to death, and the hand of all the people afterward. And you must stone him with stones, and he must die, because he has sought to turn you away from Jehovah your God."—Deut. 13:6-10.

Most assuredly, it required superior loyalty and devotion to God to testify against a close family member or friend and then to be the first to share in the execution of that one. Of course, some persons might consider this to be too severe. But was it?

What if the idolatrous relative or friend were allowed to continue living and to influence others for wrong? This would have led to very serious, yes, tragic, consequences. Prostitution, homosexuality, drunkenness and child sacrifice were among the abominable practices associated with idolatry. (1 Ki. 14:24; Jer. 19:3-5; Hos. 4:13, 14; Amos 2:8) Think how damaging to the moral fiber of the nation of Israel such degrading practices would be and what sorrow and injury they would cause. Hence, the death of the idolater would shield many from the untold suffering that his influence would surely have brought if he were permitted to continue.

Today, of course, Christians are not authorized to execute idolaters. Nevertheless, it is still true that yielding to the influence of a close family member or friend to disregard God's law can only spell disaster. True, such yielding might bring temporary relief from threats, abusive words and acts of violence. But at heart a person would know that he was being disloyal to God and following a course that could ultimately result in divine rejection. Even the relative or friend to whose influence he yielded would be put at a disadvantage. This one would be deprived of seeing an example in Christian living that might cause him to reexamine his attitude and perhaps become a Christian disciple himself.

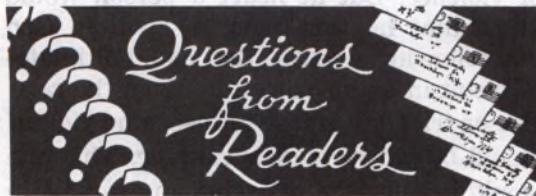
The Son of God set a fine example in

not allowing relatives to influence him wrongly. On one occasion his relatives exclaimed: "He has gone out of his mind." (Mark 3:21) And despite the marvelous works Jesus was doing, 'his brothers were not exercising faith in him.' (John 7:5) But the faithlessness of such relatives did not cause Jesus to quit. He kept right on doing God's work. What was the result? After Jesus' death and resurrection, his brothers were evidently in the group of some 120 disciples who received the holy spirit on the day of Pentecost in 33 C.E. (Acts 1:14; 2:1-4) Because Jesus put the emphasis on spiritual, not fleshly, relationships, his brothers finally gained a fine spiritual relationship with Jehovah God.

Relatives and friends are not the only ones who could cause one to fail in giving God exclusive devotion. Actually, anyone or anything taking on undue importance in our lives can lead to our not being exclusively devoted to God. For example, the Bible refers to covetousness as "idolatry." (Col. 3:5) This is so because the object of a person's craving diverts affection away from God and in this way becomes an idol. Take the case of the person wishing to gain prominence in the world. His

time and energies are fully taken up in the pursuit of that goal. He gives no thought as to what might be God's will in the matter. Obviously he is not exclusively devoted to God. Another interest has become his chief concern—the object of his love.

Since Jehovah God rightly requires exclusive devotion, we must be on guard that nothing takes on undue importance in our lives, crowding out affection for him. Nothing this world has to offer should be allowed to cloud our vision of the rightness of remaining exclusively devoted to Jehovah. We should heed the inspired admonition: "Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world. Furthermore, the world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever." (1 John 2:15-17) Yes, if our chief concern is to give Jehovah God the exclusive devotion he merits, we can rest assured of his favoring us with everlasting life.



Questions from Readers

- If a Christian unilaterally breaks his (or her) engagement to marry, what effect would this have on such a one's being used in an exemplary way in the congregation?

Both the making and the breaking of an engagement to marry are serious steps, not to be taken lightly. Both, however, are basically private matters. There is no need for congregational elders to inquire into such matters unless a complaint is lodged with them by one of the parties or there is evidence that a number in the congregation are disturbed, with corresponding lack of respect for the one thus breaking the engagement. In some cases it may be that the ones who are disturbed need to have a clearer understanding of the principles involved.

We may note that, under the Israelite arrangement, engaged women were viewed as bound by that engagement, and if they became guilty of any infidelity, the Mosaic law provided that they should be dealt with as a married woman would be. (Deut. 22:23, 24) The Israelite man had greater freedom and could break the engagement, as Joseph of Nazareth planned to do. Matthew 1:19 relates that, after learning of Mary's pregnancy, "being a man of principle, and at the same time wanting to save her from exposure, Joseph desired to have the marriage contract set aside quietly." (*New English Bible*; compare Deuteronomy 24:1.) Christians, however, are not under the Law covenant, and in large areas today an engaged woman is not viewed as bound to the same extent as was the case then.

At Matthew 5:37 Jesus said: "Just let your word Yes mean Yes, your No, No; for what is in excess of these is from the wicked one." The context shows he was here counseling against the practice many had of frequently accompanying statements by an oath, regularly swearing by heaven or Jerusalem or something else. But by this warning against such excess, Jesus did not say that, when an individual realizes he or she has made a serious mistake, it is wrong to make an effort toward correcting it. Proverbs 6:1-5 speaks of the one who goes surety for another and has "been ensnared by the sayings" of his mouth, "caught" by them, and counsels that such a one should take action to deliver himself, saying: "Go humble yourself and storm your fellowman with importunities." A person who is engaged to marry may also come to realize that he or she has made an unwise step. It is a fact that during courtship prior to engagement a man or woman generally presents his or her 'best face,' puts his or her 'best foot forward.' Following the announced engagement, however, an individual may begin to let more of the real self show through. One of the two may now see serious problems that were not evident before.

In those special cases where elders do find it necessary to inquire into the matter of a broken engagement, they should be concerned with ascertaining whether the reasons for it were valid. What might be a "valid" reason? In a "Question from Readers" published in *The Watchtower* of October 1, 1968, two examples were given. Consider here a few other exam-

ples. During the engagement period the woman might begin to reveal a very "bossy" attitude, not showing real respect for headship, thus giving strong evidence of being the type of person described at Proverbs 19:13; 21:9; 27:15, 16. Or, during that period, the man might participate in some serious wrongdoing, perhaps becoming drunk, engaging in some immorality or seriously dishonest act. Or one of the two might see some other definite spiritual weakness, perhaps a very strong materialistic attitude, in the other party and might conscientiously feel that to carry out the marriage could impose a serious burden on his or her spiritual strength, perhaps more than he or she feels able to carry without harm. This does not mean, however, that in every case the other person will be viewed as deficient or inferior. One may feel that the other person is a very fine individual but simply may come to realize that there are very strong differences in personality or outlook that would make the marital relationship a very difficult one for both of them. These, then, are some, but by no means all, of the serious reasons that might cause one, after careful thought and prayer, to decide for termination of the engagement. Of course, mutual agreement to break the engagement would be far preferable to a unilateral action. But it may be that the other party does not see, or even prefers to ignore, the problem that is there.

All of this emphasizes the value of not rushing into an engagement to marry but rather seeking first to get to know the other party well. Love of neighbor should prevent anyone from taking a light attitude toward becoming engaged, realizing the emotional hurt that it can bring if the engagement is broken.

In cases where an individual has lost a mate, through death or through infidelity (and Scriptural divorce), his or her emotional state may be such that there is a keen feeling of need for companionship to combat loneliness. There may be an inclination to enter into an engagement more quickly than if under other circumstances. On gaining emotional balance, the person may realize that the engagement was unwise. In the case of an elder, this might or might not reflect on his stability. The circumstances would have to be considered.

In the case, then, of one who is in an exemplary position, such as an elder or a ministerial servant, a member of a Bethel family, or other person in full-time service, the body of elders should look at the *whole picture* of what the person is and not solely at the one act of terminating unilaterally an engagement. If the person's past course shows an inclination or pattern of taking such matters lightly, then the elders might find it advisable to recommend removal from any exemplary position. They may find that the reason for the breaking of the engagement is simply that the person has allowed someone else to get his attention and interest, a course showing fickleness. If a considerable portion of the congregation gives evidence of having lost respect for such a one, this will also be given due consideration. Local attitudes and circumstances must be taken into account, since some countries or regions of the

world take a much stricter view as regards such arrangements than do others.

However, if these negative factors are not present and the person has shown himself or herself to be serious, conscientious and considerate of others, the decision to end an engagement unilaterally would not necessarily call for removal from an exemplary position or a restriction of congregational privileges. Whether there are valid reasons or not for terminating the engagement will always be a determining factor.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

July 20: Keep Your Senses in All Things. Page 368. Songs to Be Used: 22, 77.

July 27: Looking to the Future with Confidence. Page 374. Songs to Be Used: 11, 33.