

The WATCHTOWER

The BIBLE

**-A book from God
or from man?**

MARCH 1, 1975

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The **WATCHTOWER**

March 1, 1975
Vol. 96, Number 5

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

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

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

We know that many sincere persons would appreciate a discussion of these things in their own home with a qualified person. 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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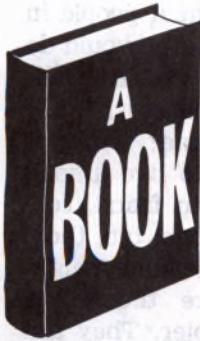
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for *All Mankind*

WHAT would you expect of a book that is for all mankind? Surely it would have to be available in all major languages. Its message ought to be meaningful to you, enabling you to get the best from life even now. Is there really such a book in existence?

Yes, there is. It is a very ancient book that has reached every land and even distant, isolated islands. It may be found in simple huts and modern homes. The book itself has been translated, the whole or in part, into more than 1,525 languages and dialects, so nearly everyone can read it in his own language. No other book even approaches its circulation. Each year millions upon millions of copies are distributed earth wide. That book is the Bible.

But can this book really help you to get the best from life now? Millions of persons today believe that this simply could not be the case. They judge the Bible by what they know about those professing to follow it. They are appalled at the shameful record that Christendom has made in the form of horrible wars, prejudice, hatreds, oppression and exploitation. They reason that, if this is what people and nations that have the Bible do, they want no part of it.

However, as you know, mere possession of a book does not mean that the owner upholds the principles it sets forth. Many people have books in their libraries advocating ideas that they do not support. Could this not also be true of millions who have the Bible?

Many religious organizations claiming to represent the Bible gave their full support to the violent wars of this twentieth century. Did they have the Bible's backing in this?



Some may try to justify their course, pointing to the wars mentioned in the Bible. True, God did use certain individuals and nations to war against others in order to execute his judgment against them because of their wickedness. But no individuals or nations today can claim that they have been so used.

The Bible strongly condemns those who carry on selfish warring. We read:

"From what source are there wars and from what source are there fights among you? Are they not from this source, namely, from your cravings for sensual pleasure that carry on a conflict in your members? You desire, and yet you do not have. You go on murdering and coveting, and yet you are not able to obtain. You go on fighting and waging war. You do not have because of your not asking. You do ask, and yet you do not receive, because you are asking for a wrong purpose, that you may expend it upon your cravings for sensual pleasure." —Jas. 4:1-3.

As for selfish warring, often feel-

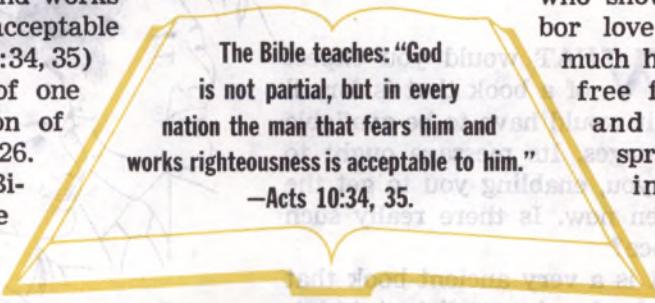
ings of racial, national or tribal superiority are responsible for it. Does the Bible encourage such feelings? No, it shows that what counts with God is, not one's station in life, one's race or national origin, but what one is as a person. Note the following clear standards the Bible expresses: "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) "He made out of one man every nation of men."—Acts 17:26.

Similarly, the Bible does not side with those who have oppressed and exploited fellowmen. We find these words addressed to oppressors and exploiters:

"Weep and wail over the miserable fate descending on you. Your riches have rotted; your fine clothes are moth-eaten; your silver and gold have rusted away, and their very rust will be evidence against you and consume your flesh like fire. You have piled up wealth in an age that is near its close. The wages you never paid to the men who mowed your fields are loud against you, and the outcry of the reapers has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on earth in wanton luxury, fattening yourselves like cattle—and the day for slaughter has come."—Jas. 5:1-6, *New English Bible*.

The way of life recommended in the Bible is one of love, an unselfish concern for the welfare of fellow humans. "Owe nobody anything," it admonishes, "except the duty of mutual love, for whoever loves his fellow-men has fully satisfied the Law. For the commandments, 'You must not commit adultery, You must not murder, You must not steal, You must not covet,' and any other commandments there are, are all summed up in one saying, 'You must love your neighbor as you do yourself.'"—Rom. 13:8-10, *An American Translation*.

You would certainly benefit if people in your neighborhood, town or city would do their utmost to apply this excellent admonition. Would you not feel much safer and more secure in your home? Would it not be a relief to be able to live among people who do not engage in fraud, robbery, theft or vandalism? Then, too, those



The Bible teaches: "God
is not partial, but in every
nation the man that fears him and
works righteousness is acceptable to him."

—Acts 10:34, 35.

who show genuine neighbor love are themselves much happier. They are free from the envies and jealousies that spring from wanting what others have. They do not experience the heartache and pain of single and married people who try to satisfy their passions outside the marriage arrangement. They avoid loathsome venereal disease, pregnancies out of wedlock, and broken homes.

Despite the obvious benefits that come from demonstrating the kind of love the Bible recommends, many people do not want to change their ways. This can really make it hard for you and may tempt you to adopt their selfish attitudes. But that would not improve matters, would it?

Nevertheless, some may reason: "Why should I study the Bible? I don't hurt anybody. I try to do what's right."

Perhaps you have heard others express themselves similarly. But would it not be of value to find out whether the Bible could help you to find greater joy in life? Millions of intelligent men and women are convinced that the Bible provides the best guide for living. Are they right? Is the Bible merely the product of ancient wise men, or does it originate with a source higher than men? Can it help you to enjoy the best from life now and to gain a secure future for yourself and your loved ones?

Is THE BIBLE Simply

A PRODUCT OF HUMAN WISDOM?

TO MANY, the Bible is just a book written by wise men of old. Yet that is not what the Bible itself says. It claims to be a book inspired by God. (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21) If that claim is true, we should be able to find convincing evidence within its pages to show that it could not have been simply the product of wise men of that time.

Do we find such evidence? Is the fund of knowledge contained in the Bible superior as compared with what may be found on the same subjects in other ancient sources? Is it free from mistaken views prevailing at the time its various parts were written? How does the Bible hold up when examined in the light of present knowledge?

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE EARTH

Today we know for a fact that the earth rests on no physical supports. But this is not what people generally believed while older parts of the Bible were being written. One common view then held was that four elephants standing on a large sea turtle supported the earth, which was described as a circular plate.

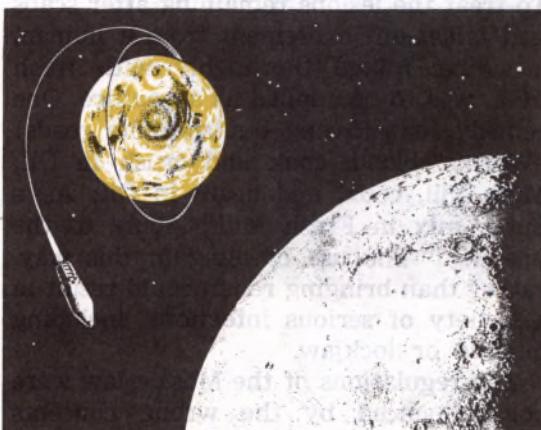
Was the Bible influenced by such ideas? No. At Job 26:7 we read: "[God] is stretching out the north over the empty

place, *hanging the earth upon nothing.*" This accurate statement has long impressed Bible scholars. One of such, F. C. Cook, wrote in the nineteenth century: "It presents a singularly strong protest against superstitions prevalent among all heathens . . . Job knows nothing of solid foundations on which the broad expanse of earth is supported. How Job knew the truth, demonstrated by astronomy, that the earth hangs self-poised in empty space, is a question not easily solved by those who deny the inspiration of Holy Scripture."

This information in the Bible about the earth is only incidental to the overall message. The Bible's main objective is to provide sound guidance for living in harmony with the will of God. Logically, therefore, what it says should be far superior to what imperfect men not following it have recommended and continue to recommend as a guide.

MEDICALLY SOUND

Take as an example the Law given through Moses to the nation of Israel some three and a half millenniums ago. One of its objectives was to safeguard the health



Centuries before men saw the earth from outer space, the Bible stated that the 'earth hangs upon nothing'

and welfare of the people. Obedience to it carried with it the promise that the Israelites would fare well from a health standpoint. (Compare Exodus 15:26; Leviticus 26:14-16.) Was that a promise without basis? Or, did the measures in the Mosaic law definitely contribute to this?

Even after the Law was given to the Israelites, the great civilizations were not very advanced as to medical concepts. French physician and scholar Georges Roux writes: "The diagnosis and prognosis of Mesopotamian physicians were a mixture of superstition and accurate observation." Regarding Egypt's physicians and their remedies, we read: "From the ancient medical papyri which have been preserved, the largest of which is the Papyrus Ebers, we know that the medical knowledge of these physicians was purely empirical, largely magical and wholly unscientific. In spite of their ample opportunities they knew next to nothing of human anatomy."—*The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. IV, p. 2393.

Not only were most of the prescriptions contained in the Papyrus Ebers of no value, but many were quite hazardous. This was especially true of remedies involving the use of human or animal excrement. To treat the lesions remaining after scabs had fallen off, excrement from a human, a scribe, mixed thoroughly with fresh milk, was to be applied as a poultice. One remedy for drawing out splinters reads: "Worms' blood, cook and crush in Oil; Mole, kill, cook, and drain in Oil; Ass's dung, mix in Fresh Milk. Apply to the opening." The use of dung in this way, rather than bringing relief, could result in a variety of serious infections, including tetanus or lockjaw.

The regulations of the Mosaic law were not influenced by the wrong concepts found in Papyrus Ebers. For example, according to that Law, human excrement was designated as something unclean, to

be buried out of sight. The regulation governing a military camp specifically stated: "You shall have a sign outside the camp showing where you can withdraw. With your equipment you will have a trowel, and when you squat outside, you shall scrape a hole with it and then turn and cover your excrement." (Deut. 23:12, 13, *New English Bible*) The contrast between the Mosaic law and Egyptian practice is really amazing when we consider that Moses, the one through whom God gave that law to the Israelites, was "instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."—Acts 7:22.

If the superior wisdom behind certain provisions in the Mosaic law had been recognized in more recent centuries, many deaths could have been prevented. Just a century ago, because the medical profession of Europe had no sound sanitary standard, mortality rates were frightful. In many maternity wards about one out of every four women died of childbed fever. Why? Medical students, after handling the dead in the dissecting room, would go directly into the maternity ward and conduct examinations without even as much as washing their hands. Infection was carried from the dead to the living. One who noted this, Doctor Semmelweis, at the obstetric clinic in Vienna, Austria, directed that students performing examinations wash their hands in a solution of chlorinated lime. Deaths in the maternity ward dropped sharply. Instead of about one out of every four dying, the ratio came to be about one death for every eighty women.

Later, Semmelweis labored in the country of his birth, Hungary, and his methods gained governmental acceptance. As a whole, however, the medical profession of Europe opposed the washing of hands. The editor of Vienna's medical journal went so far as to state that the time had come to 'stop this nonsense about the chlorine hand wash.' In 1861 Semmelweis published a record of his findings and

methods, thereafter sending this to prominent obstetricians and medical societies. The medical world responded unfavorably. At a conference of German physicians and natural scientists, most of the speakers rejected the sound medical opinion of Semmelweis.

The physicians and scientists of nineteenth-century Europe considered themselves to be learned men. But they, doubtless unknown to themselves, were rejecting the superior wisdom revealed thousands of years earlier in the sanitary provisions of the Mosaic law. That Law decreed that anyone touching a dead person became unclean and had to undergo a cleansing procedure that included bathing, and washing his garments. The period of uncleanness was set at seven days, during which time the unclean person was to avoid physical contact with others. Anyone whom he might happen to touch would be made unclean until the evening of that particular day. These measures served as a safeguard against carrying deadly in-

fection from the dead to the living and from one person to another.—Num. 19: 11-22.

Think of the many lives that could have been saved if the medical profession of the past century had viewed the Mosaic law as having come from God! This would surely have resulted in their exercising far greater care when handling the living and the dead.

In certain areas the wisdom behind what the Bible says has been recognized only recently. A case in point is the injunction about circumcision given to Abraham and, later, restated in the Mosaic law. It commanded that circumcision not be performed until the eighth day after the birth of a boy. (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:2, 3) But why the eighth day?

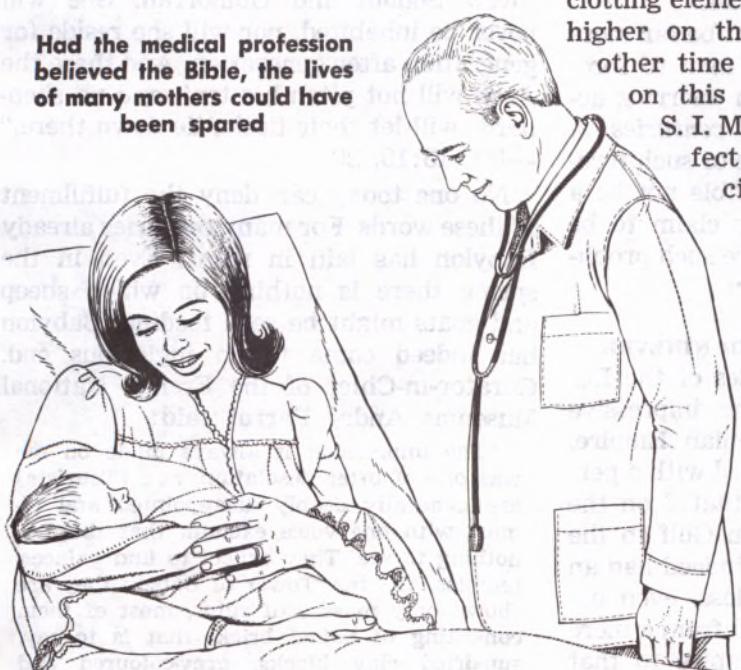
It is now known that there are sound physical reasons making the eighth day ideal. Not until the fifth to the seventh day after birth is a normal amount of the blood-clotting element known as "vitamin K" in the baby's system. Another essential clotting element, prothrombin, seems to be higher on the eighth day than at any other time during a child's life. Based on this evidence, college physician

S. I. McMillen concludes: "The perfect day to perform a circumcision is the eighth day."

—*None of These Diseases*, pp. 22, 23.

Was it just by chance that the perfect day was picked? It is noteworthy that, though other peoples have long practiced circumcision, only those influenced by the Bible are definitely known to circumcise their baby boys on the eighth day. So, then, is it not reasonable to accept the Bible's explanation that man's Creator prescribed

Had the medical profession believed the Bible, the lives of many mothers could have been spared



that this be the day? Is this not what we should expect from the One who indicated that obedience to his law would contribute toward preserving the people's health?

That the Bible does contain statements of outstanding wisdom cannot be denied. There definitely are clear indications that

the Bible could not have been simply the product of human wisdom. It contains statements revealing wisdom not shared by the world's wise men at the time it was recorded. Yet there is an even stronger factor that identifies the Bible as a book from God. What is this factor?

KNOWLEDGE *That Cannot Come from Men*

"YOU do not know what your life will be tomorrow. For you are a mist appearing for a little while and then disappearing." These words, quoted from the Bible, express an undeniable truth—we humans cannot say positively what tomorrow will bring.—Jas. 4:14.

In view of this, would it not be far more difficult, yes, impossible for men to foretell major future events with unerring accuracy and in clear terms *centuries in advance*? Would the presence of such forecasts or prophecies in the Bible not be a strong substantiation for its claim to be inspired of God? But are there such prophecies in the Bible? Consider:

THE FATE OF BABYLON AND NINEVEH
Babylon, built on both sides of the Euphrates River, was once the impressive capital of the great Babylonian Empire. Surrounded by palms, equipped with a permanent water supply and situated on the trade route from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, the city indeed had an excellent location. Nevertheless, even before Babylon's status changed from a mere satellite of the Assyrian Empire to that

of the capital of the world-conquering Babylonian Empire, the Hebrew prophet Isaiah declared in the eighth century B.C.E.: "Babylon, the decoration of kingdoms, the beauty of the pride of the Chaldeans, must become as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited, nor will she reside for generation after generation. And there the Arab will not pitch his tent, and no shepherds will let their flocks lie down there."—Isa. 13:19, 20.

No one today can deny the fulfillment of these words. For many centuries already Babylon has lain in ruins. Even in the spring there is nothing on which sheep and goats might be seen feeding. Babylon has indeed come to an inglorious end. Curator-in-Chief of the French National Museums André Parrot said:

"The impression it always made on me was one of utter desolation. . . [Tourists] are generally deeply disappointed and almost with one voice exclaim that there is nothing to see. They expect to find palaces, temples, and the 'Tower of Babel'; they are shown only masses of ruins, most of them consisting of baked brick—that is to say, sun-dried clay blocks, grey-coloured and

crumbling, and in no way impressive. The destruction wrought by man has been completed by the ravages of nature which still takes its toll of everything which excavation has brought to light. Eroded or undermined by rain, wind, and frost, the most magnificent monument, if it is not kept in repair, will return to the dust from which it was reclaimed. . . . No human power can arrest this ceaseless spoliation. It is no longer possible to reconstruct Babylon; her destiny is accomplished. . . . Babylon . . . has completely disappeared."—*Babylon and the Old Testament*, pp. 13, 14.

Likewise Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, became a desolate ruin. This, too, testifies to the accurate fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Regarding what would befall Nineveh, the prophet Zephaniah, in the seventh century B.C.E., stated: "[God] will make Nineveh a desolation, a drought like the desert; and herds shall lie down in the midst of her."—Zeph. 2: 13, 14, *An American Translation*.

Evidence still exists that God's will as expressed in this prophecy has been carried out. Two great mounds mark the site of what was once the proud Assyrian capital. Atop one of these mounds lies a village, with a cemetery and a mosque. But on the other one, with the exception of some grass and strips of cultivated land, there is nothing. In the springtime, sheep and goats may be seen grazing there.

Could any man have foreknown that both mighty Babylon and Nineveh would have such ends? Could any man have foreknown that sheep and goats would graze on the site of ancient Nineveh but would not be seen on the site of desolated Babylon? Neither Isaiah nor Zephaniah claimed to be the originators of their prophetic messages. They referred to what they spoke as the "word" or message of the true God whose name is Jehovah. (Isa. 1:1, 2; Zeph. 1:1) Faced with the accurate fulfillment of their prophecies, do we not have good reason to accept what they said?

No argument as to time of writing or the like can weaken the force of these fulfilled prophecies. As late as the first century B.C.E., Babylon, though no longer enjoying its former glory, still existed. Nevertheless, the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah (dated by scholars as being of the late second century or the early first century B.C.E.) contained the same prophecy about Babylon as do later manuscripts. So no one has any basis for claiming that these things were recorded after they happened and made to appear to be prophecies. Nor can anyone explain away the ruins to which Babylon and Nineveh were reduced.

BIBLE PROPHECIES ARE UNIQUE AND PURPOSEFUL

Of course, some persons may try to devalue the testimony of Bible prophecy, pointing to the fact that in ancient times there were other prophets who did not claim to be inspired by the God of the Bible, Jehovah. But what did such other prophets foretell? Of what real value were their prophecies? Note the comments of *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1956 edition, Vol. 22, p. 664): "No important written records of the utterances of any of these prophets outside of the Hebrew people have been preserved. . . . Prophecy among other nations aside from the Hebrews was ordinarily of the clairvoyant type, being given in answer to specific questions of individuals, and hence of no general or permanent value." So the existence of other prophets in no way discredits the fact that the Hebrew prophets were inspired of God. To the contrary, the great contrast in the prophetic utterances serves to strengthen the Bible's claim to be God's message.

Furthermore, the prophecies recorded in the Bible had a definite purpose. Even when pointing to a coming destruction as a punishment for violating righteous mor-

al standards, prophecies inspired of God gave individuals and nations opportunity to take a serious look at their ways and dealings, make changes and escape calamity. This was true in connection with all public advance announcements of divine judgment, as is evident from God's message through his prophet Jeremiah: "At any moment that I may speak against a nation and against a kingdom to uproot it and to pull it down and to destroy it, and that nation actually turns back from its badness against which I spoke, I will also feel regret over the calamity that I had thought to execute upon it."

—Jer. 18:7, 8.

A case in point is Jonah's prophecy directed against Nineveh in the ninth century B.C.E. He went throughout the city, saying: "Only forty days more, and Nineveh will be overthrown." (Jonah 3:4) This message made such an impression on the Ninevites that they repented of their wrongs. The king put on sackcloth and decreed that all the inhabitants and domestic animals fast and be likewise arrayed in sackcloth. Due to their repentance, the Ninevites escaped the calamity that would otherwise have come upon them at the end of the specified forty-day period.

—Jonah 3:5-10.

Another example in this regard concerns Jesus Christ's prophecy foretelling that Jerusalem and its temple would be destroyed within the lifetime of the generation that heard his words. That prophecy specifically pointed out the way to escape through positive action. Jesus told his disciples: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in

the country places not enter into her."

—Luke 21:20, 21.

How were Jesus' disciples enabled to heed those prophetic words? Human reasoning would have suggested that once the enemy forces surrounded Jerusalem it would be far too dangerous to flee. But, as indicated in the writings of the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, com-



Could any man have foreknown that mighty Babylon would become a ruin where even flocks would not graze . . . ?

pletely unexpected developments opened the way for escape.

It was in the year 66 C.E. that the Roman armies, under the command of Cestius Gallus, came against Jerusalem. The capture of the city appeared certain. Strangely, however, Cestius did not press the siege to its completion. Josephus reports that he "suddenly called off his men, abandoned hope though he had suffered no reverse, and flying in the face of all reason retired from the City." This unusual turn of events gave those who believed Jesus' prophecy the needed opportunity to forsake Jerusalem and Judea, finding safety in the mountainous region east of the Jordan River.

But what about those who paid no attention to Jesus' prophecy? They experienced a time of great suffering. Around Passover time of 70 C.E. the Roman armies, now under the command of Titus, returned and again laid siege to Jerusalem.

Though the siege lasted less than five months' time, the results were frightful. The city was crowded with Passover celebrants and, as there was no way to get food into the city, terrible famine conditions developed. Of the some 1,100,000 who reportedly perished during the siege, the majority were the victims of pestilence and starvation. The 97,000 taken captive (from the beginning to the end of the war) faced only degradation. Many were subjected to hard labor in Egypt and Rome. Others were handed over to perish in the arenas of the Roman provinces. Those under seventeen were sold. The tallest and handsomest youths were kept for the Romans' triumphal procession.

Jerusalem and her glorious temple were razed to the ground. All that remained standing was a section of the western wall and three towers. "The rest of the fortifications encircling the City," writes Josephus, "were so completely levelled with the ground that no one visiting the spot would believe it had once been inhabited."

It is remarkable that the devastation was so complete. Why? Because this had not been the intent of General Titus. The historian Josephus quotes Titus as saying to the Jews: "Most unwillingly I brought engines to bear on your walls: my soldiers, ever thirsting for your blood, I held in leash: after every victory, as if it was a defeat, I appealed to you for an armistice. When I got near to the Temple I again deliberately forgave my rights as victor and appealed to you to spare your own holy places and preserve the Sanctuary for your own use, offering you freedom to come out and a guarantee of safety or, if you wished, a chance to fight on other ground." Yet, despite what may have been Titus' original intention, Jesus' prophecy

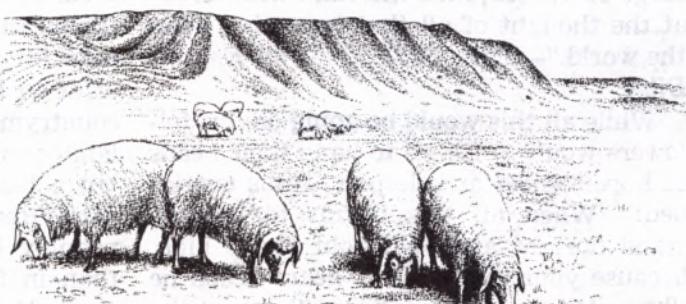
about Jerusalem and her temple was fulfilled: "They will not leave a stone upon a stone in you."—Luke 19:44; 21:6.

To this day, in the city of Rome, may be seen the Arch of Titus, commemorating his successful capture of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. That arch stands as a silent reminder that failure to heed the warning of true prophecy, as preserved in the Bible, leads to disaster.

Be it also noted that Jesus Christ did not claim to be the originator of what he foretold. He, like the Hebrew prophets before him, acknowledged the real source of inspiration to be God. On one occasion he told certain Jews: "What I teach is not mine, but belongs to him that sent me. If anyone desires to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching whether it is from God or I speak of my own originality." (John 7:16, 17) The fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic statements would therefore confirm their being God's "word."

BENEFITING FROM BIBLE PROPHECY TODAY

The fact that acting in harmony with the prophetic word in the past often resulted in the preservation of life certainly emphasizes the importance of considering it today. While recorded many centuries ago, numerous prophecies are yet to be fulfilled and call for positive action. These



. . . but that Nineveh, when also in ruins, would become a place where flocks would graze?

include prophecies about the approaching end of all corruption, injustice and oppression.

The very one who foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and her glorious temple, Jesus Christ, also prophesied about a grand deliverance from the present wicked system of things, to be experienced by his disciples in our day. As to developments that would mark the nearness of that deliverance, Jesus indicated that there would be a very bleak, dark period. It would be as if the sun, moon and stars were no longer serving as luminaries, leaving men to



The Arch of Titus, in Rome, confirms the truthfulness of God's prophetic Word

grope around blindly in the darkness. (Matt. 24:29) "On earth," said Jesus, "nations will stand helpless, not knowing which way to turn from the roar and surge of the sea; men will faint with terror at the thought of all that is coming upon the world."—Luke 21:25, 26, *New English Bible*.

While all this would be going on, his followers would not need to hang their heads in hopelessness and despair. Jesus continued: "When all this begins to happen, stand upright and hold your heads high, because your liberation is near." Then he illustrated the point, saying: "Look at the fig-tree, or any other tree. As soon as it buds, you can see for yourselves that sum-

mer is near. In the same way, when you see all this happening, you may know that the kingdom of God is near."—Luke 21:28-31, *NE*.

Is it not true that today men aware of world trends greatly fear what lies ahead? Are not overpopulation, food shortages, crime and violence, pollution of land, air and sea, and economic insecurity increasingly becoming more serious problems with which men and nations are unable to cope successfully? Was there ever a time prior to the outbreak of World War I when mankind faced such a host of problems? Hence, are there not clear indications that we definitely must be living in the period of unprecedented fear and trouble foretold by Jesus Christ? Surely!

This means that a grand deliverance by means of God's kingdom must be very near. That kingdom, according to Bible prophecy, is a righteous government that will rid this earth of all corrupting influences and usher in an era of true peace and security.

—Dan. 2:44; 2 Pet. 3:13.

The Bible will enable you to learn more about this kingdom and how you can be among those to share in the grand liberation it will bring. As is evident from the accurate fulfillment of its prophecies, the Bible can be depended upon as God's message for all mankind. Surely you do not want to be like Jesus' unbelieving fellow countrymen who could have escaped calamity in the first century C.E. had they but acted in harmony with the prophetic word. Really, what better way could there possibly be to spend some of your time than in taking positive action to inform yourself about matters that can lead to a secure and happy future for yourself and your loved ones?

THE BIBLE

*-Written By Men
But Still God's Message*

THE Bible was written by about forty men during a period spanning some sixteen centuries. These men were imperfect, subject to weaknesses and error. As humans, they did not differ from other people. One of them, Paul, told men who were wrongly viewing him and his missionary companion Barnabas as gods: "We also are humans having the same infirmities as you do." (Acts 14:15) From a human standpoint, many of the Bible writers were not men of exceptional learning and abilities. Among them were very ordinary men, men pursuing such occupations as herdsman and fisherman.

² How, then, was it possible for these imperfect men to produce a record that is actually God's message? They did not write of their own impulse, but were inspired by God. "All Scripture is inspired of God," said the apostle Paul regarding the portion of the Sacred Scriptures available in his time.—2 Tim. 3:16.

³ You may accept the Bible as being God's inspired Word. But how strong is your acceptance? Would it hold up under test? The prophet Jeremiah said: "The word of Jehovah became for me a cause for reproach and for jeering all day long." (Jer. 20:8) Would you be willing to suffer verbal abuse, physical mistreatment and even death for it? Under the pressure of

suffering and opposition, even slight doubts about the inspiration of God's Word can give rise to greater doubts, undermining faith and weakening a person's resistance to temptation. (Jas. 1:6) However, if you are truly convinced that the Bible is God's Word and that living by it is the only right thing to do, you will be in a far better position to withstand pressure and to resist following a course of expediency.

⁴ The person who reasons that the Bible may—in part at least—be simply the product of human thinking may try to justify his disregard for what it says in an attempt to escape trouble. Yet in doing so, he may actually be sacrificing the prospect of eternal life. Said Jesus Christ: "Whoever seeks to keep his soul safe for him-



1. From a human standpoint, what kind of men were the Bible writers?

2. How was it possible for imperfect men to produce a record that is in reality God's "word"?

3, 4. Why are doubts about the inspiration of the Bible potentially dangerous?

self will lose it, but whoever loses it will preserve it alive." (Luke 17:33) It is, therefore, of far more than passing interest to consider how the Bible, a book written by men, is truly God's Word. Our very life is involved.

HOW THE BIBLE WRITERS RECEIVED THEIR INFORMATION

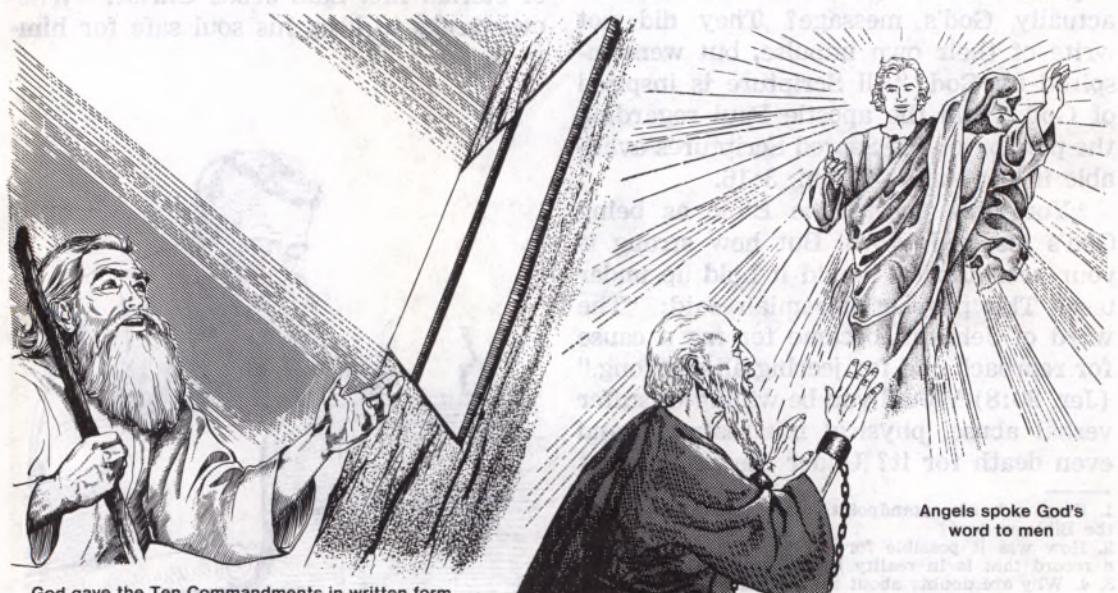
⁵ Among the "many ways" used to convey God's message to men on earth was direct dictation. (Heb. 1:1, 2) The dictated parts of the Bible include the Ten Commandments (also supplied in written form on two tablets of stone) and all the other laws and regulations in God's covenant with the Israelites. Jehovah God transmitted this Law covenant through angels. (Acts 7:53) Thereafter Moses was instructed: "Write down for yourself these words." (Ex. 34:27) Prophets besides Moses also received specific messages and these were later committed to writing. (For examples, see 2 Samuel 7:5-16; Isaiah 7:3-9 and Jeremiah 7:1-34.) These

specific messages were usually spoken by God's representative angel.—Gen. 31:11-13.

⁶ Jehovah God at times made use of dreams, visions and trances to communicate his message to humans. (Num. 12:6; 1 Sam. 3:4-14; 2 Sam. 7:17; Dan. 9:20-27) In the case of dreams, or "night visions," the sleeping person had a moving picture that conveyed God's message or purpose superimposed on his mind. Others who saw visions were fully awake and had information pictorially impressed upon the conscious mind. (Matt. 17:2-9; Luke 9:32) Some visions were received after a person had fallen into a trance. Though conscious, he was so absorbed by the vision that he remained oblivious to everything else around him. (Acts 10:10-16; 11:5-10) Afterward, the Bible writers who received information by such means as dreams, visions or trances had to select words and expressions to describe in meaningful terms what they had seen.—Hab. 2:2; Rev. 1:1, 11.

5. What part did direct dictation play in producing the Bible record?

6. Describe the nature of dreams, visions and trances, and their part in conveying God's message to men.



God gave the Ten Commandments in written form

Angels spoke God's word to men

⁷ A considerable portion of the Bible narrates history—the experiences of individuals, families, tribes and nations. How did the Bible writers get this information? At times they witnessed the very happenings they recorded. But often they had to draw on other sources, consulting already-existing historical accounts, genealogies or even people who were in position to supply reliable information, firsthand or otherwise. This called for extensive and careful research on the writer's part. Ezra, a priest and skilled copyist, used some twenty documentary sources to compile the two books of Chronicles. The physician Luke, writing about his Gospel, remarked: "I have traced all things from the start with accuracy, to write them in logical order." (Luke 1:3) Historical material (as contained in Genesis and the book of Job) about man's beginning and earlier events, conversations in the invisible heavens and the like, were revealed by God either to

7. How did the Bible writers get the information for the historical sections?

"How" signs off! This off means that a bad job is still possible if you do well the work that you have been given.

God's spirit guided the selection of facts from previous records



Divine messages were given by means of dreams

the writers or, initially, to others. If made known to persons other than the writers, it must have been transmitted verbally or in written form until such time as it became part of the Bible record.

⁸ Besides history, the Bible contains an abundance of wise sayings and counsel. The writers drew on their own and others' experience, doing so against a background of study and application of the Scriptures available to them. Time and again we read in the Bible statements illustrating this. Regarding what he had seen as to God's care for his servants, the psalmist David declared: "I have been young, and now I am old; but I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging their bread." (Ps. 37:25, *An American Translation*) The wise writer of Ecclesiastes, David's son Solomon, concluded from what he observed: "With a man there is nothing better than that he should eat and indeed drink and cause his soul to see good because of his hard work. This too I have seen, even I, that this is from the hand of the true God." (Eccl. 2:24) The arranging of material based on human experience required the writer to put forth diligent effort. This is evident from Ecclesiastes 12:9, 10, where we read: "The congregator had become wise, he also taught the people knowledge continually, and he pondered and made a thorough search, that he might arrange many proverbs in order. The congregator sought to find the delightful words and the writing of correct words of truth."

THE ROLE OF GOD'S SPIRIT

⁹ Since so much human effort was involved in Bible writing, does this mean that the Bible is God's Word only in a limited way? Are only the divinely dictat-

8. What was the source for many of the wise sayings and much of the counsel found in the Bible?

9. Does the fact that much human effort was involved in Bible writing mean that the Sacred Scriptures are God's message in a limited way only?

ed sections God's message? No, for all, not just some parts of the Bible, are inspired by God. This is so because Jehovah God, by means of his active force or spirit, guided the Bible writers. Acknowledging this, the psalmist David declared: "The spirit of Jehovah it was that spoke by me, and his word was upon my tongue."

—2 Sam. 23:2.

¹⁰ The "word" of God upon David's tongue was, not a single "word," but a composite message. This is clear from the way the Bible uses the term "word." For instance, one of the prophet Elisha's attendants said to Israelite army chief Jehu: "There is a word I have for you, O chief." (2 Ki. 9:5) That "word" proved to be God's message. It designated Jehu as God's choice for the kingship over the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel and commissioned him to execute judgment against the royal house of Ahab. (2 Ki. 9:6-10) Similarly, with obvious reference to a message and not a single "word," we read at Jeremiah 23:29: "'Is not my word correspondingly like a fire,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and like a forge hammer that smashes the crag?'" No single "word" can have such a devastating effect, but a forceful message when enforced can. How did God use his spirit to put such powerful messages into the minds of the Bible writers and ensure that they continued to be His "word"?

¹¹ Regarding the part that God's spirit played in connection with prophecy, the Bible tells us: "No prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit." (2 Pet. 1:20, 21) This means that Bible prophecy was not the result of the writer's

10. Illustrate just what is meant by the expression 'word of God' as it relates to Biblical material.

11. How is it that Bible prophecy does not 'spring from any private interpretation'?

own analysis and interpretation of current human events and trends and what he thought these would lead to. Rather, the writer had his mind stimulated by God's spirit and was moved to express the inspired message, generally in his own words. So the words were those of the writer, but the *message* was that of Jehovah God.

¹² But was not the material that became part of the Bible often written years after the events described had occurred? Yes, this is true, for example, of the accounts about Jesus' earthly ministry. Nevertheless, God's spirit was responsible for producing an accurate record. This is evident from Jesus' words to his disciples: "The helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you." (John 14:26) So, then, God's spirit was responsible for accurate recall of the information that was included in the Bible record.

¹³ By means of his spirit, Jehovah God also saw to it that what was recorded suited his purpose, providing essential instruction for those desiring to be and to remain his approved servants. He guided the selection of material to be included. That is why the apostle Paul could say: "All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." (Rom. 15:4) And with specific reference to the experiences of the Israelites in the time of Moses, he remarked: "These things went on befalling them as examples [“types,” *Authorized Version*, margin], and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the [Jewish] systems of things have arrived." —1 Cor. 10:11.

12. What part did God's spirit play in guiding the recording of past events?

13. What evidence is there that God's spirit guided the selection of material that was included in the Bible?

¹⁴ We are not to conclude from this that God was in every case acting as a great "Dramatist," deliberately staging events that would provide examples from which his servants in later times could draw lessons of warning and encouragement. No, but as in the events the apostle referred to, the Israelites reacted to the circumstances according to their own choice and desires when they fell victim to murmuring, idolatry and fornication. God did not move them to do so. (1 Cor. 10:1-10) Since the Israelites were God's covenant people, the fact that they yielded to temptation adds force to the warning the apostle thereafter gives: "Let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall."—1 Cor. 10:12.

¹⁵ So, rather than cause many of these events to happen, Jehovah God simply let many situations develop according to their natural course and then caused the writers to record what God knew would be of value in the future. That the selection of material for the Bible record was indeed guided by God's spirit is well illustrated in the case of the disciple Jude's letter. Jude originally intended to write about the salvation that spirit-anointed Christians hold in common. However, under the influence of God's spirit, he discerned that fellow believers needed something else in order to cope with the situation they were then facing. Explaining the reason for departing from his original intention, he wrote: "Beloved ones, though I was making every effort to write you about the salvation we hold in common, I found it necessary to write you to exhort you to put up a hard fight for the faith that was once for all time delivered to the holy ones. My reason is that certain men have slipped in who have long ago been ap-

14. Did Jehovah God "stage" events involving the wrongdoing of the Israelites so that these things could be recorded for a warning to Christians? Explain.

15. How does the letter of Jude show that God's spirit guided the selection of material?

pointed by the Scriptures to this judgment, ungodly men, turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct and proving false to our only Owner and Lord, Jesus Christ." (Jude 3, 4) What Jude thereafter set forth under the direction of God's spirit was just what fellow believers needed in order to resist corrupting influences.

¹⁶ Does the fact that God's spirit guided the selection of material for the Bible account mean that those involved in writing took no personal initiative as regards the subject matter of their writing? No, often they did have goals in mind and wrote accordingly. They answered certain questions or tried to clarify points that had given rise to misunderstandings. An example of this is the apostle Paul's second letter to the congregation at Thessalonica. Some in that congregation had wrongly concluded that the presence of Jesus Christ in kingly power was at hand. Then, too, there were those who had not taken to heart his previous counsel about 'working hard and walking decently as regards people outside the congregation.' Paul's second letter came to grips with this and revealed the proper Christian view on these points. (1 Thess. 4:10-12; 2 Thess. 2:1-3; 3:10-15) Since Bible writers like Paul were responsive to the leading of God's spirit, what they wrote was in full harmony with God's purpose and therefore dependable.

HUMAN OPINIONS—WITH OR WITHOUT DIVINE BACKING?

¹⁷ But what of those times when Bible writers seemingly expressed their own opinion? Take, for instance, the following statements of the apostle Paul: "To the others I say, yes, I, not the Lord . . ." "Now concerning virgins I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opin-

16. Did the Bible writers at times take the initiative in setting forth material? Explain.

17, 18. How should we understand the apostle Paul's statements about 'giving his own opinion'?

ion." "She [a widow] is happier if she remains as she is [that is, unmarried], according to my opinion. I certainly think I also have God's spirit." (1 Cor. 7:12, 25, 40) Just what did Paul mean by these statements?

¹⁸ The apostle could not quote a direct teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ on the points under discussion and therefore expressed his "opinion." However, he wrote under the direction of God's spirit and so his opinion had divine guidance and expressed God's own view. This is confirmed by the fact that the apostle Peter grouped Paul's letters along with the rest of the Scriptures in saying: "Consider the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul *according to the wisdom given him* also wrote you, speaking about these things as he does also in all his letters. In them, however, are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unsteady are twisting, as they do also *the rest of the Scriptures*, to their own destruction."—2 Pet. 3:15, 16.

¹⁹ So it can be seen that the Bible as a whole is God's "word" or message in that everything was recorded under the direction of his spirit, to serve his purpose and present matters factually. Whenever the Bible quotes the statements of men or relates what they did under certain circumstances, the Bible context makes it clear whether their course should be imitated or avoided, their reasoning be accepted or rejected.

²⁰ Take the book of Job as an example. Extensive sections of that book deal with wrong views expressed by Job's three companions and at times even by Job himself. Such wrong conclusions and misapplication of facts clearly were not inspired of God. By way of illustration, Job's companion Eliphaz wrongly charged God: "In

19. In what respects is the Bible God's message?

20. Explain how a person may use the Bible in such a way as to attribute the views of imperfect men to God.

his holy ones he has no faith, and the heavens themselves are actually not clean in his eyes." (Job 15:15) Jehovah God later reproved Eliphaz and his companions for their misrepresentations. Eliphaz was told: "My anger has grown hot against you and your two companions, for you men have not spoken concerning me what is truthful as has my servant Job." (Job 42:7) While Eliphaz and his companions obviously were not inspired of God, the writer of the book of Job was guided by God's spirit in making an accurate record of their statements. This record serves to identify and expose wrong reasoning about God's permission of wickedness. Therefore, as a whole it is God's inspired word or message. Nevertheless, this shows that we must exercise care when quoting certain portions from the Bible. If taken out of their proper setting, out of context, something that is in reality the view of imperfect men can be wrongly attributed to God.

GOD'S WISDOM REVEALED IN USING MEN TO RECORD HIS WORD

²¹ God's use of men to record his "word" is an evidence of his great wisdom in supplying just what we imperfect humans need. He could have used angels. But would his "word" have had the same appeal? True, angels could have described in writing God's marvelous qualities and his grand dealings. They could have conveyed the depth of their own devotion to him and their appreciation for his boundless gifts. But would it not have been hard for us as imperfect humans to associate ourselves with a record that set forth the expressions of perfect spirit creatures whose experience and knowledge are far superior to ours? Life in their realm could not have been portrayed as we know life—its joys

21. Had Jehovah God used angels to write the entire Bible, would it really have been more valuable to us as imperfect humans?

along with its fears, disappointments and sorrow. Hence, through his use of men, Jehovah God saw to it that his "word" had the warmth, variety and appeal that only the human touch could give it.

²² If the human element were completely lacking from the Bible, we might also have great difficulty in grasping its message. It might be hard to see how we, as imperfect humans, could possibly gain an approved standing with the Creator. For example, if the record merely told us that 'God is merciful,' this would not be enough in order for us to understand just what this means. We humans need to have such matters expressed to us in ways that we can grasp. Being written by men, the Bible provides concrete illustrations from real life, presenting them from the human perspective. It tells us of humans who, although knowing God's law, succumbed to weaknesses and became guilty of serious transgressions, the accounts at times giving us persons' own words as to how they felt and reacted. At the same time we learn to what extent they were shown mercy.

²³ Take the case of King David. He had proved himself to be a man of outstanding faith. But, then, circumstances led to his becoming a victim of wrong desire. David came to feel an attraction for the wife of Uriah the Hittite, a man who loyally supported David's kingship. He allowed his desire to grow and actually brought Uriah's wife, Bath-sheba, into his palace. Though he may not have had in mind actually engaging in sex relations, his passions were aroused to the point where he did commit adultery. Learning that Bath-sheba had become pregnant as a result, he hurriedly sought to conceal the matter by trying to get Uriah to go home and have

22. If the human element were completely missing from the Bible, what problems in understanding it might we have?

23, 24. Relate what happened to David in connection with Bath-sheba, and show what we learn from this about Jehovah God.

relations with his wife. This failing, David became desperate. Only one way seemed open to prevent Bath-sheba's being exposed as an adulteress with him and that was to get her husband out of the way and then to take her as his own wife. So David arranged to have Uriah put in such a position that he would be almost certain to die in battle. Uriah was slain, and David then took widowed Bath-sheba as his wife.—2 Sam. 11:2-27.

²⁴ When the prophet Nathan exposed to him his grave wrong, David was cut to the heart and expressed the deepest of sorrow for his sin. He exclaimed: "I have sinned against Jehovah." (2 Sam. 12:13) Seeing David's heartfelt repentance, Jehovah accepted it and, though punishing him, did not cast him off as his servant. It was no exaggeration, therefore, when David stated in one of his psalms: "You, O Jehovah, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and trueness."—Ps. 86:15.

²⁵ On the other hand, the Bible tells of the unfaithful inhabitants of Jerusalem in the days of Jeremiah. The people as a whole turned a deaf ear to repeated urgings to repent. They defiantly persisted in a practice of lawlessness. So Jehovah God cut off his mercy, withdrawing his protection from them and allowing them to experience a terrible calamity at the hands of the Babylonians. He refused to listen even though they desperately cried for help. Why? Because they remained unrepentant. Regarding this, the prophet Jeremiah wrote: "You have blocked approach with anger, and you keep pursuing us. You have killed; you have shown no compassion. You have blocked approach to yourself with a cloud mass, that prayer may not pass through."—Lam. 3:43, 44.

²⁶ Against the background of such illustrations from real life, we cannot help but get a balanced picture of the kind of God Jehovah is and how he will deal with us. Regardless of how serious a transgression imperfect humans may commit, they can gain God's forgiveness if they are truly repentant. But if they unrepentantly continue violating his righteous commands, they will not escape his adverse judgment. Since the Bible reveals the wide scope of God's personality in terms with which we imperfect humans can be appealed to, we can really get to know him as a person.

²⁷ The way in which the Bible is written has served to reveal what is in people's hearts. (Heb. 4:12) Those who want to find what seem to be flaws and contradictions in the Bible can find them. One reason for this is that the Bible does not spell out all the details. Often it relates people's reasonings, words and actions without expressing any direct approval or disapproval. That is why some persons, on reading a certain account, question whether God was really just and fair in what he did. Then they use this as an excuse for not making the changes in their way of life that the Bible recommends. This works in harmony with God's purpose to have as his approved servants only those who really love him and appreciate him for what he is.—Deut. 30:11-20; 1 John 4:8-10; 5:2, 3.

²⁸ However, the person who has given serious consideration to the Bible and has actually experienced what a wonderful guide for living it is does not seize upon what appear to be contradictions in an effort to discredit it as God's message to man. He does not blind himself to seeming problems. Not at all. He realizes that the Bible is *one harmonious whole*, and so exercises care that he does not ignore the context in which the Bible as a whole pre-

25. What do we learn about Jehovah's mercy from his dealings with the Israelites in the time of Jeremiah?

26. How do examples from real life help us to know Jehovah?

sents a particular event or situation. By way of illustration, say you had a very good friend whom you knew to be a good father, a man who really cared about the welfare of his children. If you heard that he severely punished his son, would you immediately conclude that he was totally unjustified and unreasonable in this? Of course not; because of your knowing him, you would reason that he must have had valid grounds for handling the situation as he did. Similarly, the Bible provides enough information about the personality, ways and dealings of Jehovah to enable us to know the kind of God he is. Therefore, even when the details are not spelled out in any given situation, why should anyone become upset, thinking that God is unloving, unmerciful or unjust? To do so would be to deny the abundant evidence in the Bible as a whole that he is a loving, merciful and just God.—Ex. 34:6, 7; Isa. 63:7-9.

²⁹ There is yet another reason why we should expect the Bible to contain minor differences, seeming contradictions, when discussing similar material. Take the accounts about Jesus' earthly ministry. They were written by four men. Of the three whose occupational background we know, one was an educated physician, another a tax collector and the third a fisherman. Since Jehovah God did not dictate just what these men should write but simply guided them by means of his spirit to ensure the accuracy of what they recorded, there would naturally be variations. Each writer could have included far more information than he did. One of them, the apostle John, even said: "To be sure, Jesus performed many other signs also before the disciples, which are not written down in this scroll." (John 20:30) So the Gospel accounts are very condensed, with cer-

tain details found in one being left out in another. Rather than contradict one another, the accounts complement one another, aiding us to get a more complete picture. At the same time the variations provide a further proof that the Bible is dependable. How so? In that they demonstrate that there was no collusion among the writers, no plotting together to put forth a false story.

³⁰ So there actually is no reason for people to get entangled in quibbling over minor matters. Regardless of how scholarly and well-educated they may be, they are really in no position to pass judgment on matters they did not personally witness. And even if they had been right there on the scene, they, too, would present accounts emphasizing somewhat different aspects of what they saw and heard. Really, an honest appraisal of the Gospel accounts makes it clear that these are four separate testimonies that are harmonious in establishing the one vital truth: Jesus Christ is the Son of God.—John 20:31.

HAS GOD'S MESSAGE BEEN RELIABLY TRANSMITTED?

³¹ God's message as contained in the four Gospels and in the rest of the Bible has not been preserved in original manuscript form. The original manuscripts perished long ago, through either use or the deteriorating effects of weather. How, then, can we be sure that God's message has not been distorted after many centuries of copying and recopying?

³² The Bible itself calls attention to the enduring quality of God's "word." At Isaiah 40:8 we read: "The green grass has dried up, the blossom has withered; but

29. Why should we not be surprised to find some seeming contradictions in the Bible?

30. In connection with the Bible, why is there no reason to quibble over minor differences?

31. What question presents itself in view of the fact that original Bible manuscripts are not in existence?

32. What does the Bible itself say about the enduring quality of God's message, and what did this require as to its preservation?

as for the word of our God, it will last to time indefinite." For these words to be true in future generations, it would be necessary for God's "word" to remain free from distortion. Were it to become unreliable due to an abundance of human errors in copying, it would cease to be God's message. But is there any evidence that God's "word" has endured in reliable form? Most assuredly!

³³ Those copying the Sacred Scriptures exercised great care. In their work, many Hebrew Scripture scribes counted not only the words but also the letters copied. Whenever the slightest error was found —the miswriting of a single letter—the entire section might be cut out and replaced by a new, faultless one. It became a practice for the scribes to read each word aloud before writing it. To write even one word from memory was considered by many to be a gross sin. The Christian Scripture copyists, though often not professionals, likewise did careful work. As a result remarkably few errors were made, and even those that were made do not materially affect the message.

³⁴ Comparative studies of thousands of ancient Bible manuscripts, including some that are about 2,000 years old, reveal that the text must have been accurately transmitted. Of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures, scholar W. H. Green noted: "It may be safely said that no other work of antiquity has been so accurately transmitted." The well-known scholar Sir Frederic Kenyon, in the introduction to his seven volumes on the "Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri," stated:

"The first and most important conclusion derived from the examination of them [the

33. How did Bible copyists generally go about doing their work?

34. What do comparative studies of ancient manuscripts indicate about the dependability of the Bible text as we have it today?

Papyri] is the satisfactory one that they confirm the essential soundness of the existing texts. No striking or fundamental variation is shown either in the Old or the New Testament. There are no important omissions or additions of passages, and no variations which affect vital facts or doctrines. The variations of text affect minor matters, such as the order of words or the precise words used . . . But their essential importance is their confirmation, by evidence of an earlier date than was hitherto available, of the integrity of our existing texts."

Similarly, in his book *The Bible and Archaeology*, he observed:

"The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."

³⁵ Truly, God's message, as written by men under the guidance of his spirit, has endured in reliable form to the present day. The dependable preservation has not been without purpose. The message itself can have a profound effect for good on those who accept it as coming from God. Even today the words addressed to Christians at Thessalonica can be applied to hundreds of thousands of people throughout the earth: "When you received God's word [or message], which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God, which is also at work in you believers." (1 Thess. 2:13) Like the Thessalonians, many today have been willing to suffer for their faithful adherence to the Sacred Scriptures, convinced that these are indeed God's inspired "word." (1 Thess. 2:14-16) Are you likewise convinced? Is that "word" or message at work in you? Are you benefiting from it in your daily life?

35. What effect can the Bible have on us today?

Lasting Gain FROM

LIVING BY THE BIBLE AS A FAMILY

TO DAY we can see evidence all around us that millions of men, women and children are having serious problems in living together as family groups. In many lands, separations, divorces and broken homes are increasing at an alarming rate. Though still living in the same house or apartment, a considerable number of married people do little more than tolerate their mates. Husbands, wives and children often have very little in common, each family member going his or her own separate way. Is it not obvious, therefore, that people everywhere are in great need of a dependable guide?

A main objective of the Bible is to provide guidelines for life that will lastingly benefit all who follow them. There is no aspect of living wherein the Bible's counsel cannot be applied with real benefit. "All Scripture is . . . beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

What the Bible sets forth for our guidance is very realistic. It does not leave us with the thought that those trying to follow its admonition will have no problems.

1. What evidence is there that millions of families are having serious problems?
2. What is one of the Bible's main objectives?
3. Why can we say that what the Bible sets forth for our guidance is realistic?

No, the Bible frankly acknowledges that there will be problems. But it does not leave matters there, simply recommending that we accept things as they are and not get upset about them. The Bible shows what we can do in a positive way to cope with problems and enjoy good relations with fellow humans, including our own families.

THE BIBLE'S STANDARD FOR MARRIAGE

From the very first book of the Bible we learn that Jehovah God is the Originator of marriage. (Gen. 2:22-24) Being a God of love, he purposed that marriage contribute to the happiness of both husband and wife as well as provide a stable arrangement for raising children. Marriage was to be a permanent union, as is evident from what Jesus Christ said to certain Pharisees who questioned him on the matter of divorce: "Did you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh'? So that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has yoked together let no man put apart." (Matt. 19:4-6) Obviously, respect for this original standard could have prevented many of the emotional prob-

4. Who is the originator of marriage, and what was his purpose respecting the arrangement?

lems and hurts resulting from divorces and broken homes.

⁵ The fact that Jehovah God tolerated polygamy and divorce for reasons other than marital unfaithfulness among the Israelites did not mean that he had abandoned his original standard for marriage. By the time the law was given through Moses, polygamy and divorce had become established practices. Knowing the inclinations of the Israelites, Jehovah God wisely laid down such commands as would best deter abuses under the then-existing circumstances. Jesus Christ pointed this out when he said: "Moses, out of regard for your hardheartedness, made the concession to you of divorcing your wives, but such has not been the case from the beginning."—Matt. 19:8.

⁶ Jesus Christ's words indicated, however, that God's original standard for marriage would apply to his Christian followers. How did his disciples react? Did they fully appreciate that this was the best arrangement? What they said indicates that they did not have a truly balanced view of the matter. They reasoned: "If such is the situation of a man with his wife, it is not advisable to marry." (Matt. 19:10) The disciples were aware of the problems in marriage that could result due to human imperfection. So they felt that singleness would be better than risking the possibility of being permanently united in marriage to someone with whom it would be very hard to get along. Jesus Christ, however, when recommending singleness, did not condemn marriage.—Matt. 19:11, 12.

⁷ Of course, Jesus' disciples were not wrong in taking a serious view of the original standard for marriage. Marriage

5. Why did the law that God gave to the Israelites tolerate polygamy, as well as divorce for reasons other than marital unfaithfulness?

6. How did Jesus' disciples react to the reestablishment of the original standard for marriage, and why?

7. Why is it right to take a very serious view of marriage?

among imperfect humans has negative features that cannot be ignored. The Bible frankly tells those deciding to marry that they will have "tribulation in their flesh." (1 Cor. 7:28) Marriage brings with it serious responsibilities, anxieties and cares. (1 Cor. 7:32-35) Accidents and sickness, for example, can bring tremendous burdens and stresses on a family.

⁸ One who is guided by the Bible, therefore, will realize that marriage is something for which a man or woman should be prepared mentally and emotionally. Those contemplating marriage should give serious consideration to their ability to be good husbands and fathers, and good wives and mothers. They should try to determine beforehand the main weaknesses of the person they wish to marry and whether they can cope with these in a loving and understanding way for a lifetime. They should ask themselves whether they are really willing to make personal sacrifices and to do everything within their power to contribute to their prospective mate's happiness. Many men and women could have spared themselves and their mates untold pain and grief had they taken seriously what the Bible says married people should expect. Instead of rushing into something for which they were unprepared, they could have waited until such time as they were equipped to assume marriage responsibilities and had the discernment needed to select a lifelong mate. Such a course would have brought them lasting gain indeed.

⁹ The Bible's consideration of these negative aspects, however, does not mean that among imperfect humans there can be no happy marriages. To the contrary, the Scriptures reveal that a good wife, for example, is a real treasure and a great bless-

8. What should a Scriptural view about the seriousness of marriage enable a prospective husband or wife to do, and what sad consequences may thereby be avoided?

9. What does the Bible say as to the possibility of imperfect humans' finding happiness in marriage?

ing to her husband. We read: "Has one found a good wife? One has found a good thing, and one gets goodwill from Jehovah." (Prov. 18:22) "A capable wife who can find? Her value is far more than that of corals." (Prov. 31:10) The Bible also gives the following encouragement to a husband: "Rejoice with the wife of your youth." (Prov. 5:18) Despite imperfections, married people, especially when they strive to apply Bible principles, can find contentment, satisfaction and joy in their relationship.

THE HUSBAND'S ROLE

¹⁰ The Scriptures encourage husbands to imitate the perfect example of Jesus Christ in their exercise of headship. A husband's headship does not entitle him to dominate his wife, putting her in a low, degraded position. Instead, it places upon him the responsibility of being self-sacrificing in his love, putting his wife's welfare and interests ahead of his personal desires. "Husbands," wrote the inspired apostle Paul, "continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it." (Eph. 5:25) Christ Jesus' exercise of headship over the congregation is by no means cruel or tyrannical. His self-sacrificing love, coupled with his confidence and trust in the members of the congregation, in effect, "compels" them to respond with like love, doing their utmost to please him.—2 Cor. 5:14, 15; compare 1 John 5:2, 3.

¹¹ Illustrating the nature of the love that husbands should demonstrate for their wives, the apostle Paul continued: "In this way husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no man ever hated his own flesh; but he feeds and cherishes it, as the Christ also does the con-

gregation." (Eph. 5:28, 29) Husbands generally do not downgrade their own accomplishments, make themselves appear incompetent, subject their bodies to cruel treatment, and disregard their need for rest and refreshment. They do not want to have the reputation of being "good-for-nothings," but desire a dignified standing in the eyes of others. Applying the Bible's counsel would therefore mean according their wives the same kind of dignity and consideration that they want for themselves.

¹² If a husband is going to love his wife as he does himself, he must really know her. This is exactly what the Bible commands husbands: "Continue dwelling . . . with [your wives] according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one." (1 Pet. 3:7) When a husband knows his wife's feelings and her limitations—physical, emotional and otherwise—he can treat her considerately, as a precious vessel. If a wife is to feel that she has an honorable position in the home, the husband must be willing to discuss family matters with her in a calm and reasonable way, getting her thoughts and ideas. The wife should feel free to express herself and have the assurance that what she says in discussing serious matters will not be lightly dismissed but be given due consideration. Furthermore, a husband must be alert to take note of more than just the spoken word. Deep inner feelings can be revealed by the tone of voice, facial expressions or by lack of enthusiasm or spontaneity. A husband who has come to know his wife will not ignore such things and blindly go ahead with something that might give rise to needless irritation.

¹³ Of course, as head of the family, a

10. What is involved in a husband's exercising headship in imitation of Jesus Christ?

11. How can husbands demonstrate that they love their wives as their own bodies?

12. What is needed for a husband to be able to 'assign honor to his wife as to a weaker vessel'?

13. When should a husband remain firm despite emotional displays on the part of his wife, and how may this be beneficial?

husband would not give in to his wife when he definitely knows that the interests of the family as a whole would be injured thereby. He recognizes that he is Scripturally obligated to uphold what is right despite his wife's emotional displays. Were he to comply with her wishes against his better judgment, he would be dishonoring God, who has entrusted him with the position of family head. (1 Cor. 11:3) And if matters thereafter led to difficulty for the family, this could embitter him toward his wife. On the other hand, his remaining firm for what he definitely believes to be the right course will be to the family's benefit. When his wife later sees the wisdom of the decision made, she will be glad that her husband remained firm. This will contribute toward enhancing her respect for him and make her less inclined to use feminine influence in order to sway her husband to do things her way.

THE WIFE'S ROLE

¹⁴ Regarding the role of wives, the Bible states: "Be in subjection to your own husbands, in order that, if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect. And . . . [let your adornment be] the secret person of the heart in the incorruptible apparel of the quiet and mild spirit."—1 Pet. 3:1-4.

¹⁵ A wife seeking to comply with this Scriptural counsel will consult her husband on vital matters—major purchases, employment offers and the like—before acting on them. She will strive to know his mind on things and handle family affairs in a way that she knows will be agreeable with him. By doing this, she will gain much. Her husband will not feel any

need to lay down rules for her in an attempt to control unwise actions. She will have his confidence and trust, permitting her to use her capabilities and initiative to the full in caring for the family.—Prov. 31:11-31.

¹⁶ Wifely subjection may not always be easy, especially if the husband is inconsiderate, unreasonable and even shirks responsibility. One thing is certain, however; the situation will not get better if the wife tries to assume headship, constantly nags or criticizes her husband and expects him to do things far beyond his capabilities. (Prov. 21:9, 19; 27:15, 16) Rather than "blowing up" over some neglect of his, a wife will have far better results by trying to encourage her husband and maintaining calmness and an even temper under trying circumstances. Her "quiet and mild spirit" may be just what is needed to cause him to think seriously about the way he is handling himself and to start making changes in his life. Even though progress may be very slow, a wife who applies the Bible's counsel gains. She avoids the tremendous emotional stress, bitterness and unpleasantness to which open confrontations with her husband would lead.—Prov. 14:29, 30; 1 Pet. 3:10, 11.

¹⁷ Similarly, whenever a husband makes wrong decisions, little is gained by a wife who makes a big issue of this. Humans are prone to defend themselves even when they are wrong. So if a wife makes a major case out of her husband's having used poor judgment, she may get the very opposite reaction to what she is seeking. He may become more determined to disregard what she says in order to prove to her that he does not need her advice. On the other hand, if her reaction reflects an understanding of the fact that we imperfect humans cannot altogether avoid mistakes

14. What is the Scriptural role of a wife?

15. How might a wife show her subjection, and what benefits may she reap thereby?

16. What benefits may come to a wife who heeds the Bible's counsel despite her husband's disregard for it?
17. Why is it wise for a wife not to make a big issue about her husband's mistakes in judgment?

in judgment, he may be far more inclined to give consideration to her thoughts the next time. (Jas. 3:2) His pride would not then be so intimately involved in the matter.

CHILD TRAINING

¹⁸ The extent to which parents apply or ignore the Bible's counsel in fulfilling their respective roles affects children either for good or for bad. If a wife undermines the God-given authority of her husband, the children may in time show little respect for the parents. They may play one parent against the other in attempts to get what they want. However, when a wife builds up the children's appreciation for her husband's judgment by word and example, they come to appreciate the benefits of approaching their father for advice and counsel. (Prov. 12:4) His openness in admitting mistakes and his willingness to take into consideration the family's suggestions and feelings can do much toward creating a warm family spirit. When there are clear indications that he values his wife's judgment, the children will also come to respect and appreciate their mother's admonition. (Prov. 6:20-23; 31:28, 29) Yes, the warm, loving and respectful relationship between husband and wife that the Bible encourages draws the family together and makes children receptive to their parents' instruction.

¹⁹ Proper training of children is definitely not an easy task. Very early in life children manifest such bad traits as stubbornness, rebelliousness and selfishness. Parents must be alert to note wrong inclinations and then take appropriate disciplinary measures to correct their children, doing so patiently. (Prov. 22:15; 29:15) They must also be able to discern problems that could arise from things that

in themselves may not appear to be wrong. Often it is a matter of parents' being able to see when a certain course is no longer wholesome.

²⁰ For example, there is a difference between privacy and isolationism. A certain amount of privacy is beneficial for thoughtful meditation, constructive thinking and planning. But isolationism is dangerous, as it deprives one of the balancing effect of others' thinking, experience and judgment. It may cause one to become self-centered and blind to the needs and feelings of others. Just seeing himself, the isolationist may pity himself or become opinionated, callous and rude. "One isolating himself," says a Bible proverb, "will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth." —Prov. 18:1.

²¹ Children who have a tendency to isolate themselves must be made to feel that they are wanted and appreciated members of the family, that their thoughts, emotions and experiences are important to their parents. In the example set by their parents they need to see positive proof that real happiness comes from giving of oneself in behalf of others. (Acts 20:35) Parents can provide such proof, not only by expressing genuine concern and sympathy for persons in need, but also by doing what they can to be of help. It may simply be a matter of doing shopping, cleaning or other chores for elderly, infirm or handicapped persons. At a very early age a child can be taught to share in such activity. This can do much to get the child to recognize the importance of showing concern for the welfare of other people.

²² Parents must also watch that they do not encourage or allow their sons and daughters to isolate themselves with their

18. How does the extent to which parents apply or ignore Bible counsel affect the children?

19. Why is the proper training of children no easy task?

20. Why is isolationism a danger to be avoided?
21. What might parents do to help their children to avoid isolating themselves?
22. How might children isolate themselves from adults, and what effect may this well have on them?

own entertainment, friends, ideas or imaginations. A family needs to do things together in order to maintain good communication. Parents have to be on guard that they do not simply *appear* to do things as a family. Perhaps when visitors come to the home or the family visits elsewhere, the children as a regular matter of course withdraw themselves from the company of adults and keep away during the entire visit. They may even be told to do so. If children thus end up associating only with those of their own age group, how can they possibly develop appreciation for the wisdom that comes with age and experience? (Prov. 1:20, 21; 8:1-11) How can they learn to carry on meaningful conversation with adults and understand the aspirations, concerns, feelings and needs of older people? (Lev. 19:32) Will they not become narrow in their viewpoints, looking at matters only through the eyes of inexperienced youth? At the same time, will not parents likewise become narrow in their outlook, unaware of the thinking of their children? Will they not have a generation gap in their home?

²³ In other ways too parents may fail to determine the real feelings and thinking of their children and thereby lose touch with them. How might this happen? Absorbed in the pursuit of personal goals, parents may not take the time to listen to their children and to take note of their reactions. (Compare Proverbs 27:23.) They may ask their children about how things are going at school or how they regard smoking, taking drugs for thrills, conduct with the opposite sex, and so forth. While perhaps sensing that they do not have the full truth of the matter, parents may content themselves with their children's brief answers and comments. Because of repeatedly ignoring evidence regarding their children's deeper feelings

23. How might parents fail to find out the real thinking and feelings of their children?

as reflected in their tone of voice, facial expressions and extent of enthusiasm or spontaneity, such parents may in time not even notice attitudes and actions indicating that their sons and daughters really do not mean what they say. Parents may think that things are going well with their children, as they are being well provided for materially. In reality, however, the children may be quite discontented and believe that their parents have little interest in their welfare. Clearly, parental neglect of this kind results in a breakdown of vital family communication.

²⁴ Besides striving hard not to lose touch with their children's thoughts and feelings, parents need to know how to discipline them. The Bible instructs fathers: "Do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Eph. 6:4) How might a father's discipline irritate his children? He may be unreasonable in his commands, needlessly severe or inconsistent. Punishments may be meted out in the heat of anger. Since anger begets anger, the children may build up anger and resentment within themselves toward their father. They may submit to his discipline simply because they are forced to yield to his superior strength. Whenever this happens, the discipline will not really motivate them to do what is right. It may well bring out the worst in them—resentment, bitterness and rebelliousness.

²⁵ The father who tries to make his children aware of his deep love for them and impresses upon them the value and rightness of a way of life that harmonizes with the Bible will have entirely different results. True, the children may at first not always recognize the rightness of their father's discipline. But as they think about

24. What admonition does Ephesians 6:4 give to fathers, and what can happen if it is disregarded?

25. What should a father do so that his discipline will affect his children for good?

it afterward, they may come to appreciate it as an expression of a loving father who really cares for them.—Heb. 12:5-11.

²⁶ The administering of discipline is only a small part of a father's Scriptural responsibility toward his children. He is also under obligation to spend a reasonable amount of time with them so that his example and teaching can counteract the wrong influences to which they are subjected at school and elsewhere. A father who takes this seriously will not think that he has done his full duty if he perhaps conducts a weekly Bible study with his family. He appreciates that bringing up children in the "mental-regulating of Jehovah" is a responsibility to be cared for each day if at all possible.—Deut. 6:6, 7.

²⁷ Daily instruction does not mean that a father must constantly be quoting the Scriptures to his children. But he needs to know what the Bible says and convey the spirit of its message to his children. His own attitude, words and actions should be in harmony with the Scriptures. Whenever the children need guidance, he should be able to help them to see things from the Biblical standpoint. In this way, God's Word will be prominently before the children. A wife can be of great assistance to her husband in providing such vital training.—Prov. 1:8; 6:20; 31:26.

²⁸ What if a husband does not take God's Word seriously? What if only the wife appreciates its counsel? In that case the responsibility for bringing children up in the "mental-regulating of Jehovah" rests with the wife. (Compare Proverbs 31:1) This is not an ideal situation, but it is not hopeless. Many women have succeeded in aiding their children to become exemplary servants of Jehovah God.

26. Why is a father's spending a reasonable amount of time with his children very important?

27. What is involved in a father's giving daily instruction to his children?

28. What must a wife do if her husband does not follow the counsel of God's Word?

²⁹ Take the case of Timothy in the first century C.E. Due to the efforts of his mother Eunice and likely also of his grandmother Lois, he came to appreciate the Scriptures. His mother, though it may have been difficult for her on account of her unbelieving husband, started teaching the Scriptures to her son at a very early age. That is why the apostle Paul could say to Timothy: "From infancy you have known the holy writings." (2 Tim. 3:15) Yes, from his earliest recollections, Timothy never knew of a time when he had not been acquainted with the Sacred Scriptures. That excellent training contributed much toward making him a fine example in young manhood. He was well reported on by all who knew him well. (Acts 16:1, 2) To the congregation at Philippi, the apostle Paul said of Timothy: "I have no one else of a disposition like his who will genuinely care for the things pertaining to you. . . . you know the proof he gave of himself, that like a child with a father he slaved with me in furtherance of the good news."—Phil. 2:20-22.

³⁰ There can be no question that training children in the way the Bible outlines requires much time and effort. But are not the time spent and the effort put forth well worth it? Is it not rewarding when children prove themselves to be a credit to their parents? Even if parents have failed in the past because of not appreciating the value of the Bible, they may still be able to undo the damage resulting from lack of proper guidance and discipline. The application of the Bible's principles may even reach the hearts of older children as they see that their parents truly have their best interests at heart.

³¹ Living by the Bible does indeed bring

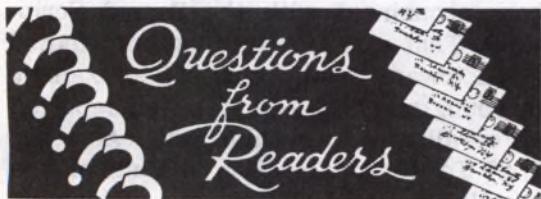
29. How does the case of Timothy show that a mother can give fine Scriptural training despite the unbelief of her husband?

30. How should parents feel about training children even if they have only recently come to appreciate the value of the Bible?

31. What is required of a person who seeks to live by the Bible, and how is he benefited?

lasting gain. To do so, we must really know what it says and seek to be guided by the spirit of its teaching in all that we do. This is something that cannot be done overnight. It takes continual study of God's Word and a burning desire to conform to its wise counsel. This, in turn, leads to true happiness, security, contentment and peace. As the Bible book of Proverbs puts it: "Happy is the man that has found wisdom, and the man that gets

discernment, for having it as gain is better than having silver as gain and having it as produce than gold itself. It is more precious than corals, and all other delights of yours cannot be made equal to it. Length of days is in its right hand; in its left hand there are riches and glory. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its roadways are peace. It is a tree of life to those taking hold of it, and those keeping fast hold of it are to be called happy.—Prov. 3:13-18.



- Would a husband's approving of sterilization (either for himself or for his wife) disqualify him from positions of congregational responsibility?

The Bible clearly shows God's high regard for the powers of procreation with which he has gifted humans. (Gen. 1:28; 9:1) The "fruitage of the belly" was counted a reward and an "inheritance from Jehovah." (Ps. 127:3) A man whose genital organs were severely damaged was disqualified under the Law covenant from 'coming into the congregation of Jehovah.' The fact that the context of this verse sets forth prohibitions upon those of certain races 'coming into the congregation of Jehovah' appears to indicate that this provision relates to defective males among foreigners who took up the worship of Jehovah. (Deut. 23:1-8) It is not stated whether the damaging of the genital organs was intentional or accidental. Additionally manifesting God's high regard for the powers of procreation, when a woman attempted to aid her husband in a struggle by seizing the genital organs of his opponent, the Law ruled that her hand should be amputated. (Deut. 25:11, 12) Christians, of course, are not bound by the Law covenant. Nevertheless, they are concerned as to the principles embodied therein.

From this we might conclude that the only course in harmony with God's purpose would be for persons to marry and bring forth as

many children as possible. The Scriptures, however, still allow for personal decision in matters relating to the procreative powers. If this were not so, then it would be a course of disrespect for the gift of those powers if any Christian refrained from marrying and producing children. Yet Christ Jesus, who himself refrained from marrying, said: "There are eunuchs that were born such from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs that were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs that have made themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of the heavens. Let him that can make room for it make room for it." Such ones making themselves "eunuchs on account of the kingdom of the heavens" did so by remaining single. (Matt. 19:10-12) By so doing they were not showing disrespect for God's provision regarding procreation. The apostle Paul, like Jesus, also showed that singleness could have advantages.—1 Cor. 7:25-38.

At the same time, neither Jesus nor his apostles urged childlessness upon married Christians. What Jesus said at Matthew 24:19 was simply a prophetic statement of fact—not to urge first-century Christians to avoid having children, but for them not to delay flight from the doomed city when the sign of her destruction was seen. Much closer to the time of that destruction, the apostle Paul was still encouraging passionate "younger widows to marry, to bear children."—1 Tim. 5:11-14.

In view of these Scriptural points, it should be evident that the bearing of children has divine approval. Hence, it would be wrong for one to submit to sterilization or approve of sterilization of one's wife simply because one has no appreciation for God's gift of the procreative powers. What, however, of the situation where one's wife has given birth to chil-

dren but has had to do so through surgical operations, such as cesarean section? She may have had as many as three such operations and her physician may warn her that a further pregnancy could place her in serious danger of experiencing womb rupture, generally fatal to both the mother and the fetus. Would sterilization in such a case necessarily show disrespect for the divine gift of procreation?

It seems evident that the couple have not manifested a light attitude toward their procreative powers, having already brought forth children. They may view sterilization as a procedure advisable to protect the life of the mother or the children already produced. They may view it as a 'last resort.' Thus in making their decision they may feel that it is a question of balancing respect for God's provision of the procreative powers with respect for the gift of life itself, in this case the life of the endangered mother. For this reason, and for additional reasons, it appears that such a decision is one that rests on the individual consciences of those involved.

It may be objected that, even under such circumstances, agreeing to sterilization would represent a lack of faith on the part of those involved. A doctor's warning is not necessarily certain to prove correct; hence, why not wait and see what happens? The same argument, however, could be used regarding women who submit to a hysterectomy, which, through removal of the womb, is certainly destructive of the procreative powers. Hysterectomies are often performed although the woman is not actually dying. Aside from incipient cancer, there may be large fibroids (fibromyomas) that cause great pain or much bleeding. Benign tumors can become degenerate. Since the threat of fatal illness that these things present is only *potential*, would respect for the procreative powers require the woman to wait until massive hemorrhaging actually begins before submitting to a hysterectomy and the loss of her procreative powers? True, the woman who *has had* several children by cesarean section may not have large fibroids or malignant tumors, yet at the same time it can hardly be said that her womb is a "healthy" one, having been cut open a number of times. The Christian whose conscience allows for sterilization might view the condition of her womb as a threat potentially as dangerous as these other conditions described.

Some might consider sterilization as a deliberate "mutilation" of the body. However, any major surgery has a 'mutilating' effect on the body; a cesarean section or a hysterectomy obviously does. Nonetheless, where it is a question of maintaining health and life, a Christian may feel that he can conscientiously submit to major surgery. Again, it is a matter of weighing factors, on the one hand giving due weight to respect for one's body and the qualities divinely implanted therein and, at the same time, giving equal weight to health and the preservation of life itself. This gives further reason why the decision regarding sterilization under such circumstances should rest with the consciences of those involved.

It is a recognized fact that only total abstinence from sexual relations gives any sure guarantee of avoiding pregnancy. But such total abstinence does not harmonize with the apostolic counsel at 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 and, if practiced, might increase the temptation to adultery on the part of one or the other of the mates. Christians who conscientiously wish to avoid sterilization may prefer to rely on self-control and contraceptive methods to avoid a potentially fatal pregnancy, accepting the risk that this involves. However, can such ones rightly condemn those whose conscience may allow for sterilization as a means of protecting an endangered life? In each case the individuals are seeking the same end: to neutralize or block the effect of their procreative powers, in one case by mechanical or chemical means of contraception, in the other case by surgical operation.

What of the man who submits to sterilization due to his wife's endangered state? It is not his body that has a weakened womb. Still, if his conscience allows for sterilization, he might

IN COMING ISSUES

- Life Free from Injustice
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prefer to be the one to suffer the operation, rather than have his wife undergo further surgery. His conscience might or might not allow him to do so.

What is here presented is not to be taken as indicating any encouragement whatsoever toward sterilization, even as we cannot encourage the use of contraceptive methods by couples seeking to avoid having children. The responsibility for whatever consequences or adverse side effects may result, whether at the present time or in the future, must rest with those making the decision. Sterilization, like a hysterectomy, is a serious step, since human ability to reverse its effects is very slight indeed.

The qualifying for congregational responsibility on the part of a man who approves of sterilization due to his wife's endangered state, then, is one that must be weighed in the light of Bible principles by the local body of elders. Does his life pattern as a whole show that he has deep respect for God's Word or does he make light of its counsel? Does he show himself to be conscientious and serious in his decisions? *If his motive in approving of sterilization were due to lack of respect for God's standards, this disrespectful attitude would likely*

be manifest in other ways as well. On the other hand, if he measures up to the Scriptural requirements for those having congregational responsibility as set forth in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and other texts, then the fact that his conscience allows for surgical sterilization as a life-protecting measure need not of itself disqualify him. Of course, the attitude of the congregation must be considered. If the matter became an issue of such proportion that it distracted measurably it could seriously limit his ability to serve with effectiveness. Weighing these factors, the elders should then make their decision.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

**April 6: The Bible—Written by Men but Still
God's Message, ¶1-20. Page 141. Songs to
Be Used: 20, 95.**

April 13: The Bible—Written by Men but Still God's Message, ¶21-35, and Lasting Gain from Living by the Bible as a Family, ¶1-9.
Page 147. Songs to Be Used: 100, 88.

April 20: Lasting Gain from Living by the
Bible as a Family, ¶10-31. Page 153. Songs
to Be Used: 9, 65.