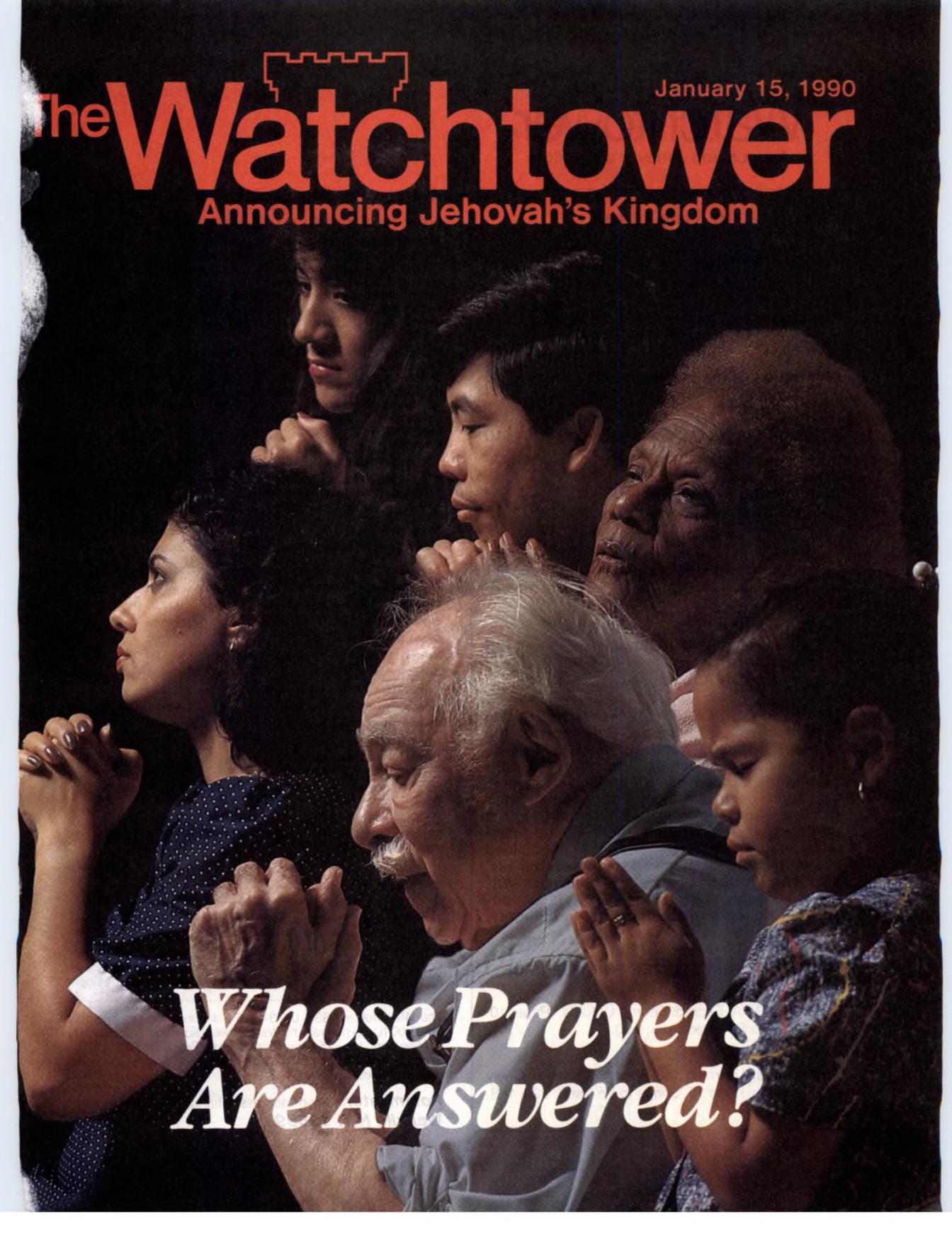


The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

January 15, 1990



*Whose Prayers
Are Answered?*

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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But where the way is hard,
fewer need set rewards more bitter.

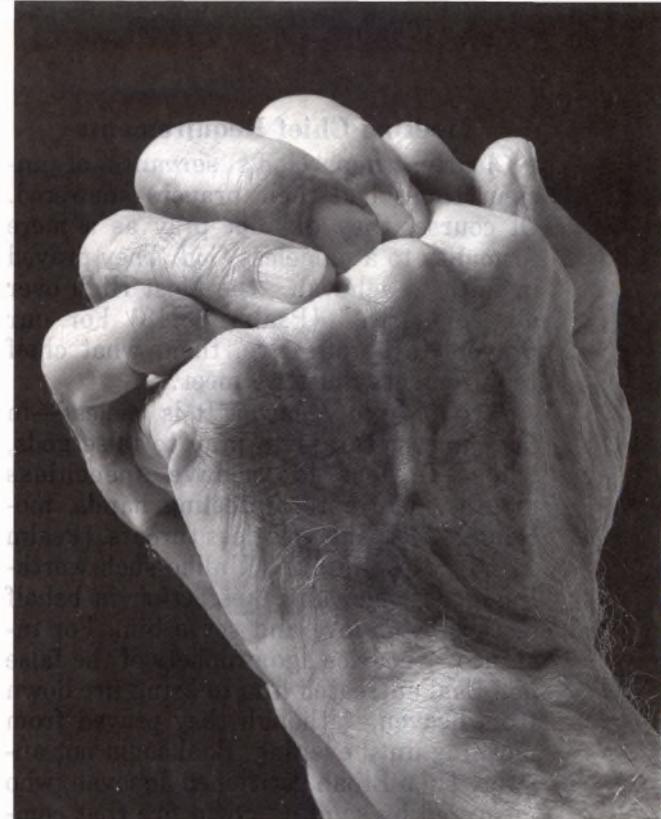
Whose Prayers Are Answered?

MORE things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of." So said the 19th-century English poet Alfred Tennyson. But many have prayed in vain for health, happiness, peace, and prosperity. In fact, some feel that God does not really listen to prayers. Yet, the Bible calls him the "Hearer of prayer."—Psalm 65:2.

This may well cause you to ask: Who is this "Hearer of prayer"? Must we meet special requirements for our prayers to be heard? How should we pray? And whose prayers are answered?

Their Prayers Were Heard

Prayer is as old as humankind. Consider Abel, a son of our first parents, Adam and Eve. When he offered God an acceptable sacrifice, doubtless it was accompanied by words of supplication and praise.—Genesis 4:1-5.



In the ninth century before our Common Era, God's prophet Jonah "prayed to Jehovah his God from the inward parts of the fish" that had been appointed to swallow him. Was that prayer effective? Yes, for "in time Jehovah commanded the fish, so that it vomited out Jonah onto the dry land." Jonah then proceeded to fulfill his God-given assignment to go to Nineveh.—Jonah 1:17; 2:1, 10; 3:1-5.

When David of ancient Israel was hemmed in by his foes, he cried out: "O Jehovah, hear my prayer; do give ear to my entreaty. In your faithfulness answer me in your righteousness." (Psalm 143:1) David's prayers for deliverance were answered, as his enemies never did succeed in doing away with him. Therefore, he could say: "Jehovah is near to all those calling upon him, to all those who call upon him in trueness."—Psalm 145:18.

Meeting Chief Requirements

Clearly, then, God's servants of ancient times had their prayers answered. Of course, they did not pray as a mere formality to a nameless God. They prayed in faith to Jehovah, "the Most High over all the earth." (Psalm 83:18) For our prayers to be effective, then, what chief requirements must we meet?

Pray only to Jehovah. It is useless—in fact, unscriptural—to pray to false gods, whose lifeless idols have speechless mouths, deaf ears, unfeeling hands, motionless feet, and voiceless throats. (Psalm 115:5-7; 1 John 5:21) Unlike such worthless gods, Jehovah takes action in behalf of those who love and serve him. For instance, centuries ago prophets of the false god Baal entreated him to bring fire down from heaven. Although they prayed from morning until evening, Baal could not answer. Then Elijah petitioned Jehovah, who answered by sending down fire that completely consumed the offering placed on an altar.—1 Kings, chapter 18.

Approach God through Jesus Christ alone. Jehovah God sent his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to the earth to serve as a ransom to redeem mankind from sin and death. (John 3:16, 36; Romans 5:12; 6:23) Hence, for those availing themselves of this provision, God opened up a new approach to himself in prayer. Such earlier servants of God as the psalmist David prayed directly to Jehovah. (Psalm 4:1; 17:1; 55:1; 102:1) But the new approach was through Jesus, who said: "No one comes to the Father except through me. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14:6, 14) Nowhere do the Scriptures suggest that prayers should be directed to God through anyone else.

So, then, once we have learned that we should pray to God in Jesus' name, our prayers would not be answered unless we prayed only to Jehovah through his Son.

But there are also other reasons why Jehovah does not answer most prayers.

Why God Does Not Answer

God will not answer our prayers just because we assume a special posture while praying. The Scriptures do not require that we pray only in one particular bodily position. Of course, kneeling may show humility before God. But it is acceptable to pray while standing, sitting at a table, resting in bed, or going about daily activities. (Daniel 6:10, 11; Mark 11:25) Why, Jehovah even answers inaudible prayers! Before telling Persia's king that he desired to rebuild Jerusalem's devastated walls, Nehemiah silently "prayed to the God of the heavens," and Jehovah answered that prayer. (Nehemiah 2:1-6) So if posture is not the important thing, why do so many prayers go unanswered by God?

Jehovah takes no pleasure in the prayers of the wicked. Yes, "he that is turning his ear away from hearing the law—even his prayer is something detestable." (Proverbs 28:9) Through the prophet Isaiah, God told His wayward people: "When you spread out your palms, I hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening; with bloodshed your very hands have become filled." (Isaiah 1:15) Naturally, the prayers of the wicked are not answered even if they are addressed to God through Christ.

God does not answer hypocritical prayers. "When you pray," said Jesus Christ, "you must not be as the hypocrites; because they like to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the broad ways to be visible to men. Truly I say to you, They are having their reward in full." Jesus added: "You, however, when you pray, go into your private room and, after shutting your door, pray to your Father who is in secret; then your Father

who looks on in secret will repay you." (Matthew 6:5, 6) By saying this, Jesus did not rule out all public prayers, for he himself prayed audibly in the presence of others. (Matthew 14:19) But Christ was showing that it is wrong to pray in public solely to be seen and heard by others and to receive their praise.

Jehovah does not answer insincere, repetitive prayers. Said Jesus: "But when praying, do not say the same things over and over again, just as the people of the nations do, for they imagine they will get a hearing for their use of many words. So, do not make yourselves like them, for God your Father knows what things you are needing before ever you ask him." (Matthew 6:7, 8) Many in Oriental lands think that each time they spin a prayer wheel (a drum into which written prayers are put), the petitions are repeated. Millions of others use Rosaries or recite prayers from prayer books. But those wishing to be heard by God will avoid repetitive prayers and will pay attention to Jesus' further instructions.

"Pray . . . This Way"

Jesus next gave what many call the model prayer. (Matthew 6:9-13) He said: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified.'" Addressing God as "our Father" indicates that others also have a close relationship with him as part of his family of worshipers. The sanctification of God's name, Jehovah, is of utmost importance, but how will he sanctify it? By removing the wicked, he will clear away from that name all the reproach that has been heaped upon it.—Ezekiel 38:23.

"Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth," added Jesus. God's rulership as expressed in his Son's heavenly Messianic Kingdom will soon come against all opposers of di-

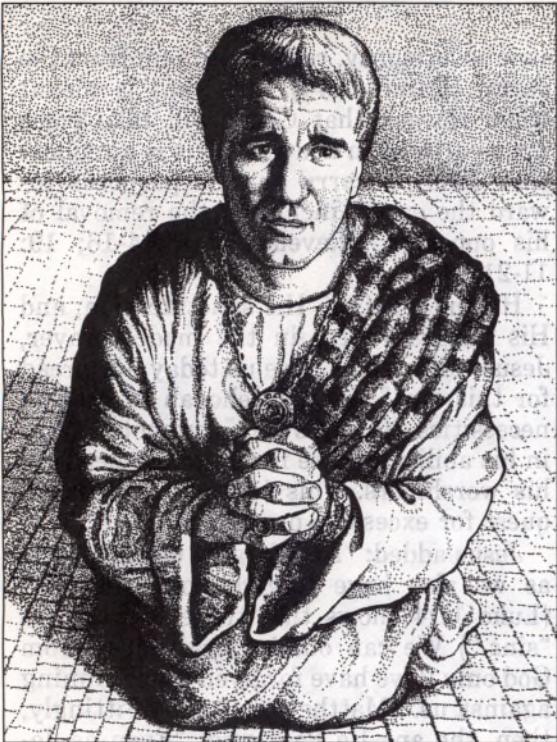
vine sovereignty, removing them from the earth. (Daniel 2:44) But what is meant when we ask that God's will take place upon earth as in heaven? This is a request that Jehovah carry out his purposes toward the earth, including the removal of his opposers.—Revelation 16:14-16; 19:11-21.

Having put God, His sanctification, and His purposes first in the model prayer, Jesus continued: "Give us today our bread for this day." Asking Jehovah to provide necessities "for this day" promotes faith in his ability to care for the daily needs of his worshipers. This is not a selfish request for excessive provisions.

Jesus added: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." (Luke 11:4 shows that these "debts" are "sins.") We can obtain forgiveness from God only if we have forgiven those sinning against us. (Matthew 6:14, 15) Fittingly, then, the apostle Paul said: "Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also." —Colossians 3:13.

Concluding the model prayer, Jesus said: "And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the wicked one." Jehovah never tempts people "with evil things." (James 1:13) Temptation comes from the wicked one, Satan the Devil, but the Bible sometimes says that God's permitting certain things amounts to his doing them. (Ruth 1:20, 21; Ecclesiastes 7:13) In answer to the request, "Do not bring us into temptation," Jehovah does not abandon his faithful servants, though he permits them to be tempted. Indeed, "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it."—1 Corinthians 10:13.

When we request deliverance from the wicked one, we are asking that the Devil not be allowed to overcome us as



How were the prayers of Cornelius affected by his dedication to God and his baptism?

Those whose prayers are answered have met basic requirements. Citing these, Paul wrote: "He that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) Note these two basic points: Jehovah answers the prayers of (1) those who believe that God is, or exists, and (2) those who are "earnestly seeking him."

One such first-century individual was the devout Gentile Cornelius. He believed that God is, and he was earnestly seeking him. What did Cornelius do upon gaining accurate knowledge? Why, he wholeheartedly dedicated himself to Jehovah God and was baptized to symbolize that dedication. Thereafter, Cornelius apparently had a close relationship with God, and this would have had a positive effect on his prayers.

—Acts 10:1-44.

Before Cornelius was baptized, his prayers only "ascended as a remembrance before God." (Acts 10:4) However, by making a dedication to God on the basis of his belief in Jesus' ransom sacrifice, and being baptized, Cornelius unreservedly gave himself to Jehovah. This established a wonderful closeness between God and this devout man—a relationship giving Cornelius the unrestricted privilege of prayer. (James 4:8) He could approach his heavenly Father through Christ Jesus with the expectation of being heard. That is what happens to all who dedicate themselves to God through Christ and get baptized. They too have the unrestricted privilege of prayer.

Surely, you desire to have your prayers answered. Therefore, if you are not now serving Jehovah as one of his dedicated worshipers, how wise to seek him earnestly! Pursue a course like that of Cornelius, and God will answer your prayers.

Jehovah's faithful worshipers. If we are loyal servants of God, we can be confident that he will answer such a petition, since the apostle Peter wrote: "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial." (2 Peter 2:9) And how important this part of the model prayer is, for Satan the Devil "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone"!—1 Peter 5:8.

Why Their Prayers Are Answered

God answers the prayers of his faithful worshipers. Why? In part, Jehovah does so because they pray to him alone, making their approach through Jesus Christ. They shun wickedness and avoid hypocritical and repetitive prayers. Instead of repeating the model prayer by rote, Witnesses of Jehovah use its splendid guidelines in expressing their own heartfelt sentiments to God. But there are yet other reasons why their prayers are answered.

Constantine's conversion TO WHAT?

THE claimed conversion of Roman emperor Constantine has long interested students of religion. According to his own account, on the eve of a battle in 312 C.E., which he won, the pagan Constantine saw a vision of a cross with the motto: "In this [sign] conquer." He was "converted" shortly thereafter (in 313 C.E.) and brought an end to the persecution of Christians in the Roman empire. Constantine encouraged the then current form of Christianity as a State religion, and even intervened in internal church disputes. However, he also committed acts that called into question the genuineness of his conversion and was not baptized until just before his death some 24 years later.

In an article in *Bible Review*, numismatist and doctoral student of theology Stanley A. Hudson revealed how the coinage struck during Constantine's reign contributes some fascinating information on this subject. Up until Constantine's time, it was common for Roman coins to depict the popular Roman deities. But Hudson reported that after Constantine's conversion, pagan themes appeared less and less—with one exception. Coins depicting Sol, the sun god—formerly Constantine's favorite—were minted profusely. Why?



The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Bequest of Mrs. F. F. Thompson, 1926 (26.229)

Hudson suggested two possibilities. First, Constantine's conversion may have been very gradual—despite his dramatic vision. Or Constantine may actually have confused Sol with Jesus. Syncretism (combination of different forms of belief) is not unusual even today. For example, in Latin America, the pre-Columbian goddesses Pacha-Mama and Tonantzin are still worshiped under the name of the Virgin Mary. In the same way, Constantine may have worshiped Sol under the name of Jesus.

Such syncretism would explain why December 25th, 'the birthday of the unconquered sun,' was chosen as the day to commemorate the birth of Jesus. It would also help us to see why on a coin minted to commemorate Constantine's death there is an inscription "DV Constantinus" ("Divine Constantine"). This shows that, despite his conversion and eventual baptism, Constantine was viewed as a god after his death, just like the pagan emperors before him.

Illustration of the Marriage Feast

BY MEANS of two illustrations, Jesus has exposed the scribes and the chief priests, and they want to kill him. But Jesus is far from through with them. He goes on to tell them yet another illustration, saying:

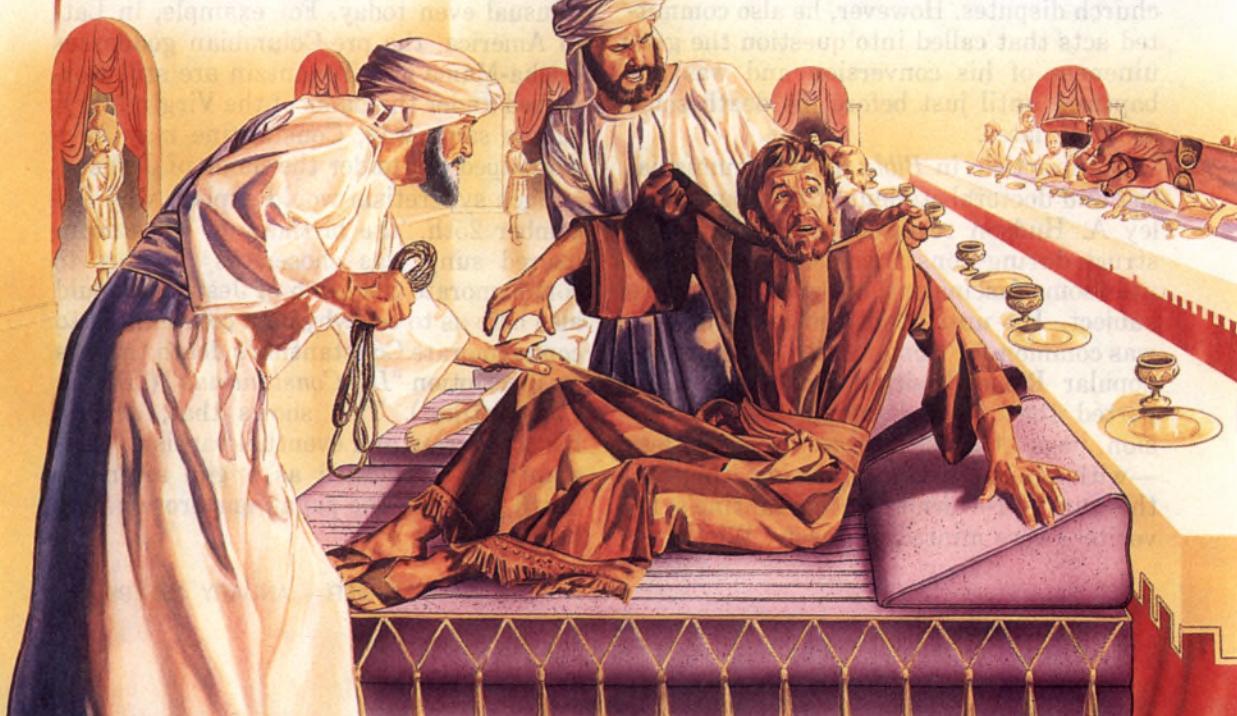
"The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man, a king, that made a marriage feast for his son. And he sent forth his slaves to call those invited to the marriage feast, but they were unwilling to come."

Jehovah God is the King who prepares a marriage feast for his Son, Jesus Christ. Eventually, his bride of 144,000 anointed followers will be united with him in heaven. The King's subjects are the people of Israel, who, on being brought into the Law covenant in 1513 B.C.E., received the opportunity of becoming "a kingdom of priests." Thus, on that occasion, they were originally extended the invitation to the marriage feast.

However, the first call to those invited did not go out until the fall of 29 C.E., when Jesus and his disciples (the king's slaves) began their work of Kingdom preaching. But the natural Israelites who received this call issued by the slaves from 29 C.E. to 33 C.E. were unwilling to come. So God gave the nation of invited ones another opportunity, as Jesus explains:

"Again he sent forth other slaves, saying, 'Tell those invited: "Look! I have prepared my dinner, my bulls and fattened animals are slaughtered, and all things are ready. Come to the marriage feast.'"'" This second and final call of those invited began at Pentecost 33 C.E., when holy spirit was poured out on Jesus' followers. This call continued until 36 C.E.

The great majority of those Israelites, however, also spurned this call. "Unconcerned they went off," Jesus explains, "one to his own field, anoth-



er to his commercial business; but the rest, laying hold of his slaves, treated them insolently and killed them." "But," Jesus continues, "the king grew wrathful, and sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned their city." This occurred in 70 C.E., when Jerusalem was razed to the ground by the Romans, and those murderers were killed.

Jesus then explains what occurred in the meantime: "Then [the king] said to his slaves, 'The marriage feast indeed is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Therefore go to the roads leading out of the city, and anyone you find invite to the marriage feast.'" The slaves did this, and "the room for the wedding ceremonies was filled with those reclining at the table."

This work of gathering guests from the roads outside the city of the invited ones began in 36 C.E. The Roman army officer Cornelius and his family were the first of the uncircumcised non-Jews gathered. The ingathering of these non-Jews, all of whom are replacements for those who

originally refused the call, has continued on down into this 20th century.

It is during the 20th century that the room for the wedding ceremonies becomes filled. Jesus relates what then occurs, saying: "When the king came in to inspect the guests he caught sight there of a man not clothed with a marriage garment. So he said to him, 'Fellow, how did you get in here not having on a marriage garment?' He was rendered speechless. Then the king said to his servants, 'Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the darkness outside. There is where his weeping and the gnashing of his teeth will be.'"

The man without a marriage garment pictures imitation Christians of Christendom. These God has never recognized as having the proper identification as spiritual Israelites. God never did anoint them with holy spirit as Kingdom heirs. So they are thrown outside into darkness where they will suffer destruction.

Jesus concludes his illustration by saying: "For there are many invited, but few chosen." Yes, there were many invited from the nation of Israel to become members of Christ's bride, but only a few natural Israelites were chosen. Most of the 144,000 guests who receive the heavenly reward prove to be non-Israelites. **Matthew 22:1-14; Exodus 19:1-6; Revelation 14:1-3.**

- ♦ Who are those originally invited to the wedding feast, and when are they extended the invitation?
- ♦ When does the call first go out to those invited, and who are the slaves used to issue it?
- ♦ When is the second call extended, and who afterward are invited?
- ♦ Who are pictured by the man without a wedding garment?
- ♦ Who are the many called, and the few chosen?





A SACRED SECRET UNFOLDS

"The sacred secret of this godly devotion is admittedly great."—1 TIMOTHY 3:16.

DO MYSTERIES intrigue you? Do you enjoy delving into secrets? Most of us do! Join us, then, as we investigate one of the grandest of all secrets—a secret that was locked up in God's Word for thousands of years. This sacred secret vitally affects our lives, both present and future. It is 'the sacred secret of godly devotion,' described for us at 1 Timothy 3:16. How thankful we should be to Jehovah, "the Revealer of secrets," for graciously making known to us this sublime secret and its interpretation!—Daniel 2:28, 29.

1. What secret is described at 1 Timothy 3:16?

² Jehovah first spoke of a sacred secret after the Serpent had deceived Eve, and Adam had followed her into rebellion. God then promised that the "seed," or offspring, would crush the Serpent's head. (Genesis 3:15) Who is this Seed? How would he conquer the Serpent? Would he vindicate God's truthfulness and His purpose toward this earth?

³ In time, divine prophecies revealed

2. (a) When did Jehovah first speak of a sacred secret, and what did he then promise? (b) What questions require answers?
3. Divine prophecies provided what clues as to the identity and activity of the Seed?

clues as to the identity and future activity of the Seed. He would be a descendant of Abraham, would inherit David's kingdom, and would be called Prince of Peace. 'To the abundance of his princely rule and to peace there would be no end.' (Isaiah 9: 6, 7; Genesis 22:15-18; Psalm 89:35-37) But as Romans 16:25 states, that sacred secret was "kept in silence for long-lasting times."

Solving the Mystery

⁴ Finally, after four millenniums, enlightenment burst forth! In what way? In 29 C.E., John baptized Jesus of Nazareth in the Jordan River, and from heaven God's voice declared: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved." (Matthew 3:17) Ah, here at last was the Seed of promise! The sacred secret had started to unfold in all its glorious facets, including the matter of godly devotion.

⁵ What do we understand by "godly devotion"? In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the expression occurs just 20 times, more than half of these in Paul's two letters to Timothy. The publication *Insight on the Scriptures* defines "godly devotion" as "reverence, worship, and service to God, with loyalty to his universal sovereignty." Reverence proceeds out of a heart that draws close to God, in awe of his majesty, his eternalness, and the multiplicity of his grand creations, with thankfulness for the spiritual and material gifts that he showers upon appreciative humans. Truly, each one of us who practices godly devotion can say, as did the psalmist at Psalm 104:1: "Bless Jehovah, O my soul. O Jehovah my God, you have proved very great. With dignity and splendor you have clothed yourself."

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4. How did the sacred secret begin to unfold in 29 C.E.?
 5. What is "godly devotion," and how does it affect those practicing it?

⁶ Our devotion to God must find expression, and this it does through actions. In this regard, worshipers of the true God, Jehovah, are vastly different from the pew sitters of Christendom's fading churches. To many people on earth, religion—if they still have a religion—is a formalism, a cloak that is put on to make them appear holy while they live a life that conforms to the corrupt world around them. They do not even know who God is. Surely, such persons need to consider Paul's words at Acts 17:23, when he said to Athenians who venerated "an Unknown God": "What you are unknowingly giving godly devotion to, this I am publishing to you." Concerning that magnificent God, Paul exclaims at Romans 11:33, 34: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are! For 'who has come to know Jehovah's mind, or who has become his counselor?'" How, then, do we come to know God's ways? It is through learning 'the sacred secret of godly devotion.' But how do we do that?

⁷ In 1 Timothy chapter 3, the apostle Paul first outlines what is required of responsible servants in God's household, described in verse 15 as "the congregation of the living God, a pillar and support of the truth." Then Paul adds, in verse 16: "The sacred secret of this godly devotion is admittedly great." Great indeed because Jehovah sent his only-begotten Son to earth to unlock this secret, to demonstrate what godly devotion really is and how it is vital, pivotal, in true worship. The sacred secret of this godly devotion is illuminated in Jesus' life course here on earth. All

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6. (a) How do worshipers of Jehovah differ from Christendom's pew sitters? (b) What did Paul say at Romans 11:33, 34, and what questions are thus raised?
 7. Why can it be said that "the sacred secret of this godly devotion is admittedly great"?

lovers of Jehovah must build their faith and their lives on Christ, who exemplified godly devotion. How, then, did Jesus clarify the sacred secret of godly devotion?

Six Facets

⁸ By divine inspiration, Paul answers that question. Here at 1 Timothy 3:16, he describes six facets of this sacred secret, saying: “He [1] was made manifest in flesh, [2] was declared righteous in spirit, [3] appeared to angels, [4] was preached about among nations, [5] was believed upon in the world, [6] was received up in glory.” Who is the “He” who is made manifest? Obviously, “He” is the promised Seed, Jesus, who came to do God’s will. He is central to the sacred secret, making it truly great.

⁹ Trinitarians try to muddy up the understanding of the sacred secret by saying that “He” at 1 Timothy 3:16 is God himself. They base this on the King James Bible, which reads, “God was manifest in the flesh.” However, what do the most reliable Greek manuscripts say? Consistently, they use the pronoun “He” instead of “God.” Textual critics now agree that the insertion of “God” in this scripture is a scribal error. Thus, more recent translations, such as the *American Standard Version*, *The New English Bible*, and the *New World Translation*, correctly read: ‘He [or, He who] was manifest in the flesh.’ No, it was not God himself who appeared “in the flesh.” Rather, it was his beloved Son and first creation, of whom the apostle John wrote: “So the Word became flesh and resided among us, and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as belongs to an

8. (a) What are the six facets of the sacred secret Paul describes at 1 Timothy 3:16? (b) Who is the “He” who is made manifest?

9. What proof is there that 1 Timothy 3:16 should not read: “God was manifest in the flesh”?

only-begotten son from a father; and he was full of undeserved kindness and truth.”—John 1:14.

“Manifest in Flesh”

¹⁰ At Jesus’ baptism the first feature of the sacred secret became apparent: Jesus “was made manifest in flesh” as the anointed Son of God. Jehovah God had transferred his Son’s life from heaven to the womb of Mary so that Jesus could be born in the flesh as a perfect human. Thus, as 1 Corinthians 15:45-47 shows, Jesus became a second, or “last,” Adam, a perfect human soul corresponding exactly to the first Adam. For what purpose? First Timothy 2:5, 6 refers to “the last Adam” as “a man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all.” On this legal basis of a perfect human sacrifice, Jesus mediates the new covenant toward the 144,000 humans who become joint heirs with him in his Kingdom.—Revelation 14:1-3.

¹¹ Would others also benefit from Jesus’ sacrificial death? Positively yes! First John 2:2 states that Jesus Christ “is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins [that is, the sins of anointed Christians like John], yet not for ours only but also for the whole world’s.” The benefits of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice thus extend far beyond the 144,000 anointed Christians to the entire world of mankind. “A great crowd” who are now living and thousands of millions who will be resurrected in the Paradise earth are to receive everlasting life on the basis of their faith in Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. Already, as prophesied at Revelation 7:9, 10, the great crowd have washed their robes and made them white

10. (a) How did the first feature of the sacred secret become apparent at Jesus’ baptism? (b) Why did Jesus become “the last Adam”?

11. To whom do the benefits of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice extend?

by exercising faith in the shed blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. They are counted righteous as to friendship with God. With joy, they learn the various facets of the sacred secret and display godly devotion in harmony with Jesus' example!

Other Facets

¹² What, now, of the second feature at 1 Timothy 3:16? Jesus "was declared righteous in spirit." But how? By Jehovah's raising his integrity-keeping Son from the dead to spirit life. This amounted to God's declaration that Jesus was altogether righteous and worthy of further exalted assignments. As Romans 1:4 puts it, Jesus "was declared God's Son according to the spirit of holiness by means of resurrection from the dead." Confirming this, Peter tells us in his first letter, chapter 3, verse 18: "Christ died once for all time concerning sins, a righteous person for unrighteous ones, that he might lead you to God, he being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the spirit." Is Jesus' example of godly devotion leading you to God?

¹³ Continuing with 1 Timothy 3:16, Paul next refers to the third feature of the sacred secret, saying that Jesus "appeared to angels." Who might these angels be? Concerning Jesus, now "made alive in the spirit," Peter writes at 1 Peter 3:19, 20: "In this state also he went his way and preached to the spirits in prison, who had once been disobedient when the patience of God was waiting in Noah's days." According to Jude 6, those spirits were "the angels that did not keep their original position but forsook their own proper dwelling place" in the heavens. They took

12. How was Jesus "declared righteous in spirit"?

13. The resurrected Jesus appeared to what angels, and what kind of message did he preach to them?

on fleshly bodies in order to enjoy illicit sex relations with women. When the Deluge compelled those angels to return to the spirit realm, they were thrown into Tartarus, a condition of utter debasement. (2 Peter 2:4) The resurrected Jesus preached to them. But was that a message of salvation? Definitely not! Rather, Jesus condemned their wickedness as being the very antithesis of godly devotion. Any of God's people who toy with sexual immorality today should take warning from the judgment pronounced upon those angels!

¹⁴ The fourth feature of 1 Timothy 3:16 is that Jesus "was preached about among nations." How has this been fulfilled? Just before his arrest, Jesus told the apostles: "Most truly I say to you, He that exercises faith in me, that one also will do the works that I do; and he will do works greater than these, because I am going my way to the Father." (John 14:12) Shortly thereafter, at Pentecost 33 C.E., Jesus poured out holy spirit on his disciples, and the startling news that "this Jesus God resurrected" began to be preached to the Jews. Later, Samaritans also accepted the word of God and began to receive holy spirit. (Acts 2:32; 8:14-17) Then, in 36 C.E., Peter preached to Cornelius and other Gentiles assembled in his house. Thus, the good news regarding Jesus began to be "preached about among nations," that is, among non-Jews, who were also anointed with holy spirit.

¹⁵ As reported at Acts 12:24, "the word of Jehovah went on growing and spreading." Acts 17:6 relates that in northern Greece opposers cried out, as they do there to this day: "These men that have overturned the inhabited earth are present

14. How was it that Jesus began to be "preached about among nations"?

15. What proves that first-century Christians had learned well the sacred secret of godly devotion?

here also." Within 30 years, Paul could write from Rome that the good news had been "preached in all creation that is under heaven." (Colossians 1:23) Christians of that time had learned well the sacred secret of godly devotion. How zealously they were applying it! And may we likewise learn and apply it in this climactic day of Kingdom preaching!

¹⁶ In response to that first-century preaching, the fifth feature of the sacred secret of 1 Timothy 3:16 became notably apparent. Jesus now "was believed upon in the world." This was a result of the Christ-like godly devotion of zealous missionaries, including Paul and Timothy. They carried the good news into Asia Minor and Europe, perhaps as far as Spain, and into East Africa by the mouth of the baptized Ethiopian, while Peter served in Babylon.

¹⁷ What of our day? Since 1919 the anointed remnant have been exhibiting exemplary godly devotion. These anointed ones have built solidly on the foundation of faith laid by Jesus. Especially since 1935, they have proceeded to gather a great crowd, who rejoice in the prospect of passing through "the great tribulation" and enjoying everlasting life in a paradise earth. (Revelation 7:9, 14) Thus, the good news focusing on Jesus is believed upon throughout the modern world. In godly devotion, over 3,700,000 Witnesses of Jehovah are now preaching and prospering around the globe!

¹⁸ One more facet of that sacred secret remains, the sixth: Jesus "was received up in glory." During the 40 days after being made alive in the spirit, Jesus materialized fleshly bodies, appearing to his disci-

16. What was the fifth feature of the sacred secret, and what activity made it apparent?
17. Why is Jesus believed upon throughout the modern world?
18. How was Jesus "received up in glory"?

ples and telling them "the things about the kingdom of God." Then he ascended to heaven. (Acts 1:3, 6-9) His prayer, recorded at John 17:1-5, was thus answered: "Father, . . . glorify your son, that your son may glorify you . . . I have glorified you on the earth . . . So now you, Father, glorify me alongside yourself with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was."

¹⁹ What great rejoicing must have attended Jesus' return to heaven! Much earlier, when Jehovah founded the earth, "all the sons of God began shouting in applause." (Job 38:7) Even more so must those angelic hosts have been overjoyed to receive again into their midst the loyal Champion of Jehovah's sovereignty!

²⁰ At Hebrews 1:3, 4, Paul says of the victorious Jesus: "After he had made a purification for our sins he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in lofty places. So he has become better than the angels, to the extent that he has inherited

19. What must have attended Jesus' return to heaven?

20. Why has Jesus inherited such an excellent name, and what did he do while on earth?

How Would You Respond?

- What is "godly devotion"?
- How was Jesus "made manifest in flesh" and thereafter "declared righteous in spirit"?
- To what angels did Jesus appear, and with what message?
- How has Christ been "preached about among nations" and "believed upon in the world"?
- When was Jesus "received up in glory," and after doing what regarding godly devotion?

a name more excellent than theirs." Christ received that name because of his triumph over unrighteousness. This Son of God had indeed blazed the trail of godly devotion here on earth. He had also set a

pattern for all others who will attain to everlasting life. With Jesus' exaltation to God's right hand in heaven, the sacred secret of this godly devotion was revealed in all its features.

LEARNING THE SACRED SECRET OF GODLY DEVOTION

"Even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely."—1 PETER 2:21.

THE sacred secret of this godly devotion" is no longer a secret! (1 Timothy 3:16) How different it is from the secrets of false religion, like the mystic Trinity, which remain secrets! No one can understand them. Rather, Jehovah has purposed that the sacred secret revealed in the person of Jesus Christ should be given the widest possible publicity. Jesus himself became the outstanding example of a zealous proclaimer of the Kingdom of God. We can learn much from his message and manner of preaching, as we shall now see.

² Let us give further consideration, then, to Jesus' being "made manifest in flesh." (1 Timothy 3:16) At Matthew 20:28 we read that Jesus "came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." This even puts his ministering ahead of the ransom. Why so? Well, back in Eden the wily Serpent had disputed Jehovah's rightful sovereignty over mankind, implying that God's creation was faulty and that under

1. What has been Jehovah's purpose regarding 'the sacred secret of godly devotion'?
2. Why is Jesus' ministering put ahead of the ransom? (Matthew 20:28)

test no man could keep integrity to the Most High. (Compare Job 1:6-12; 2:1-10.) Jesus' flawless ministry as a perfect man, "the last Adam," showed the challenger Satan to be a wicked liar. (1 Corinthians 15:45) Moreover, Jesus fully proved his qualifications to serve as God's "Chief Agent and Savior" and to "judge the inhabited earth in righteousness," in vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty.—Acts 5:31; 17:31.

³ Jesus completely refuted Satan's taunting challenge! In all history, no man on this earth served God so devotedly—despite mockings, scourgings, and physical and mental tortures. Christ had to endure blasphemous reproaches as the Son of God. Through it all—even to a cruel and shameful death—he was steadfast, immovable in loyalty to his Father. At Philippians 2:8, 9, Paul writes that because Jesus obeyed 'as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake, God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every other name.' Jesus exposed Satan as the venomous liar that he is!

3. How did Jesus completely refute Satan's challenge?



As an advocate of godly devotion and a zealous Kingdom proclaimer, Jesus could tell Pilate: "For this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth"

⁴ Thus, at the conclusion of just a few years of intensive preaching, Jesus could boldly testify to Pontius Pilate: "You yourself are saying that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is on the side of the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:37) Jesus had displayed superlative godly devotion in proclaiming God's Kingdom truth throughout Palestine. He trained his disciples to be zealous preachers also. How his example stimulates us to follow in his steps today!

4. Why could Jesus tell Pilate that he had come into the world to bear witness to the truth?

Learning From Our Exemplar

⁵ By our godly devotion in doing Jehovah's will, we too may prove the Devil a liar. Whatever trials we suffer, none will ever equal the agonies and indignities experienced by Jesus. Let us, then, learn from our Exemplar. As Hebrews 12:1, 2 urges us, may we run the race with endurance "as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus." Unlike Adam, who failed when tested as to godly devotion, Jesus became the one man on earth who met all tests perfectly. To the death, he proved "loyal, guileless, undefiled, separated from

5. What can we learn about godly devotion by looking intently at Jesus?

the sinners." (Hebrews 7:26) In flawless integrity, he could say to his enemies: "Who of you convicts me of sin?" Jesus hurled back Satan's challenge, declaring: "The ruler of the world . . . has no hold on me." And in concluding his final talk to his disciples before his betrayal and arrest, he told them: "Take courage! I have conquered the world." —John 8:46; 14:30; 16:33.

⁶ In the flesh here on earth, Jesus experienced what it means to be human, "a little lower than angels." (Hebrews 2:7) He became acquainted with human frailties and is therefore well-equipped to serve as mankind's King and Judge for a thousand years. This Son of God, who said, "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you," knows what kind of refreshment is needed by mankind. (Matthew 11:28) Hebrews 5:7-9 tells us: "In the days of his flesh Christ offered up supplications and also petitions to the One who was able to save him out of death, with strong outcries and tears, and he was favorably heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered; and after he had been made perfect [in obedience] he became responsible for everlasting salvation to all those obeying him." Jesus did not waver, even though he had to endure to the point of experiencing the sting of human death in receiving a 'heel wound' from the hateful Serpent. (Genesis 3:15) Like Jesus, may we always display godly fear, even to death if necessary, confident that Jehovah God will hear our supplications and grant us salvation.

'Living to Righteousness'

⁷ While manifest in flesh, Jesus loyally unveiled the sacred secret of godly dev-

6. (a) Why does Jesus know what kind of refreshment is needed by mankind? (b) To what extent did Jesus display godly fear?

7. According to 1 Peter 2:21-24, what model did Christ leave for us, and how should his course affect us?

tion. We read at 1 Peter 2:21-24: "Even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely. He committed no sin, nor was deception found in his mouth. When he was being reviled, he did not go reviling in return. When he was suffering, he did not go threatening, but kept on committing himself to the one who judges righteously. He himself bore our sins in his own body upon the stake, in order that we might be done with sins and live to righteousness." As we meditate on Jesus' course, how it encourages us to pursue godly devotion, to keep integrity, and to live to righteousness as he did!

⁸ Jesus truly lived to righteousness. Psalm 45:7 prophesied of him: "You have loved righteousness and you hate wickedness." Applying those words to Jesus, the apostle Paul said at Hebrews 1:9: "You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness." In the light of our understanding of the sacred secret of this godly devotion, may we like Jesus always love what is righteous and hate what is bad. In Christian morals, today so fiercely under assault by Satan's world, and in all our dealings with those inside and outside of God's organization, let us be resolved to live to righteousness, upholding Jehovah's right principles. And let us continually feast upon God's Word in order to have the godly insight so essential for resisting the Devil and his devices!

⁹ Something additional motivated Jesus to be zealous in his ministry. What was that? At Matthew 9:36 we read: "On seeing the crowds he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd." So Jesus

8. How can we live to righteousness as Jesus did?

9. What added to Jesus' zeal in the ministry, and this involved what regarding false religious shepherds?

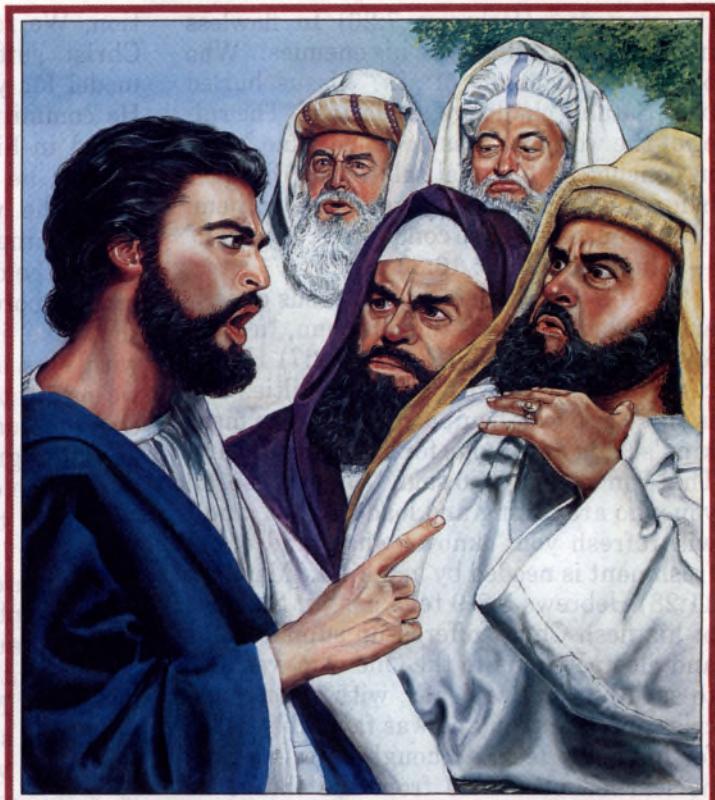
"started to teach them many things." (Mark 6:34) Of necessity, this involved exposing the wickedness and lawlessness of the false religious shepherds. According to Matthew 15:7-9, Jesus said to some of these: "You hypocrites, Isaiah aptly prophesied about you, when he said, 'This people honors me with their lips, yet their heart is far removed from me. It is in vain that they keep worshiping me, because they teach commands of men as doctrines.'"

A Deplorable Mystery

¹⁰ As Jesus spoke out against false religious leaders, so we today deplore a mystery that stands out in sharp contrast with the sacred secret of godly devotion. At 2 Thessalonians 2:

7, Paul called it "the mystery of this lawlessness." It was a mystery in the first century C.E. because it would not be unveiled until long after the apostles' death. Today, it focuses on the clergy of Christendom, who are more interested in politics than in declaring the good news of God's righteous Kingdom. Hypocrisy abounds in their ranks. Television evangelists of Christendom's Protestant sects are a glaring example: charlatans who fleece their flocks, build up multimillion-dollar empires, consort with prostitutes, weep crocodile tears when they themselves are exposed, and keep begging for money, always more money. Roman Catholicism's

10. Today, "the mystery of this lawlessness" focuses on whom, and of what are they guilty?



Jesus' godly devotion was expressed when he denounced the scribes and the Pharisees

Vatican presents a similar unsavory picture, with its unscrupulous political connections, outward pomp, and corrupt banking practices.

¹¹ No wonder Christendom's clergy class can be identified as "the man of lawlessness"! (2 Thessalonians 2:3) This dominant part of harlotlike Babylon the Great will be fully exposed and devastated, along with all the rest of false religion. As we read at Revelation 18:9-17, politicians and merchants (and their bankers) will then lament: "Too bad, too bad, you great city!"

11. What will happen to Christendom's clergy and all of Babylon the Great?

Babylon the Great and her mysteries will have been laid bare, in stark contrast with all that illuminates the sacred secret of godly devotion.

¹² Jesus' love of righteousness and hatred of lawlessness led him to exert himself unsparingly in behalf of true worship. On his first visit to Jerusalem as the anointed Son of God, Christ drove the merchants and money brokers out of the temple, declaring: "Take these things away from here! Stop making the house of my Father a house of merchandise!" (John 2:13-17) On a later visit to the temple, Jesus told opposing Jews: "You are from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father. That one was a manslayer when he began, and he did not stand fast in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaks the lie, he speaks according to his own disposition, because he is a liar and the father of the lie." (John 8:44) What courage Jesus showed in telling those religionists to their faces that they were liars and sons of the Devil!

¹³ Jesus' hatred of lawlessness is nowhere better expressed than in his stinging denunciation of the viperous scribes and Pharisees, as recorded in Matthew chapter 23. There he pronounces a sevenfold "woe," comparing them to 'white-washed graves—full of every sort of uncleanness, hypocrisy, and lawlessness.' How Jesus yearned to deliver the oppressed people from that lawlessness! "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," he cried out, "how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks

12. Jesus' love of righteousness led him to do what?

13. (a) Where especially is Jesus' hatred of lawlessness expressed? (b) Why do the lawless clergy merit judgment similar to that pronounced by Jesus upon the scribes and Pharisees?

together under her wings! But you people did not want it. Look! Your house is abandoned to you." (Verses 37, 38) The lawless clergy of our day merit a similar judgment because, in the words of 2 Thessalonians 2:12, 'they do not believe the truth but take pleasure in unrighteousness.' Their lawlessness is the very antithesis of the godly devotion that Jesus so loyally displayed while here on earth.

Declaring God's Judgments

¹⁴ Our appreciation for the sacred secret of godly devotion should lead us always to follow Jesus' steps closely. Like him, we should be zealous in proclaiming what Isaiah 61:2 describes as "the year of goodwill on the part of Jehovah and the day of vengeance on the part of our God." And may we zealously do our part "to comfort all the mourning ones." As when Jesus was on earth, it takes courage today for us to declare Jehovah's judgments, including the strong messages in outspoken Watchtower articles and in the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* We must preach boldly and tactfully, our utterances being "seasoned with salt" so as to be tasteful to those inclined toward righteousness. (Colossians 4:6) Having learned from Jesus' example of godly devotion, may we be able to report in due time that we have finished the work Jehovah gave us to do.—Matthew 24:14; John 17:4.

¹⁵ While manifest in flesh, what a splendid Exemplar Jesus was! How clearly the sacred secret of godly devotion was fulfilled in him! How boldly he magnified Jehovah's name! And how marvelously Jesus' Father rewarded him for his

14. Appreciation for the sacred secret of godly devotion should move us to do what?

15. As to God's sacred secret, what has happened since 1914?

integrity-keeping course! But there is yet more to God's sacred secret. Since 1914 we have been living in "the Lord's day." (Revelation 1:10) As Revelation 10:7 states, it is the time for 'the sacred secret of God according to the good news to be brought to a finish.' Heavenly voices have now proclaimed: "The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15) Jehovah has installed the Messianic King, Jesus Christ, on his glorious throne to be coruler with Him!

¹⁶ As coruler with God in the newborn Kingdom, Jesus is also called Michael (meaning, "Who Is Like God?"). No rebel may ever succeed in being like God, and the newly enthroned King quickly demonstrated this by hurling the original Serpent, Satan, and his angels down to the earth. (Revelation 12:7-9) Yes, Jesus has regard for godliness in heaven, just as he displayed godly devotion while on earth. The glorified Jesus Christ will not rest until he has exterminated false religion and completely wiped out Satan's organization, visible and invisible.

¹⁷ Since 1914 the fulfillment of Jesus' own prophecy at Matthew 25:31-33 has radiantly illuminated the sacred secret of God. There Jesus declares: "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left."

16. How did the newly enthroned King, Jesus Christ, quickly show his regard for godliness in heaven?

17. Since 1914, what has been happening in fulfillment of Matthew 25:31-33?

From his vantage point in the heavens, this glorious King, Judge, and Advocate of godly devotion will bring vengeance, first on the man of lawlessness and other factions of Babylon the Great, and then on all remaining elements and goatish supporters of Satan's wicked earthly organization. Satan will then be abyssed. (Revelation 20:1-3) But sheeplike "righteous ones" will depart into everlasting life. (Matthew 25:46) May your pursuit of godly devotion place you in that upright group!

¹⁸ Revelation 19:10 encourages us to "worship God." And why? The scripture continues: "For the bearing witness to Jesus is what inspires prophesying." So many of the inspired prophecies of ancient times bore witness to Jesus! And as these prophecies have been fulfilled, the sacred secret of God has become crystal clear. We rejoice, therefore, to know that the sacred secret of this godly devotion came to be personified in Jesus. Marvelously privileged we are to follow in his steps as humble ministers of the Kingdom of God. Yes, we are honored to share in understanding and proclaiming *all* of the sacred secret of God according to the good news!

18. What joyous privilege do we have in connection with the sacred secret of godly devotion?

How Would You Respond?

- What can we learn from Jesus' example of godly devotion?
- How can we live to righteousness as Christ did?
- What deplorable mystery stands out in sharp contrast with the sacred secret of godly devotion?
- Our appreciation for the sacred secret of godly devotion should move us to do what?

JEHOVAH KNOWS US WELL!

JEHOVAH truly knows us, especially if we are his loyal servants. Close friends, relatives, even parents, do not know us as well as he does. Why, God knows us better than we know ourselves!

Jehovah's perfect knowledge of his servants was well portrayed in Psalm 139. What did David say in that psalm? And how should God's knowledge of us affect our words and actions?

How Much Jehovah Knows!

Since God is our Creator, we should expect him to have full knowledge of us. (Acts 17:24-28) Hence, David could say: "O Jehovah, you have searched through me, and you know me." (Psalm 139:1) God's knowledge of David was like that obtained through a thorough investigation. Glad to have Jehovah search through him, the psalmist yielded fully to God's control and guidance. Similarly, Jehovah's Witnesses prayerfully 'roll upon Jehovah their way, relying upon him,' sure that he will always do what is right. (Psalm 37:5) There is a sense of spiritual security in our hearts because we seek to be guided by godly wisdom, and we willingly submit to divine guidance. (Proverbs 3:19-26) Like David, we can draw comfort from the knowledge that God observes us, understands our problems, and is always ready to help us.

"You yourself have come to know my sitting down and my rising up," acknowledged the psalmist. (Psalm 139:2a) God knew everything about David's activities, such as his sitting down at the end of a workday and his rising up after a night's sleep. If we are Jehovah's Witnesses, be assured that God knows us that well too.

David admitted: "You have considered my thought from far off." (Psalm 139:

2b) Though God dwells in the heavens so far from the earthly scene, he knew what David was thinking. (1 Kings 8:43) Such insight should not surprise us, for Jehovah "sees what the heart is." (1 Samuel 16:7; Proverbs 21:2) The fact that God considers our thoughts should move us to think on things that are chaste, virtuous, praiseworthy. And how fitting that we regularly express our thoughts in heartfelt prayer so that we may have divine guidance and the "peace of God"!—Philippians 4:6-9.

The psalmist added: "My journeying and my lying outstretched you have measured off, and you have become familiar even with all my ways." (Psalm 139:3) Measuring off David's journeying from one place to another and his lying outstretched while resting evidently meant that Jehovah scrutinized everything the psalmist did. The Most High was measuring all of David's deeds to determine the exact nature of his deportment. God had full knowledge of David's ways, the paths he followed in life. When our heavenly Father similarly examines us, may he find that we are serving him faithfully and are remaining on "the path of righteousness" that leads to life eternal.—Proverbs 12:28.

Since nothing he might say would be hidden from God, David said: "For there is not a word on my tongue, but, look! O Jehovah, you already know it all." (Psalm 139:4) If we are so distressed that we do not know what to say in prayer, Jehovah's spirit "pleads for us with groanings unuttered." (Romans 8:26) In our conversations, God discerns things on the tip of the tongue but left unsaid, for he knows our true feelings. And if we have love that stems from "faith without hypocrisy," we will never try to deceive others with

"smooth talk."—1 Timothy 1:5; Romans 16:17, 18.

David added: "Behind and before, you have besieged me; and you place your hand upon me." (Psalm 139:5) In effect, Jehovah hemmed David in as a city besieged in battle. Apparently the psalmist knew that there were limits to what he could do in his lifetime. He also knew that it was impossible to escape from God's watchful eye and hand, or control. Of course, David did not try to make such an escape, and neither do we. But let us always deport ourselves with awareness that Jehovah's hand is upon us as his Witnesses.

God's knowledge of David filled him with awe. Thus, he declared: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is so high up that I cannot attain to it." (Psalm 139:6) So thorough is God's knowledge of us as individuals that we cannot fathom it, regardless of experience or training. Since it surpasses human understanding, we can be sure that Jehovah knows what is best for us. Hence, if we pray for something and his answer is no, let us submit to the divine will. As the apostle John wrote: "No matter what it is that we ask according to his will, he hears us."—1 John 5:14.

No Escape From God's Spirit

Jehovah not only answers the prayers of his loyal servants but his spirit also operates toward them and helps them to do his will. In fact, David asked: "Where can I go from your spirit, and where can I run away from your face?" (Psalm 139:7) The psalmist knew that he could not escape Jehovah's spirit, or active force, which can reach even the remotest parts of the universe. And nobody can flee from God's face, that is, escape his observation. True, "Jonah proceeded to get up and run away to Tarshish from before Jehovah," but that prophet could not elude either the great fish that God appointed to swallow him or ac-

countability for his divine assignment. (Jonah 1:3, 17; 2:10-3:4) So let us rely on Jehovah's spirit to enable us to fulfill God-given assignments.—Zechariah 4:6.

Since David knew that it would be impossible to get away from God, he said: "If I should ascend to heaven, there you would be; and if I should spread out my couch in Sheol, look! you would be there." (Psalm 139:8) In the psalmist's day, 'ascending to heaven' meant going up into the high mountains, the peaks of which are so often obscured by clouds. Yet, if we were on the highest mountain peak, we would not be out of the reach of God's spirit. Moreover, we could not escape his notice if we had our couch in Sheol, figuratively denoting the lowest parts of the earth.—Compare Deuteronomy 30:11-14; Amos 9:2, 3.

"Were I to take the wings of the dawn, that I might reside in the most remote sea," said David, "there, also, your own hand would lead me and your right hand would lay hold of me." (Psalm 139:9, 10) What is meant by "the wings of the dawn"? These words are poetically descriptive of how the light of dawn, as if having wings, quickly spreads from the east to the west. But what if David could take the wings of the dawn and reach the most distant sea or islands in the west? He would still be subject to God's hand, or control and direction. By means of His spirit, Jehovah would be there to guide the psalmist compassionately.—Psalm 51:11.

Darkness No Problem for God

Neither distance nor darkness can put a person out of God's reach. So David adds: "And were I to say: 'Surely darkness itself will hastily seize me!' then night would be light about me. Even the darkness itself would not prove too dark for you, but night itself would shine just as the day does; the darkness might just as well be the light." (Psalm 139:11, 12) A

person could be enshrouded in total darkness, as if seized by it. But to Jehovah he would be as visible as if standing in bright daylight. Nobody can hide from God any sins committed in darkness.—Isaiah 29:15, 16.

Concealment does not block observation by our Creator. In this regard David said: “**For you yourself produced my kidneys; you kept me screened off in the belly of my mother. I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful, as my soul is very well aware. My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret, when I was woven in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing, as regards the days when they [the body parts] were formed and there was not yet one [distinct body part] among them.**”—Psalm 139:13-16.

Jehovah God, who knows our deepest feelings, produced David’s kidneys. Being deep inside the body, the kidneys are among the most concealed and inaccessible organs, but God can see them. He can even look into a mother’s belly, or womb. Why, Jehovah can see into the developing embryo! Just thinking about the marvelous way in which he was formed in the womb moved David to praise his Maker. The psalmist evidently referred to the mother’s womb as “the lowest parts of the earth.” There, concealed from human view but visible to God, a baby’s bones, sinews, muscles, nerves, and blood vessels are woven together.

Before David’s body parts became distinct in his mother’s womb, his appearance



was known to God. Why? Because the development of the embryo followed a specific pattern, as though obeying instructions recorded in a book. How this shows Jehovah’s wisdom and ability to see even concealed things! It should also make us appreciate that God created the human race and is responsible for the wonderful reproductive process that has resulted in our existence as individuals.

How Precious God’s Thoughts Are!

Thinking about a baby’s development in the womb made David reflect on God’s wisdom. Thus, the psalmist exclaimed: “**So, to me how precious your thoughts are! O God, how much does the grand sum of them amount to!**” (Psalm 139:17) David cherished Jehovah God’s thoughts, and they are so

numerous that he was impressed by “the grand sum of them.” If God’s thoughts are precious to us, we will be diligent students of the Scriptures. (1 Timothy 4:15, 16) His recorded thoughts are “beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.”—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Regarding Jehovah’s thoughts, David said: “**Were I to try to count them, they are more than even the grains of sand. I have awaked, and yet I am still with you.**” (Psalm 139:18) Since God’s thoughts are more numerous than even the grains of sand, if David started counting them at daybreak, he would not be finished by bedtime. Upon awakening in the morning, he would still be with Jehovah. That is, he would still be counting God’s thoughts.

In fact, since we need Jehovah's direction, prayerful meditation on his thoughts and purposes might well be occupying our minds last at night and the first thing in the morning.—Psalm 25:8-10.

Retribution for the Wicked

Since God gives wise direction, how did David feel about those rejecting divine guidance? He prayed: “O that you, O God, would slay the wicked one! Then even the bloodguilty men will certainly depart from me, who say things about you according to their idea; they have taken up your name in a worthless way—your adversaries.” (Psalm 139:19, 20) David did not try to kill the wicked but prayed that they might experience retribution at Jehovah's hand. We should have the same attitude. For example, we can pray for boldness to speak God's word when foes persecute us. (Acts 4:18-31) But we do not seek to do away with our enemies, for we know that Jehovah has said: “Vengeance is mine; I will recompense.”—Hebrews 10:30; Deuteronomy 32:35.

If God were to slay the wicked, such bloodguilty men would depart from David. They had a record of guilt in shedding blood and also said things about Jehovah according to their idea, not in harmony with his thoughts. Moreover, they deserved death for bringing reproach on God's name by taking it up in a worthless way, possibly by using it as they promoted their evil plans. (Exodus 20:7) May we never be guilty of similar sins!

Because the wicked were guilty of bloodshed and of bringing reproach on God's name, David declared: “Do I not hate those who are intensely hating you, O Jehovah, and do I not feel a loathing for those revolting against you? With a complete hatred I do hate them. They have become to me real enemies.” (Psalm 139:21, 22) David felt a loathing

for these men because they intensely hated Jehovah and were revolting against Him. They were the psalmist's foes because he abhorred their wickedness, godlessness, and rebellion against the Most High.

Let God Search Through You

David did not want to be like wicked men, but he knew that he should not have animosity toward them. So he pleaded: “Search through me, O God, and know my heart. Examine me, and know my disquieting thoughts, and see whether there is in me any painful way, and lead me in the way of time indefinite.” (Psalm 139:23, 24) Like the psalmist, we should want God to search our hearts and discern whether we have improper motives. (1 Chronicles 28:9) We should ask Jehovah to examine us, know our disquieting thoughts, and see if there is any painful way in us. If we are beset by anxiety over our errors or there is something hurtful within us or wrong with our motives, let us pray humbly and submit fully to the direction of God's spirit and the counsel of his Word. (Psalm 40:11-13) By such means, our best Friend, Jehovah, can lead us in the way of time indefinite, helping us to pursue a righteous course leading to eternal life.

Psalm 139 thus provides real encouragement. It indicates that, since nothing escapes the observation of our heavenly Father, he can help us in every time of need. (Hebrews 4:16) Moreover, because Jehovah knows us better than we know ourselves, we are secure in his loving care. (Deuteronomy 33:27) If we humbly ask him to search through us and bring personal weaknesses to our attention, we can correct matters with his help. Surely, then, God's knowledge of us as individuals should affect our life in a good way. It should move us to be faithful advocates of true worship and to walk humbly before Jehovah, who knows us so well.

GODLY DEVOTION

BENEFICIAL FOR ALL THINGS



JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES know that "godly devotion is beneficial for all things" and is vital to true worship. (1 Timothy 4:8) Without it, religion is mere formalism. "Godly Devotion" was therefore an apt name for their series of district conventions that started last June.

In August, three of such conventions were held in Poland against a joyful backdrop. They took place after official recognition had been granted Jehovah's Witnesses in May. (For other details regarding the Polish conventions, see *Awake!* of December 22, 1989.)

Let us here review the convention program as it was presented in Poland.

Piątek w Poznaniu **(Friday in Poznan)**

Demanding bread and freedom, 50,000 demonstrators rioted in Poznan in June 1956. This resulted in over 50 fatalities and the formation of a new Polish government. In sharp contrast, 33 years later, in an atmosphere characterized by an abundance of spiritual bread and Christian freedom, peaceful Christians met there to hear talks on "Serving a God Exacting Exclusive

Devotion," Friday's theme. A peak of 40,442 gathered there on Sunday.

After the convention chairman's welcoming address and an interview with persons "Leading a Life With Full Godly Devotion," practical counsel was offered in the talk "Avoid Lips of Hurtfulness." How easy it is for idle talk to turn into hurtful gossip! And injurious gossip can lead to deadly slander. But before talking about other people, mature Christians, eager to preserve peace and unity, wisely ask themselves: 'Would Jesus have said this? Does it need to be said? Will it buildup? What is my reason for saying it?'

Unique to the conventions in Poland was the time set aside each day to hear reports given by Witnesses from other lands. Experiences told by delegates representing 24 different nations emphasized the truth that here is an international family truly united in recognition of the fact that "Jehovah Insists on Exclusive Devotion." Since God is worthy of receiving such devotion, his servants must be undivided in affection and worship. Jesus' example illustrates that there can be nothing halfhearted about exclusive devotion.

Godly devotion involves everything we do. Thus, a three-part discussion warned Christians to "Avoid Going Astray" in the areas of food and drink, dress and grooming, and entertainment. Gluttony and drunkenness are forms of greediness that dull spiritual senses, cause health problems, induce bad conduct, and lead to accidents. Extreme styles of dress—immodest, bizarre, outlandish, or even shocking—must be avoided. Sloppy, overly casual, or tight-fitting clothes are out of place. The issue is not whether a style is fashionable, but whether it is appropriate for a minister of God. And entertainment that is tainted with rebellion, violence, drugs, occultism, or sexual immorality is not for Christians.—Philippians 1:27.

The Friday afternoon program started with the talk "'The Faithful Slave' and Its Governing Body." Confident of the loyalty of

his faithful creatures, Jehovah delegates authority. So does his Son. From among his anointed followers, "the faithful and discreet slave," he has chosen a few to serve as a visible governing body. (Matthew 24:45) In the first century, this group was composed of the apostles and several other older men in Jerusalem.

In modern times the Governing Body has been closely identified with the editorial staff of the Watch Tower Society and its board of directors. But the Governing Body differs from that legal corporation, as the speaker pointed out: "Since the corporation's existence is purely legal, with a fixed geographic headquarters, it can be dissolved by Caesar, the State." Not so the Governing Body, which is not a legal instrument but the members of which "are appointed through the holy spirit under the direction of Jehovah and Christ." Thus, the Governing Body continues to function and to receive the unqualified support of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide.

Release of the "Trinity" brochure was a source of joy in Warsaw



New Releases Incite to 'Deeds of Godly Devotion'

The new book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* and the brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* both evoked many expressions of appreciation. A sister writes regarding the *Trinity* brochure: "I am amazed, thrilled, and delighted with it. Thank you for the tremendous time, energy, and work that went into printing this fine publication."

Another sister wrote regarding the book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?*: "I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for this fine new book. I wonder, do even you realize what a work of art it is? I often underline essential words. But you've stumped me because every single word is essential. I've only just finished chapter 5, but I had to say thanks."

The Polish conventions were attended by 5 members of the currently 12-man Governing Body. One of them delivered the keynote address, "Why Learn the Sacred Secret of Godly Devotion." Therein it was noted that the secret of godly devotion is no longer a secret, since "it came to be personified in Jesus." The speaker discussed the six facets of this sacred secret mentioned at 1 Timothy 3:16, and stated: "Our appreciation for the sacred secret of godly devotion should lead us always to follow Jesus' steps closely."

Two symposiums made it clear that godly devotion is required of young and old alike. Parents are responsible for giving their children a spiritual heritage by teaching them to develop a proper sense of right and wrong. Meaningful family study, including a realistic discussion of childhood problems, is a must. Always being alert to danger signals, parents must guard children from unwholesome association, even within the congregation.

On the other hand, if young people are to live rewarding lives, they must look to Christ, who 'left them a model for them to follow his steps closely.' (1 Peter 2:21) Appropriately, they were asked: "If you were raised in the truth, you know what you believe, but do you know why?" They were encouraged to make the truth their own by

proving to themselves that the Bible is God's Word and that Jehovah's Witnesses really have the truth.

In many countries this discussion was climaxed with the release of the new 320-page book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*. (Please see the accompanying box, "A Gift From Jehovah" for Young People.) It is hoped that young people in Poland and other Eastern European countries will some day also be able to benefit from the fine counsel this publication contains by reading it in their own language.

Sobota w Chorzowie (Saturday in Chorzów)

Katowice is an industrial center in the heart of the coalfields of southern Poland. The Silesian coal mines have meant economic gain for the area. But the main topic of conversation among the 65,710 persons at Slaski Stadium last August was gain of a greater kind.

"Godly Devotion Means Great Gain," the theme for Saturday, came in for explanation by the first speaker at the afternoon session. (1 Timothy 6:6) Underscoring the truthfulness of the speaker's words were interviews with individuals who had experienced great gain in their own lives by pursuing godly devotion.

During the morning program, the benefits of pursuing godly devotion had been stressed in a symposium. "By Regularly Reading [God's Word] With Discernment," probing into the meaning of what we read, and prayerfully considering how to apply what we learn, we as Christians are able to pursue godly devotion "By Always Letting Our Light Shine." (Joshua 1:8) It was noted that if each one of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the world would spend 15 minutes a day informally talking to others, an additional 327 million hours could be spent annually in Kingdom-preaching activity.

Godly devotion is also pursued "By Resisting Temptation." Things like food, drink, sex, or money, although not bad in themselves, can be evil under improper circumstances. The way of protection is to avoid needlessly exposing oneself to the world's materialism, pornography, drugs, and drunkenness, as well as to its preoccupation with pleasures, such as music, sports, and social affairs. Prayer is vital. Christians must learn to hate what is bad. This is appropriate, since the next speaker pointed out that they should be "Living No Longer for Man's Will but for God's."

More and more people are deciding to do just that. This was evident when 2,663 new Witnesses publicly expressed their determination to "Pursue Godly Devotion as Dedicated, Baptized Christians." (At all three conventions in Poland, baptismal candidates totaled 6,093.) To maintain joy in Jehovah's service, those about to be baptized were encouraged to meditate on the many reasons to be joyful: Jehovah's friendship, their worldwide brotherhood, and the hope of life in Paradise.

Christian subjection came up for discussion in the talk "Manifesting Deeds of Godly Devotion—As Men Under Christ's Headship." Men practicing godly devotion will care for family duties in a loving, Christlike way. "As Women Showing Proper Subjection," our Christian sisters will be support-

ive, not influencing the family head wrongly or letting emotion sway them into making unwise decisions. "As Children Who Obey Parents," younger ones will learn to obey, to comment at meetings, and to participate in the Christian ministry.

What fine counsel! Yet, how miserably false religion has failed to offer such proper guidance! For this, it deserves strong condemnation, which was forthcoming in the talk "Exposing the 'Man of Lawlessness.'" This mysterious one was identified as "a composite 'man,' the entire religious clergy of apostate Christendom." Notorious for their persecution of God's servants, the clergy have now been joined by "modern apostates, who formerly claimed to be Witnesses, [but who] have been going back to Christendom's doctrinal vomit and have collaborated with the spiritual drunkards of Babylon the Great in beating and attacking Jehovah's faithful and discreet slave class." Applause indicated agreement as the speaker declared: "We will continue to expose Babylon the Great and its 'man of lawlessness.'"

This calls for boldness, especially at a time when, according to M. G. Henschel, a member of the Governing Body, most people "turn their backs on God and on his Word, the Bible." Though "respect for the Bible is today at an all-time low," the Bible has stood the test of time. The speaker argued that "no book produced solely by humans could be so

In Our Next Issue

■ Can You Believe the Bible?

■ Exposing "the Man of Lawlessness"

■ I've Seen It Grow in Southern Africa

Godly Devotion on the Increase in Europe!

	Peak Convention Attendance			Baptized at Convention		
	1979	1984	1989	1979	1984	1989
AUSTRIA	17,847	20,908	25,153	236	257	307
BELGIUM	23,185	28,456	30,622	234	248	429
BRITAIN	113,910	137,008	160,704	605	937	1,344
DENMARK	21,057	23,267	24,645	122	147	249
FINLAND	20,293	23,501	25,679	215	302	329
FRANCE	89,073	110,745	156,751	1,361	1,856	3,201
GERMANY	129,342	140,681	159,819	1,154	1,009	1,694
ITALY	117,163	169,328	240,041	2,515	3,769	6,295
LUXEMBOURG	1,141	1,327	3,131	8	12	61
NETHERLANDS	36,768	42,060	44,185	126	143	271
NORWAY	10,327	11,352	13,829	107	159	294
POLAND	—	94,134*	166,518	—	3,140*	6,093
PORTUGAL	35,108	47,843	59,797	862	1,068	1,546
SPAIN	62,201	84,706	115,981	1,278	1,521	2,935
SWEDEN	21,286	25,204	30,943	279	323	410
SWITZERLAND	14,455	17,457	23,867	130	225	349
TOTALS	713,156	977,977	1,281,665	9,232	15,116	25,807

* Figures for 1985

deeply discerning and so consistently right." He declared that "Jehovah's Witnesses allow God's Word to exert power in their lives [and] the resulting international brotherhood of genuine Christians is powerful evidence that the Bible is the inspired Word of God." The day reached a delightful climax with the announcement of the new book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?*, released in a number of languages.

Niedziela w Warszawie (Sunday in Warsaw)

Warsaw's visitors generally go to see a memorial marking the site of the infamous Warsaw Ghetto, where the Nazis herded hundreds of thousands of Jews marked for extermination during World War II. Located only a few minutes away by car, however, X-Lecia Stadium overflowed, on August 13,

with 60,366 persons who had come to hear thoughts on "Repudiate Ungodliness and Live With Godly Devotion," the theme for Sunday.—Titus 2:12.

Living with godly devotion clearly rules out manifesting a worldly spirit of independence. The true-to-life drama "Subject Yourselves to Jehovah," presented with typical Polish enthusiasm, stressed the vital changes that Christians must make to receive God's approval.

A member of the Governing Body quoted 1 Corinthians 8:6, which says: "There is actually to us one God the Father." He noted that Christianity's central doctrine is not the Trinity, as many claim, but Jehovah's vindication by his Kingdom under Christ. "The Trinity teaching is a deviation from the truth, an apostatizing from it," he explained. Thus, people who call Mary the

'A Gift From Jehovah' for Young People

An outstanding feature at conventions in the United States and many other lands was the Friday afternoon session, when youths between the ages of 10 and 19 were asked to sit in a reserved section. After a special series of talks, each was given a free copy of the new book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*. Worldwide, some 8,840,000 copies were released in 21 languages, and hundreds of letters of appreciation have been received!

"At previous assemblies, there have been talks given to youths," writes one teenage girl, "but the effect of having all of us sit together was incredible." Writes another young person: "I got to sit in the section for youths. I was so encouraged by this that, since then, I've been taking notes at meetings, studying more, and commenting. I am thinking about baptism next summer."

For many youths, the experience was a landmark event. "When the speaker announced we were to sit in a special section," recalls one young girl, "I knew something great was going to happen. When they announced the release of the book, I felt so happy I wanted to cry. I always knew you cared about us youths, but this sunk it into my heart. This book is just what we needed!"

"It's so well written," says a youth named Leah, "and the pictures are realistic and really make you think." Convention editions of the book contained a brief message from the Governing Body addressed "To All Young Witnesses of Jehovah." "I was very touched by that special note," says young Andréa. "To me that feels as though someone whom Jehovah has chosen to live with him in heaven is actually talking to me!"

Many appreciated that the book was presented as a gift. Recalls one parent: "I was brought to tears. Brothers, five of those young people were mine, ages 11 to 16. I could have afforded to contribute for only two books." Writes a youth named Mark: "I began calculating how much it must have cost to give a copy to each young one, but then I realized that the guidance inside is *priceless*. If the book helps just one wayward youth to get back on the road leading to life or, better yet, helps a lot of us to *stay* on that road, it was worth all that cost."

Many youths began benefiting from the book immediately. "I attended our convention July 7-9," says one youth, "and by Monday, July 10, I had finished it!" Said another: "The last two chapters really encouraged me to start taking my life more seriously. I was once going to get baptized but changed my mind. Now that I have received this wonderful publication, I realize that 'the world is passing away' and that I need to take action now."

"Because times have changed," wrote one young girl, "I had always thought older ones didn't know how we felt. You don't know how glad I am to see that I'm wrong. Your attention toward us young ones makes me feel as though I count." Wrote a group of youths from Sweden: "We feel that you understand us youths, and we also feel much *closer* to you."

One youth summed it up well when he said: "My brother and sister and I loved the book. We feel it is a gift straight from Jehovah." It is our prayer that this gift will continue working for the blessing of God-fearing youths.



Newly dedicated Witnesses in Chorzów pursue godly devotion by being baptized

mother of God and the Mediatrix between God and man are not "holding God in accurate knowledge." (Romans 1:28) Accordingly, "to worship God properly means to reject the Trinity doctrine." Applause greeted the release of a 32-page brochure, *Czy wierzyć w Trójcę?* (Should You Believe in the Trinity?) What a fine tool for exposing the falsity of this God-dishonoring doctrine!

Deliverance never came for the Warsaw Ghetto victims. But God's promise, as explained in the public talk, is that "Deliverance [Is] Near for People of Godly Devotion!" (2 Peter 2:9) This is so although Christians are victims of twofold violence—the everyday kind and that directed against them in the form of persecution. Calling for self-examination, the speaker stressed that "deliverance is only for those who are people of godly devotion, those whose devotion is genuine, those whose obedience is an expression of loyalty."

After a final reminder to "Be Aglow With the Spirit," the convention concluded with a stirring presentation on the theme "Our Continued Training With Godly Devotion Is Beneficial." The conventioners then opened their new Polish songbooks, just fresh off

the presses a few weeks earlier, and unitedly offered "A Prayer of Thanksgiving" in the form of song 45.

A fervent closing prayer followed, and then thunderous applause broke out at Warsaw, Poznan, and Chorzów. In Warsaw the vigorous clapping of tens of thousands of hands reverberated in wave after wave for over 11 minutes. No one wanted to leave, and the standing ovation, so expressive of the exultation of this vast crowd of Witnesses, of whom many thousands were attending their first three-day convention, was dramatically expressive of their thanks to Jehovah and his organization. It was as though in response to Psalm 47:1, 2: "All you peoples, clap your hands. Shout in triumph to God with the sound of a joyful cry. For Jehovah, the Most High, is fear-inspiring, a great King over all the earth." As one of the grandest events in the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses drew to a close, those earnest brothers prepared to journey homeward, their hearts overflowing with happiness and a determination to step up the grand Kingdom witness in line with Jesus' precious example of godly devotion.

He Was Fascinated



While riding the New York subway last spring, a young woman was reading the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* The man sitting next to her noticed the publication, and as she turned the pages, he was fascinated by the striking illustrations. "Oh, that book sure looks interesting!" he said.

"Yes, it is," the woman responded. "It explains the Bible book of Revelation, chapter by chapter."

"How can I get one of those?" the man wanted to know.

"From Jehovah's Witnesses," she replied. But then she continued: "You know, this copy that I have is new, and it is only \$3, so I could let you have it."

He immediately took the money from his pocket and accepted the book. Just then, the train stopped, and he had to hurry off.

Afterwards, the man told his friends about the book and how it had changed his life. He began attending meetings and soon became a Jehovah's Witness himself.

The book that so captivated the man is the one you are holding now. It is the same book that has been distributed millions of times around the world. It is the same book that has helped many people find hope and comfort in their darkest hours. It is the same book that has inspired millions of people to live their lives according to God's Word.

Revelation—*Its Grand Climax At Hand!* is a powerful book that will change your life. It is a book that will help you understand the end times and what God has in store for us. It is a book that will give you hope and encouragement during difficult times. It is a book that will help you live a life that pleases God.

