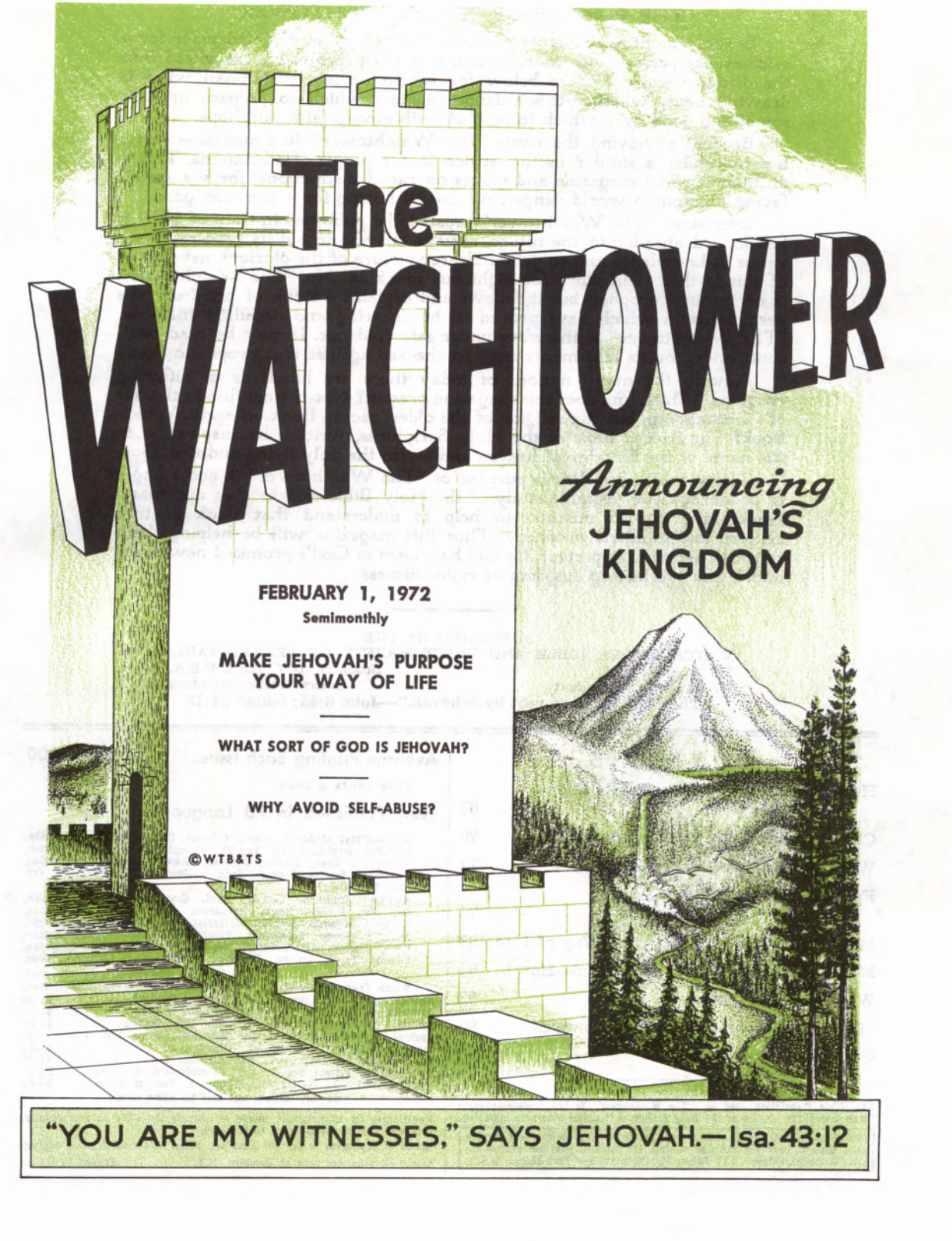




The WATCHTOWER

Announcing
**JEHOVAH'S
KINGDOM**

FEBRUARY 1, 1972

Semimonthly

**MAKE JEHOVAH'S PURPOSE
YOUR WAY OF LIFE**

—
WHAT SORT OF GOD IS JEHOVAH?

—
WHY AVOID SELF-ABUSE?

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"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13

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ONE of the biggest problems people face today is how to get along with others in peace. Yet few things have so much to do with our daily enjoyment of life. Where can we find the key to solve this problem? In the churches? Why, then, do we read of growing dissension in the churches, even open fighting between religions, as in Ireland now?

What, then, about the Bible? You may say, "But don't most churches claim to represent the Bible's teachings?" True, but could it be that they have failed to do this? That must be the case, for the Bible clearly teaches peaceful living. More than that, it offers us the wisdom we need to enjoy pleasant relations with others.—Prov. 3:13, 17.

How does it do that? Just by saying, "Be peaceful"? No. Instead, it reveals what the real obstacles to peaceful living are and how to overcome them.

To begin with, it shows us that it is not enough just to want to live free from strife. We have to

HOW CAN WE ENJOY

Peaceful Relations with Others?

work at enjoying peace with others. As the psalmist put it: "Who is the man that is delighting in life, that is loving enough days to see what is good? Safeguard your tongue against what is bad, and your lips against speaking deception. . . . seek to find peace, and pursue it."—Ps. 34:12-14.

From your own experience, would you not put 'unrestrained tongues and lips' near the top of the list of peace wreckers? Many persons profess some religion. But what does their claim to worship God mean if their tongue is not truthful, if it cuts and lashes at others, or spreads remarks that damage others' reputations? No wonder the disciple James wrote: "If any man seems to himself to be a formal worshiper and yet does not bridle his tongue, but goes on deceiving his own heart, this



The Bible reveals what the obstacles to peaceful living are and how to overcome them

man's form of worship is futile."—Jas. 1:26.

SELF-RESTRAINT A SIGN OF STRENGTH

A problem here is that many look on the course of refusing to trade insult for insult as a sign of weakness. The Bible shows that the truth is just the opposite. At Proverbs 16:32 we read: "He that is slow to anger is better than a mighty man, and he that is controlling his spirit than the one capturing a city."

Yes, a person may outwardly appear powerful but inside be a moral weakling. Moral strength is far harder to come by than any other kind of power. Many, lacking strength to control their feelings, fit the description at Proverbs 25:28: "As a city broken through, without a wall, is



the man that has no restraint for his spirit." They are vulnerable to every passing provocation.

Really, which makes more sense: to "let off steam" now and then to relieve inner pressure or to cool down the fire that is building up the steam? Why not work on the *source* of the problem? More often than not we find that the real problem is our pride, selfishness, shortsightedness or ignorance of the best way to solve personal problems. These produce hasty, excited words and acts. By contrast the Bible, at Ecclesiastes 7:8, 9, says:

"Better is the end afterward of a matter than its beginning. Better is one who is patient than one who is haughty in spirit. Do not hurry yourself in your spirit to become offended, for the taking of offense is what rests in the bosom of the stupid ones."

No one, of course, likes being the object of slighting remarks or actions. But is it worth it to let these cause us to erupt in violence? Men have become crippled or have crippled others, even lost their lives or caused others to lose theirs, because of the hastiness spawned by haughtiness and pride. They may ruin their lives to avenge a few words—words possibly not intended to offend in the first place. Is this not "stupidity"?

The Bible's counsel aids us to see and weigh the consequences *before* we act—rather than to have to learn them by painful experience later. It helps us to build up the inner strength we need to succeed in 'seeking peace and pursuing it.' One way it does that is by helping us to make a right estimate of things—recognizing what the really big things in life are and what things merit only minor importance.

For example, many today go 'all out' to gain as many luxuries as they can. But often they rob their mate or children of the attention they need. Then friction and quarrels fill the home. Do you value luxuries—rich food, for instance—more than love and peace in your home? The Bible counsels: "Better is a dish of vegetables where there is love than a manger-fed bull [with its filet mignon and T-bone steaks] and hatred along with it." "Better is a dry piece of bread with which there is quietness than a house full of the sacrifices of quarreling."—Prov. 15:17; 17:1.

Some persons quickly gain our respect by the fine qualities they demonstrate. What about strangers, or some persons

we know but whose qualities we do not find admirable? What will help us to maintain peaceful relations with these? This is not always easy to do. But here again the Bible comes to our aid. It shows us that we owe such ones fundamental respect as fellow members of the human family.

Thousands of years before modern scientists reached the conclusion that "all the peoples of the earth are a single family and have a common origin" (*The Races of Mankind*, 1951, pages 3, 4), the Bible contained that fact. (Gen. 1:26, 27; 3:20) And by showing that God "made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth," and that "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him," the Bible knocks down any reason for pride or prejudice based on race or nationality. —Acts 17:26; 10:34, 35.

NEIGHBOR LOVE

More than respect is needed, however. We need to be motivated by love for our neighbor as for ourselves. (Matt. 22:39) As far back as King Solomon's time people were saying: "Just as he did to me, so I am going to do to him. I shall repay to each one according to his acting." (Prov. 24:29) Many still follow the same selfish rule today. Others follow the rule given by Chinese sage Confucius: "Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you." But even this is based on a negative principle. How superior is the *positive* principle stated by Jesus: "Just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them." —Luke 6:31.

Yes, this positive principle shows that the way to 'seek peace' is not just by holding back from doing harmful things but by doing helpful things for others, things we ourselves would appreciate

having done for us. A smile, a friendly greeting, expressions of courtesy as simple as opening a door for another, or expressions of gratitude for courtesies shown—these and hundreds of other acts of human kindness can make a tremendous difference in our relations with others. Putting this principle to work in small ways prepares us for those times when doing so calls for greater effort and sacrifice.

Some may say: "Putting up with minor or occasional provocations or irritations is not so hard. But what about situations where pressure is severe and prolonged?" In such circumstances many drop the pursuit of peace and give in to bitterness or resort to acts designed to do harm.

Then it is a question of either trusting in human ability to gain relief or trusting in God to do so. It takes real faith to apply the words: "Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says Jehovah.' . . . Do not let yourself be conquered by the evil, but keep conquering the evil with the good." —Rom. 12:19-21.

Do you have such faith in God as the supreme Judge and in his declared purpose to establish justice in all the earth? Do you believe the Bible's promise of a righteous government headed by God's own Son, a Kingdom rule that will bring lasting peace? Only by gaining knowledge of the Bible's teachings and then applying them in your daily life, proving to yourself their truthfulness and practicality, can you have such faith.

Would you appreciate help in doing this? Write the publishers of this magazine for a free Bible discussion in your home with a qualified minister of Jehovah's witnesses. Learn how true the words are: "Abundant peace belongs to those loving your law, and for them there is no stumbling block." —Ps. 119:165.

COURAGEOUS

IN THE FACE of OPPOSITION

HOW would you feel if you were living in a land where your worship of the Creator was prohibited by law? Would you speak out boldly for your faith? Though using good judgment, would you take a measure of risk to present reasons for your Bible-based hope to others? (1 Pet. 3:15) Or would you deny it in the face of possible loss of freedom? Truly, it would take courage to uphold what you knew to be the truth. This courage has been displayed by many of Jehovah's Christian witnesses in recent months.

RICH REWARDS FROM BEING COURAGEOUS IN WESTERN AFRICA

◆ While calling on persons who had previously shown interest in the Bible, a Christian witness of Jehovah in Africa noticed a woman standing beside a policeman. Suddenly this woman cried out in a loud voice: 'Hey! Jehovah's witness, where did you leave your briefcase? Are you walking around secretly now, carrying little books in your pockets in order to preach to the people?' Fearlessly the Witness approached the woman and the policeman, asking her: 'What does a briefcase have to do with the ban on Jehovah's witnesses? Before the ban was placed on our work, was it the briefcase that spoke from door to door or was it the mouth of the Witness?'

'We well know,' said the policeman, 'that the work of Jehovah's witnesses is prohibited, but with mouths they still preach.' Hearing these words, the woman entered her house, leaving the Witness with the policeman.

The Witness then posed this question: 'If the chief of police gave you an assignment and thereafter a military official came along and tried to force you to do something else, what would you do?' 'I could not stop the work given me by the police chief. I work for the police, not the military,' he replied.

In line with this answer, the Witness explained that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had ordained the work he was doing as one of Jehovah's Christian witnesses. This work is important because disaster is threatening all nations. The Witness explained that as a Christian he was obligated to speak to his neighbors so that they might be saved. He referred to a Bible prophecy showing that the wicked would perish even while standing up. The Witness pointed out that he could not

stop preaching just because the president of the republic banned the work of Jehovah's witnesses. If he were to stop now, could the president give him the reward of everlasting life?

Impressed, the policeman asked how he might obtain a Bible. The Witness immediately went to a nearby Protestant minister to buy a Bible with the money given him by the policeman. When he returned, the policeman wanted to know where the Bible says that the wicked would perish while standing up. The Witness opened the Bible to Zechariah 14:12. After reading this text personally the policeman was astounded.

The Witness then asked: 'Does the Bible from which you just read belong to Jehovah's witnesses?' 'No,' replied the policeman. The Witness raised yet another question: 'Since the minister has this Bible in his church and has preached to you, has he ever taught this to his members?' Again the policeman answered, 'No.' The Witness pointed out that Jehovah's witnesses are persecuted in all the world because they teach the truth of the Bible. Moved by these words, the policeman, in all sincerity, asked whether he could work for Jesus.

Arrangements were made for a Bible study. Three months later this policeman began attending meetings held by Jehovah's Christian witnesses. Today he is proclaiming Bible truth to others.

◆ In the same country a male nurse began to study the Bible with Jehovah's witnesses. So great was his interest that he wanted to study several times each week. After only two weeks of study, however, he was assigned to work at a place seventy-five miles away, where there were no Witnesses. Nevertheless, his appreciation for Bible truth moved him to preach from house to house despite the ban on Jehovah's

Christian witnesses. Everywhere news spread that someone was practicing a new religion. Word reached the assistant prefect, who called the man to his office, advising him that as a male nurse he was a state civil servant and had no right to engage in an illegal work.

Calmly the man replied that his work was important and that God was its author. Under no circumstances would he stop his activities.

Angered by the man's fearless stand, the assistant prefect sent a lengthy report against him to his superiors. What was the outcome? Not the male nurse, but the assistant prefect was reassigned. And the male nurse was baptized late at night during a visit by one of the traveling ministers of Jehovah's Christian witnesses.

PERSEVERANCE DESPITE FAMILY OPPOSITION

◆ For an individual to continue faithful to Jehovah God in a land where his worship is proscribed by law is not easy, especially when there is bitter family opposition. This was the experience of four fleshly sisters living in a village in Hungary. Three of the sisters were Christian witnesses of Jehovah. The other one had a real interest in the message of Jehovah's witnesses, but married a man whose relatives were staunch Catholics.

Whenever this man visited his relatives, they would incite him against Jehovah's witnesses. After one such visit he told his wife that he would not much longer bear the shame of having married into a family that had left the good Catholic religion. Another time he pulled a rope from his pocket and threatened that he would commit suicide. On several other occasions he nearly strangled his wife, demanding that she leave her religion. This difficult situation lasted for two years.

All during this time the sisters in the house endeavored to manifest Christian love and patience. Though repeatedly met with rebuffs, they tried to present the Bible's message to this man. They continued to pray that their patience and love might bear fruit.

One evening this man, after having visited his parents, returned home completely infuriated against Jehovah's witnesses. With a knife in his hand, he stood over the bed of his wife and little daughter, saying: 'Now the moment has come when all of us must die.' 'If Jehovah permits it,' said his wife calmly, 'then do what you plan to do, but we will not give up true worship.' Then the other sisters came in. They

started to pray aloud, calling upon Jehovah's name for help. The man then let the hand holding the knife slowly sink to his side. After a while he started to talk calmly. He showed regret for what had happened, acknowledging that he could not explain why he acted the way he did.

Shortly afterward this man had to go to another location for a certain time. Often he sent letters to his wife, asking for her forgiveness and promising to start a new life upon his return. His promises were not empty words. He began to study the Bible. Eventually he and his wife were baptized. Now he is helping others to appreciate that the way of life he once viciously opposed is true worship.

ACCEPTING BIBLE TRUTH REQUIRES COURAGE

◆ When a person has a deep love for righteousness, he is able to take a stand for Bible truth despite probable adversity. This was the case with an engineer in East Germany. At a meeting of the Communist party he told fellow members that he was going to resign. Asked why, he courageously replied that he was going to become one of Jehovah's witnesses. At that an influential functionary jumped up and shouted: 'You will have to repeat this before the district bureau; I will see to that.'

The day came for the party meeting of the district bureau, an organ of the party that has greater influence than the police force. But the engineer and his family were determined to continue in their new way of life, come what may. At the place of meeting the engineer did not see the man who had launched the action against him. Inquiring of a neighbor about this, he was told: 'Don't you know? He will not come. He lost his mind and was confined to a mental institution yesterday.' How glad the engineer was for not having yielded to the pressure of possible adversity!

Surely those who take their stand for Jehovah God are in line for blessing. Whereas there may not always be a reversal of matters, they have the deep satisfaction of knowing that they have proved faithful to the supreme Sovereign of the universe. And He is the One who can reward them so abundantly that their sufferings appear to amount to nothing. As the apostle Paul wrote respecting the heavenly reward: "I reckon that the sufferings of the present season do not amount to anything in comparison with the glory that is going to be revealed in us."—Rom. 8:18.

What Sort of God is Jehovah?

THERE is no question that there is a God named Jehovah. More than a million and a half persons render worship to him. And in at least 207 lands virtually everyone hears the name Jehovah talked about by these people and by others. His worshipers adhere to laws they read in the Bible, the book that declares his name.

At times the loyalty of these million and a half worshipers to their God Jehovah brings the Name into the public spotlight, in one country or another. Their sticking to strict neutrality as to the politics of the nations, their complete separation from Christendom's churches, their insistence on obeying God's command about the sanctity of blood, even at the cost of suffering—all these show Jehovah to be a God whose word has powerful effect on his worshipers.

Some nations, particularly the communistic ones, try not to hear the Name. They legislate against it and ban the proclamation of it. But they are unsuccessful in getting mention of it stopped. What sort of God is this One with the unlikely name? And what is there about him that produces such loyal, active adherents?

We do not need to be in the dark as to this God's qualities. We have a historical account in the Bible as God's inspired record, written by men who personally experienced dealings with God. Secular history also gives us some corroborative details.

Take, for example, the people of Israel delivered from slavery to Egypt. Some 600,000 fighting men, with hundreds of thousands of women, children and older

men, along with their livestock, walked across a dry seabed and saw the pursuing Egyptians trapped as the sea closed in on them. This event climaxed a period of intimate eyewitness experience of Jehovah's dealings. Preceding the Red Sea incident were ten plagues on Egypt, each announced beforehand by Jehovah's representative Moses, and each coming on time and in the way Moses predicted.

All this should have convinced everyone involved that Jehovah is the supreme God, and should also have been very informative as to his qualities. Prior to this event Israel's forefathers had known God's name. They had addressed him at times by the name Jehovah and knew that it designated him as the Purposer toward his people. But now they could appreciate the Name in a way they had never done before. This full understanding and appreciation of the Name's significance was what God had referred to earlier when he said to Moses: "I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty. But I did not let myself be known to them by my name JEHOVAH."—EX. 6:2, 3, *New English Bible* of 1970.

Now God had brought added illustriousness to that Name by fulfilling what it had signified to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Now the entire nation was obligated to be witnesses to the glory of that Name. Before whom? First, to their own children. (Ex. 10:1, 2) Also, they were to be a nation of Jehovah's witnesses before the other nations who worshiped false gods—gods that could not make prophetic promises and bring them to fulfillment, as Jehovah could.—Isa. 43:1-12.

JEHOVAH'S CARE FOR HIS PEOPLE

But did Israel come to know other qualities of Jehovah? Yes, for on leaving Egypt they had before them a trek through "the great and fear-inspiring wilderness, with poisonous serpents and scorpions and with thirsty ground that has no water." (Deut. 8:15) Jehovah had brought them into this place. As their God, would he be concerned enough to care for them? Yes, for now both the welfare of his people and *his own Name* were involved.

The fact that the nation of Israel survived to enter the Promised Land with almost the same population as they had at the start, despite the rigorous conditions and also their own repeated derelictions from God's laws, proved Jehovah to be their merciful Provider and Sustainer. Shortly after their leaving Egypt God allayed their anxiety about his ability and willingness to care for them when he supplied an abundance of quail and when the miraculous life-sustaining manna began to appear. (Ex. 16:1-18) As Moses afterward pointed out to them: "[God] brought forth water for you out of the flinty rock; [he] fed you with manna in the wilderness." And as to God's provision of clothing needs, they were reminded: "Your mantle did not wear out upon you, nor did your foot become swollen these forty years."—Deut. 8:4, 15, 16.

Furthermore, Jehovah proved to be their Protector. Early in the wilderness

journey, through his miraculous support Israel defeated the Amalekites. At this time Moses built an altar and named it Jehovah-nissi, meaning "Jehovah Is My Signal Pole." He is a God around whom his people can rally for protection and help.—Ex. 17:8-16.

HIS MERCY

So, Israel's forty years' personal experience brought them to know Jehovah. At Mount Sinai, where the Law covenant was made with the nation, Moses made request to see God's glory. Then, in the mountain, by means of his representative angel, "the LORD came down in the cloud and took his place beside him and pronounced the Name JEHOVAH. Then the LORD passed in front of him and called aloud, 'JEHOVAH, the LORD, a god compassionate and gracious, long-suffering, ever constant and true, maintaining constancy to thousands, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin, and not sweeping the guilty clean away; but one who punishes sons and grandsons to the third and fourth generation for the iniquity of their fathers!'" —Ex. 33:18-34:7, *NEB*.

Already God had demonstrated these fine qualities when the people, less than four months after their deliverance at the Red Sea, made a golden calf and said: "This is your God, O Israel, who led you up out of the land of Egypt." (Ex. 32:4) What ingratitude, disloyalty and faithlessness! But Jehovah did not cast them off. In fact, that very generation could have gone into the Promised Land, with Jehovah's help.

However, when about to enter Canaan they manifested fear and rebellion, speaking of appointing for themselves a head to lead them back to Egypt. (Num. 14:1-4) Even then Jehovah forgave them, letting

them live, but he deferred their entry into the land until all the rebellious men of that generation had died off.—Num. 14: 18-20, 29, 34.

Moreover, God put up with their many complaints and rebellions during their forty-year wilderness journey, forgiving, protecting, providing and caring for them.

The qualities displayed by Jehovah distinguish him from all the so-called gods whom men and nations have worshiped. What reasonable person, with a proper appreciation, would not want to worship a God such as Jehovah is? He deserves to be worshiped. He has the exclusive and just right to command that he be worshiped by all his creatures in heaven and on earth.

PROVISIONS FOR WORSHIP

In Israel's case Jehovah provided the nation with everything necessary to carry on worship of him. They had his laws, which were spiritual, holy and good. (Rom. 7:12, 14) When obeyed they worked for Israel's welfare, both spiritual and physical. He arranged for a priesthood to serve Israel, in the family of Aaron the brother of Moses. He prescribed a list of sacrifices that they could offer to him on certain occasions and for certain reasons. By these means every individual in the nation could enjoy approach to his God. These sacrifices also had a special meaning, pointing forward to the Great Sacrifice that Jehovah would provide in due time to take away the sins of the whole world of mankind.

The architectural plans for the transportable tent of meeting or tabernacle and for the temple later built in Jerusalem were provided by Jehovah. Jehovah put his name there. Accordingly, what went on there was of special interest to Jehovah forasmuch as it reflected upon his holy name.

It was no light offense for anyone to defile his temple. Those who did would come to know that they could not do so with impunity. They would come to know that Jehovah, though a merciful, forgiving God to those who turn to him, is also a God of justice, the Universal Sovereign who insists on right-doing. In this he not only magnifies his own Name as the true God, but also protects his creatures, so that they may live in peace, security and happiness.

TEN-TRIBE KINGDOM MADE TO KNOW HIM

Centuries after entering the Promised Land ten of the tribes broke away from God's appointed dynasty of the house of David and set up their own kingdom, also making calf images to worship. This kingdom, with its capital city Samaria, was called Israel, as distinguished from Judah, with Jerusalem as capital. Even then God gave idolatrous Israel an opportunity to know him by defeating their enemy Syria. But Israel, though they had known Jehovah in the past as their God, manifested no appreciation of his Godship.

Israel continued in its idolatry. That nation failed to profit religiously from having learned that the God of salvation is Jehovah. After an existence of 257 years, their capital city Samaria was destroyed by the Assyrians in 740 B.C.E. and the people were taken off into exile. The prophet Jeremiah explains why, saying: "Over the fact that they had not listened to the voice of Jehovah their God, but kept overstepping his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of Jehovah had commanded. They neither listened nor performed."—2 Ki. 18:11, 12.

Do these examples mean anything in our time? They do! They serve as a strong warning to the so-called "Christian" na-

tions. They have had every opportunity to know about Jehovah. They are accountable, because they claim to serve the God of the Bible, who states that Jehovah is his memorial Name.—Ex. 3:13-15.

But the other nations who do not claim to serve the God of the Bible, Jehovah, should not think that they will not also have to come to know who Jehovah is. This was foreshadowed by what happened to the nations surrounding God's ancient kingdom of Judah. In 607 B.C.E. God allowed Babylon to overthrow Judah for unfaithfulness to him. At that time Babylon and the enemies of Judah rejoiced.

Speaking by his prophet Ezekiel to the Jewish exiles in Babylon, Jehovah comforted them, foretelling their restoration, and saying: "I shall certainly sanctify my great name, which was being profaned among the nations, which you profaned in the midst of them; and the nations will have to know that I am Jehovah," is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'when I am sanctified among you before their eyes.'"—Ezek. 36:23.

In 539 B.C.E. Babylon was overthrown by the Medes and Persians and in 537 B.C.E., after seventy years' exile, the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild its temple. The enemies of Jerusalem were forced to sit up and take notice of what God had done for them.

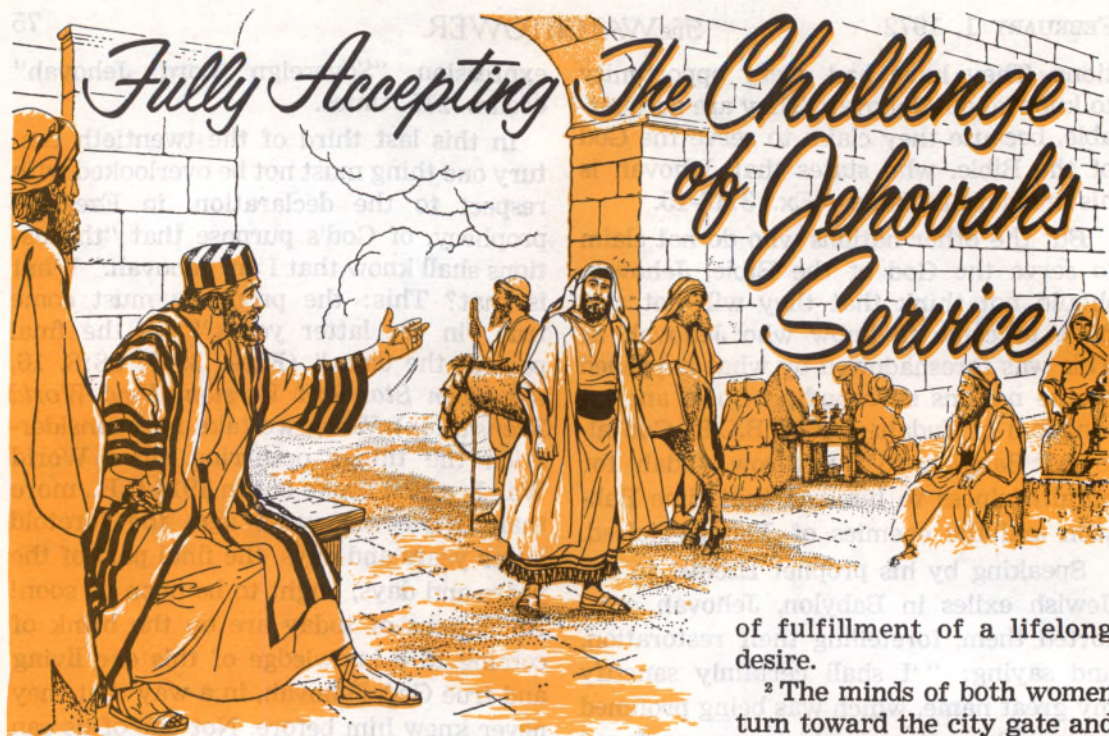
HE IS TO BE MADE KNOWN TODAY

Today, is it important that this knowledge that he is Jehovah be made so widespread? Yes! In the entire prophecy of Ezekiel alone the Sovereign Lord God indicates the importance of it by repeatedly declaring that nations and peoples and individuals must "know that I am Jehovah," making such a declaration sixty-two times. In the prophecy of Ezekiel the

expression "Sovereign Lord Jehovah" occurs 215 times.

In this last third of the twentieth century one thing must not be overlooked with respect to the declaration, in Ezekiel's prophecy, of God's purpose that "the nations shall know that I am Jehovah." What is that? This: the prophecy must come true "in the latter years," "in the final part of the days." (Ezek. 39:7; 38:8, 16, *American Standard Version, New World Translation*) When we take into consideration the things occurring since World War I, which broke out in 1914 C.E., more than fifty-seven years ago, the foretold latter years and days, the final part of the years and days, ought to be upon us soon! All nations of today are on the brink of coming to a knowledge of this one living and true God, Jehovah, in a way that they never knew him before. Not one of us can escape it. We are all part of those nations. Do we stand to gain or to lose when there is imparted to us that highly important knowledge of Jehovah?

In Ezekiel's prophecy God made many declarations about what nations and peoples must come to know. Consequently, whether we now like Jehovah and his name or not, it is certainly worth our while to peer into that prophetic book. If so, we will observe how outstanding parts of it have had modern-day fulfillment. Many honest-hearted persons today are still confused about the Supreme Being, the Almighty God. They cannot do otherwise than benefit themselves by discovering his wise and timely counsel for today. Why be forced to know that he is Jehovah in the way that Pharaoh, the ancient ruler of Egypt, was? Far better is it for us as lovers of life and happiness to accept his gracious invitation to come to know Him now in a peaceful, friendly way.



DAWN was breaking over Bethlehem. Already some movement could be faintly distinguished in the streets as the dim light of the new day revealed a few shadowy figures hurrying about some early morning chore. The graceful figure of a young woman approaches the city and glides quickly across the open space at the entrance of the gate. There is a look of joy on her face and a spring in her step despite the bundle she carries wrapped in her cloak. She turns aside and enters a modest home where she is greeted briefly by a much older woman, then both sit down, expectantly waiting, the younger woman with a prospective hope for the future, the older woman with the hope

1, 2. What events in ancient Bethlehem were leading up to a challenge that would have far-reaching effects?

"I concealed my face from you for but a moment, but with loving-kindness to time indefinite I will have mercy upon you," your Repurchaser, Jehovah, has said."—Isa. 54:8.

of fulfillment of a lifelong desire.

² The minds of both women turn toward the city gate and the events that begin to occur as the first rays of the rising sun light upon the little city perched on the hilly eminence. More people are moving through the streets. The sun mounts higher. Though it is hardly yet summer, the six-month dry spell is well advanced and even at this early hour of the day the sun is beginning to make its heat felt. Now people

are everywhere and the open space before the city gate is the scene of considerable activity. But sitting alone at the entrance of the gate is an older man, his bearing and dress denoting him as a man of means and of some prominence in the community. His demeanor this morning is serious as his eyes search out each new face that appears in the square. Obviously, he is looking for someone. Suddenly he calls out: "Do turn aside, do sit

down here, So-and-so." Another man of mature years stops, turns and seats himself alongside the first. With this greeting and this response, events were to begin that would change, not only the lives of the two women waiting patiently in the little home in Bethlehem, but also the lives of many in generations to come. A challenge was to be made to "So-and-so" that would have far-reaching effects, even down into our day.

³ The name of the young woman who entered the city on this significant day was Ruth and the older woman who greeted her on entering the home was her mother-in-law, Naomi, widow of Elimelech. Ruth was not a natural-born Jewess though Naomi was. Ruth was a Moabitess. But how did she come to be the daughter-in-law of Naomi, living in Bethlehem so far away from her own land and people? What was her relationship to Boaz, the older man who was so intent on discussing a matter with So-and-so? And what was this matter of such import that its challenge could affect our lives today, over thirty centuries later?

⁴ The drama that was beginning to unfold in ancient Israel, as recorded in the book of Ruth, was prophetic of events in modern times that are just as challenging and far reaching in their effects as were those then. (1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4) And each of the characters involved in the ancient drama is pictorial as well. Elimelech's name means "God is king." Thus he pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. So does Boaz, a close relative of Naomi, his name possibly meaning "in

strength." It would be expected, then, that Naomi, whose name means "my pleasantness," would picture those espoused to Jesus, those who are his bride, particularly those on earth in this "time of the end" when the drama is having its remarkable fulfillment. Ruth, her name perhaps meaning "friendship," became the daughter-in-law of Naomi and was thus in line to produce offspring for Naomi. Thus she, too, would represent those of the bride of Christ, from a slightly different viewpoint and under different circumstances. Whom, then, does the one called "So-and-so," who was also a close relative of Naomi, picture? We shall allow the unfolding of events in the modern day to make this identification clear.

A WOMAN FORSAKEN

⁵ We return now to the time when the happy family of Elimelech was still intact, his wife, Naomi, and their two sons,

5. (a) What occurred in Bethlehem in Naomi's day, and what did her husband Elimelech do as a result?
(b) What does this picture in the modern fulfillment?



"Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out, for the man will have no rest unless he has brought the matter to an end today"

3. Who were the principal characters in the drama of Naomi and Ruth, and what questions must be settled as to their relationships?

4. Who or what do the principal characters picture?

Mahlon and Chilion, residing in the territory of Judah, in Bethlehem or Ephrathah. Bethlehem means "house of bread," whereas Ephrathah means "fruitfulness" or "fertility." Both names have to do with abundance, absence of starvation or famine, but in this thirteenth century before our common era, famine, lack of bread, does befall Bethlehem and the whole territory of the tribe of Judah, picturing the scarcity in a spiritual way that came upon Jehovah's organization during World War I. Whether any other residents of Bethlehem left the city or not, Elimelech moves out with his family. He crosses over the Jordan River and settles down in the land or field of Moab to reside there temporarily as an alien resident, just as Jehovah's servants today are temporary residents in Satan's system of things. (John 17:16; 1 John 5:19) In doing this, Elimelech leaves behind in the land a hereditary possession.—Ruth 1:1, 2.

⁶ In the course of time the aged Elimelech dies and leaves Naomi as a widow. Naomi then sees good to marry off her two sons there in the land of Moab, and Mahlon, apparently the older, marries the Moabitess Ruth, while Chilion marries Orpah, also a Moabitess. Eventually, however, Mahlon and Chilion also die and leave behind a widowed mother, Naomi, and widowed wives, Ruth and Orpah. (Ruth 1:3-5) They are childless widows, bearing no offspring to Naomi. Being too old to bear children herself, Naomi must bear the brunt of the reproach. The death of Mahlon (meaning "sickly, invalid") and Chilion (meaning "frailty") pictures the spiritual death of some associated with God's organization during this trying period. It was a time of great sorrow for Jehovah's people.

6. What events occurred in Moab with Naomi's relatives?

⁷ Naomi saw herself as a woman forsaken, one without seed or the reproductive power to produce seed. She was like "a wife left entirely and hurt in spirit, and as a wife of the time of youth who was then rejected." In the days when fruitage of the womb could be viewed as a blessing from Jehovah and barrenness as a curse, Naomi felt justified in saying: "It is Jehovah that has humiliated me." (Ruth 1:21) Centuries later the prophet Isaiah was inspired to write of a similar humiliation, in this instance as a direct result of Jehovah's displeasure. To appreciate fully the challenge that faced Naomi, we must understand Isaiah's prophecy and its application to events that have taken place in modern times in fulfillment. "For Jehovah called you as if you were a wife left entirely and hurt in spirit, and as a wife of the time of youth who was then rejected,' your God has said: 'For a little moment I left you entirely, but with great mercies I shall collect you together. With a flood of indignation I concealed my face from you for but a moment, but with loving-kindness to time indefinite I will have mercy upon you,' your Repurchaser, Jehovah, has said."—Isa. 54:6-8.

JEHOVAH, A HUSBANDLY OWNER

⁸ This prophecy would suggest that Jehovah, the God of all creation, has a wife. Is this possible? Yes, symbolically speaking. To her it is said in Isaiah 54:5: "For your Grand Maker is your husbandly owner, Jehovah of armies being his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Repurchaser." These words are addressed, not to Naomi, who had been dead for five centuries by Isaiah's day, nor to any literal woman but to an organization, the

7. How did Naomi view her condition, and what condition did Isaiah prophesy centuries later?

8, 9. (a) To whom are the words of Isaiah 54:6-8 addressed, and how is this shown in the context of the prophecy? (b) What group is taken thereinto that is also pictured by Naomi?

heavenly Zion, God's universal organization of spiritual sons in heaven. For the past nineteen hundred years these spiritual sons of God's universal organization have not been confined to the invisible spiritual angels of heaven who are still holy and loyal to Jehovah God. This universal organization of Jehovah has taken in spirit-begotten sons of God on earth who finally total up to the number of 144,000. (Rev. 14:1) All of these are footstep followers of the chief one in God's universal organization, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ These 144,000 footstep followers of Jesus Christ are engaged to marry him in heaven and consequently they are the prospective bride of Christ, as Revelation 21:9 calls them, "the bride, the Lamb's wife." The members of this bridal class have been in course of selection during the past nineteen hundred years. For this reason there could at most be only a remnant of them on earth today. Those who survived World War I, being dedicated to God and baptized before the year 1919 of our twentieth century, are pictured in the drama by Naomi. How, then, did they come to be in the condition of Naomi in the land of Moab, childless and forsaken?

¹⁰ In order to understand this feature of the drama of Naomi and Ruth it is necessary to understand another feature of the relationship of the remnant on earth to the other members of God's universal organization, those in heaven. Those of the remnant being members of the universal organization of God, whatever affects the remnant of the bride, still in the flesh though spiritual sons of God, likewise affects God's woman, the heavenly Zion or the universal organization. This becomes quite clear when we consider the

prophecy of Isaiah 54:6-8 in the light of events that surrounded the activity of the Naomi class during World War I. For it was in this period, from 1918 into 1919, that the Greater Elimelech "died" toward the Naomi class, who became forsaken, as though without a husbandly owner. It was an experience of humiliation when Jehovah, the husband of that universal organization, rejected his woman, as represented by the spirit-begotten members here on the earth, to fulfill Isaiah 54:6-8.

JEHOVAH IS DISPLEASED WITH HIS WOMAN

¹¹ Notice how Jehovah describes his woman in Isaiah's prophecy as being abandoned, hurt in spirit with his face concealed from her. That indicates a period of displeasure in her. That is why, in the eleventh verse, he addresses her: "O woman afflicted, tempest-tossed, uncomforted." The Naomi remnant came into a condition like that, particularly in the year 1918, when they were, in a sense, exiled from Jehovah God's favor. In that year Jehovah God came to his temple suddenly, accompanied by the messenger of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. He examined the remnant here upon earth; he was displeased with them. (Mal. 3:1, 2) For a time they were not fully accepting the challenge of Jehovah's Kingdom service that had opened up to them. They were holding back, through fear of man and were not properly keeping themselves "unspotted from the world." (Jas. 1:27, *Authorized Version*) Therefore Jehovah let them go into bondage to Babylon the Great and her political associates. During this time much persecution and abuse were heaped upon them culminating in the arrest and imprisonment of the Society's headquarters representatives in

10. What interrelationship exists between the remnant and God's universal organization, and during what period did the Greater Elimelech "die" toward the Naomi class?

11. When and for what reason did Jehovah find displeasure in the remnant, and how was this manifested, affecting the entire universal organization?

1918, on the false charge of espionage.* This meant that all of the universal organization of God, God's woman, would be affected by his displeasure, and the prophecy foretells that the entire organization would be as "a wife left entirely."

¹² But how does Jehovah's concealing his face from his woman fit in with the death of Elimelech if Elimelech represents the Lord Jesus Christ? How does the heavenly Jesus Christ, in effect, die toward the Naomi class on earth? During his earthly ministry Jesus clearly demonstrated the rule of action: 'What I see my Father do, I do.' If, then, during the remnant's period of divine disfavor, Jehovah abandoned his woman, concealed his face from her, then the Son must do the same thing, particularly to that portion of God's universal organization, the spiritual remnant here on earth, who are members of his bride. Thus Jesus Christ, in effect, "died" to those whom Jehovah abandoned.

A SERIOUS CHALLENGE RAISED

¹³ By this time, in the ancient drama, ten years have passed and now Naomi hears that a change has taken place in Bethlehem. Jehovah has again directed his attention to his people by giving them bread. Naomi determines to return. But there is an even more pressing reason. Back there in Bethlehem of Judah Naomi had a hereditary possession and she needs to go back there to take it over. This raises a serious challenge to Ruth and Orpah, her two "daughters." What will they do? Apparently without question they set out with Naomi on the road back to Bethlehem. (Ruth 1:6, 7) Then, somewhere along the road, Naomi attempts to dis-

suade them. "'Go, return, each one to the house of her mother. . . . May Jehovah make a gift to you, and do you find a resting-place each one in the house of her husband.' Then she kissed them, and they began to raise their voices and weep. And they kept saying to her: 'No, but with you we shall return to your people.' But Naomi said: 'Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Do I still have sons in my inward parts, and will they have to become your husbands? Return, my daughters, go, for I have grown too old to get to belong to a husband. . . . No, my daughters, for it is very bitter to me because of you, that the hand of Jehovah has gone out against me.'"—Ruth 1:8-13.

¹⁴ "At that they raised their voices and wept some more, after which Orpah kissed her mother-in-law. As for Ruth, she stuck with her. So she said: 'Look! Your widowed sister-in-law has returned to her people and her gods. Return with your widowed sister-in-law.'" (Ruth 1:14, 15) Orpah pictures some who come into contact with the faithful Naomi class and who manifest some interest and zeal for a time but who shrink back while still in their Christian youth. Self-interest and personal desires stand in the way of their accepting Jehovah's challenge to 'test him out' whether he would "not open to you people the floodgates of the heavens and actually empty out upon you a blessing until there is no more want."—Mal. 3:10; Heb. 10:38, 39; 2 Pet. 2:22.

¹⁵ The Ruth class, on the other hand, sacrifice all personal advantages to share with the Naomi class in fulfilling Jehovah's purpose for them. "And Ruth proceeded to say: 'Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from accompanying you; for where you go I shall go,

* See the book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pp. 79-83.

12. How does Jehovah's concealing his face from his woman fit in with the death of Elimelech if Elimelech represents the Lord Jesus Christ?

13. What does Naomi now determine to do, and how does this present a challenge to Ruth and Orpah?

14. What decision does Orpah make, and what similar course is followed today by those whom she pictures?
15, 16. How did Ruth respond to the challenge?

and where you spend the night I shall spend the night. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I shall die, and there is where I shall be buried. May Jehovah do so to me and add to it if anything but death should make a separation between me and you.' ”

—Ruth 1:16, 17.

¹⁶ With these words, “May Jehovah do so to me and add to it,” Ruth was swearing, taking an oath to Jehovah that she would do these things. She was fully accepting this challenge to serve the God of Naomi, accompanying Naomi in his service even to death. Orpah’s failure to respond did not weaken Ruth’s determination or dampen her zeal. The influence of Naomi had worked to Ruth’s conversion, and the deep-rooted desire of Naomi’s heart was now to be worked out so that there would be faithful response on the part of Ruth to the further challenge both women were to face back in Bethlehem.



Ruth accepted the challenge to serve Jehovah, declaring to Naomi: “Your people will be my people, and your God my God”

A FURTHER CHALLENGE PRESENTED

¹⁷ The bitterness and disillusionment Naomi had expressed to Ruth and Orpah as to their prospects in Bethlehem are not alleviated by Naomi’s homecoming. Back in her home, her sense of loss is only sharpened, and the keen realization of her impotence only heightens her bitterness and grief. All the city become stirred up over their return, especially so the womenfolk, and they cannot believe their eyes. Why, where is Elimelech? Where are Mahlon and Chilion? And who is this Moabite girl? “And the women kept saying: ‘Is this Naomi?’ and she would say to the women: ‘Do not call me Naomi [meaning “my pleasantness”]. Call me Mara [meaning “bitter”], for the Almighty has made it very bitter for me. I was full when I went, and it is empty-handed that Jeho-

vah has made me return. Why should you call me Naomi, when it is Jehovah that has humiliated me and the Almighty that has caused me calamity?’ ”—Ruth 1:18-22.

¹⁸ Truly the Naomi class could say during this time of affliction: “Call me Mara, the bitter one.” Isaiah 12:1 also makes reference to this severe discipline when it says, the prophet speaking to Jehovah God: “Although you got incensed at me, your anger gradually turned back.” Then Isaiah 52:3 says: “For this is what Jehovah has said: ‘It was for nothing that you people were sold, and it will be without money that you will be repurchased.’ ” In other words, the people who took captive God’s dedicated servants here on earth

17. What did Naomi reply to the greeting of her neighbors upon her return to Bethlehem?

18. Why did God’s woman, as represented by the Naomi remnant on earth, need to be redeemed?

did not pay for them, they got them for nothing. Verses five and six add: "And now, what interest do I have here?" is the utterance of Jehovah. 'For my people were taken for nothing. . . . For that reason my people will know my name, even for that reason in that day, because I am the One that is speaking.'" So God let his people go for nothing; he let the enemy take possession of them without purchasing them. Therefore, God's woman, as represented by the Naomi remnant here on earth, needed to be redeemed, repurchased, from Babylon the Great.

¹⁹ This was the challenge that faced Naomi of Bethlehem of the tribe of Judah, childless and a widow as though forsaken, chastened by Jehovah. Still there burned deep in her heart the desire to share in Jehovah's purpose for the women of Israel, particularly a favored few of the tribe of Judah, for those in this tribe were in line for the promise of Jacob, the father of Judah. Just before he died in Egypt in the year 1711 B.C.E., Jacob blessed Judah with these words: "The scepter will not turn aside from Judah, neither the commander's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him the obedience of the peoples will belong." (Gen. 49:10) This Shiloh, whose name means "He Whose It Is" or "He to Whom It Belongs," must be the Commander who wields the staff. He must be the One who grasps the royal scepter. He must be the Messiah, the true Seed of Abraham, through whom all families of the earth would bless themselves. (Gen. 22:17, 18) Whose son would he prove to be in line of descent from Judah, the great-grandson of Abraham? What mother in Judah would be signally honored to carry him at her breast? Not Naomi, she might well reason in her own heart, childless and

beyond the age of childbearing. No wonder that Naomi, in her desolate condition, cried out: "Call me Mara."

JEHOVAH OPENS A WAY

²⁰ But Jehovah was not to forsake this faithful woman whose cry had reached his ears. Well might the prophet have said to her as he did, speaking for Jehovah centuries later to the woman she pictured: "I concealed my face from you for but a moment, but with loving-kindness to time indefinite I will have mercy upon you," your Repurchaser, Jehovah, has said." (Isa. 54:8) How was this to be accomplished with Naomi? If she were to die without a natural descendant, she would have no heir to whom to leave that estate of her dead husband. Besides, if Jehovah's purpose to bring forth Shiloh from the tribe of Judah were to be accomplished through her, she would need a male heir. What was she to do?

²¹ Again the law of Israel made provision for someone in Naomi's plight. It was according to Jehovah's own promise that no faithful woman of ancient Israel be left barren. He said: "Because you keep listening to the voice of Jehovah your God: . . . Blessed will be the fruit of your belly." (Deut. 28:2-4) Neither was a man to be left without one to carry forward his name. The law in Israel stated: "In case brothers dwell together and one of them has died without his having a son, the wife of the dead one should not become a strange man's outside. Her brother-in-law should go to her, and he must take her as his wife and perform brother-in-law marriage with her. And it must occur that the firstborn whom she will bear should succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be wiped

19. What promise of Jacob to Judah would Naomi be particularly aware of in her forsaken condition?

20. What promise of Jehovah was made centuries later through Isaiah?

21. What provision was made in the law of Israel for a widow in Naomi's plight, and how did this present a challenge to Ruth?

out of Israel." (Deut. 25:5, 6) This law, along with the law of repurchase, was Naomi's only hope. If a brother or near relative could be found, then Naomi might rely on this provision of the law to seek a way out. But Naomi herself could not produce a child even if the relative were to be found. Her only chance then depended on Ruth her daughter-in-law, who could take her place in this arrangement and provide a seed to Elimelech. How would Ruth view this opportunity? Would she be willing to set aside any hope she might have of her own to find a young man who could give her something for herself? Or would she recognize in this challenge an opportunity to seek out Jehovah's purpose and make that her way of life?

²² And what of Boaz and So-and-so? How would they face this challenge to provide an heir to Naomi for the name of her dead husband Elimelech? Would they recognize it as an opportunity to share more fully in Jehovah's service? And how does this challenge and its outcome affect us today? The way Naomi was to be restored in spirit, the way her lifelong dream was to be realized, and the parts that Ruth, Boaz and So-and-so were to play in facing this challenge, all are a part of this inspiring drama that moves us even today to make Jehovah's purpose our way of life. The article that follows will reveal the outcome.

22. Who else in the prophetic drama would be affected by this challenge, and how should its outcome affect us today?

Make

JEHOVAH'S PURPOSE

"FAITH is not a possession of all people." So said the apostle Paul. (2 Thess. 3:2)

Your Way of Life

Outstanding among the many reasons why this is so is the spirit of self-determination that has become so strong in our own twentieth century. This desire for self-gratification has become a religion, with love of the Creator crowded into a corner and indifference toward his purpose completely subverting the heart and mind. How refreshing it must be to Jehovah, and what an example it is to us, to observe those who have unselfishly accepted the challenge of Jehovah's service and made his purpose their way of life.

1. (a) What attitude of mind and heart afflicts mankind today? (b) What challenge that faced both Ruth and Naomi provides us with a lesson in zeal and devotion?

One outstanding example is that of Ruth in ancient times who left behind her own people and her home in Moab and accompanied her widowed mother-in-law Na-

omi back to Bethlehem. A widow also, she could well have interested herself in finding a husband in Moab and settling down in familiar surroundings to raise a family. But Ruth's love for Naomi and for the worship of Jehovah prompted her to forsake all and accompany Naomi back to Israel. In this unfamiliar setting the unselfishness of her love was tested to the limit, but her sincere desire to make Jehovah's purpose her way of life sustained her and moved her to face this challenge without a moment's hesitation. The outcome to Ruth and Naomi, as well as the events themselves leading up to it, provide

us with an inspiring lesson in zeal and devotion.

² It is the time of the barley harvest, which would mean it is after the Passover celebration. It is springtime, the winter rains are over, and now there is something to harvest in Bethlehem-Judah. It is again the place of bread after ten long years of famine. Those years Naomi had spent in Moab, where she had lost her husband Elimelech and her two sons, one of them being Mahlon, Ruth's husband. Now Naomi is home again, with Ruth, having divine favor. They are gathered back to her homeland; they are back at Naomi's hereditary possession. (Ruth 1:22) What does this refer to in modern times? In the historical antitype of today this would call attention to Jesus' words regarding the regathering of all the chosen ones, the remnant of his anointed disciples, by the angels. When? After Babylon the Great (the world empire of false religion) had fallen before the antitypical Cyrus the Great. Then it was time for fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy regarding the end of the system of things to take place.—Matt. 24:29-31.

³ Isaiah 12:1, 2 speaks of the joy at that time of gathering the remnant out of Babylon the Great. "And in that day you will be sure to say: 'I shall thank you, O Jehovah, for although you got incensed at me, your anger gradually turned back, and you proceeded to comfort me. Look! God is my salvation. I shall trust and be in no dread; for Jah Jehovah is my strength and my might, and he came to be the salvation of me.'" These words are echoed by the Naomi remnant, beginning in 1919 with a restoring of them to divine favor and a reestablishing of them in God's service according to his purpose for them.

2, 3. What does the return of Naomi to her homeland with Ruth refer to in modern times?

ZEAL IN THE HARVEST PROVES FRUITFUL

⁴ Now, in the dramatic type, the barley harvest was in progress. Ruth was living with her mother-in-law, but she did not want to be a burden upon her. She wanted to contribute to Naomi's support. So, with Naomi's consent, she took advantage of Israel's law on harvesting (Lev. 19:9, 10) and "she went off and entered and began to glean in the field behind the harvesters. Thus by chance she lighted on the tract of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech." (Ruth 2:1-3) Boaz was a true worshiper of Jehovah and he respected Jehovah's law. (Ruth 2:4-7) When he learns of Ruth's identity he makes arrangements for Ruth to continue working in his fields, both through the barley harvest and also the wheat harvest that would follow and run down through the feast of Pentecost in the month of May. In doing so he tells Ruth: "The report was fully made to me of all that you have done to your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, and how you proceeded to leave your father and your mother and the land of your relatives and to go to a people whom you had not known formerly. May Jehovah reward the way you act, and may there come to be a perfect wage for you from Jehovah the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to seek refuge." (Ruth 2:8-13) When he favors Ruth with this arrangement, he has in mind her mother-in-law, the aged Naomi, to benefit her also.

⁵ The dramatic events of the day that fulfill this are in line with what Jesus said: "The field is the world . . . The harvest is a conclusion of a system of things, and the reapers are angels." (Matt. 13:38, 39) The membership of the bride of Christ was not yet complete by the year 1919.

4. According to what provision in Israel does Ruth seek to contribute toward Naomi's support, and how is her labor of love rewarded?

5, 6. What is pictured by Ruth's joining herself to Naomi in harvest activity?

More had to be gathered in and, just as Ruth joined herself to Naomi and worked diligently with her in harvest activity, loyally even to death, so a newer addition to the remnant class began to appear from 1919 onward. This additional class was pictured by Ruth.

⁶In that year, on Saturday afternoon, September 6, 1919, a mass baptism was conducted in Lake Erie, at the time of the Cedar Point, Ohio, general convention, and there were more than 200 that were baptized. These were an addition to the old original Naomi remnant of the bride of Christ. Among those looking on were the Society's officers who had been released from the Atlanta federal prison on Tuesday, March 25, of that year. They were now enjoying new freedom and still working in behalf of the Kingdom interests of Jehovah God's theocratic government. Three years later, in 1922, another general assembly was held in Cedar Point, Ohio. On Saturday, September 9, 1922, 361 were baptized. The Ruth class continued to be added to as time went on. Now, like Ruth the Moabitess, the modern Ruth class determined to work zealously together with the Naomi class to the end of God's harvest in the earth, both the barley harvest and the wheat harvest, as the prophetic drama pictures. And just as with Ruth, whom Boaz pronounced an excellent woman, so with this new addition to the remnant. It proved to be an anti-typical excellent woman of exclusive devotion to Jehovah God.

NAOMI'S HOPE TESTS RUTH'S DEVOTION

⁷Now, as a result of Ruth's industriousness and the generosity of Boaz, Naomi and Ruth have food. Still, Naomi is an aged widow beyond the age of bearing

children and she has this hereditary possession that was her husband Elimelech's. She is helpless now without Ruth's acting as an agent or substitute for her. Naomi sees the way out. She decides to sell this possession, having in mind particularly the benefits to Ruth, whom she must use in this transaction. Furthermore, as widows, Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth could not make any contribution to the royal line in the tribe of Judah leading to the promised Shiloh. Naomi must have a child; she must have an adopted child, a child by Ruth in the tribe of Judah, because that hereditary possession could not be moved out of the tribe of Judah. Ruth therefore has to marry a man in the tribe of Judah and keep the property there. But first, Ruth must accept this way of life for her, renouncing any desire she might have for a younger man than the aged Boaz. How will she react to the proposal?

⁸Naomi puts the challenge to her quite plainly. She says to her: "My daughter, ought I not to look for a resting-place for you, that it may go well with you? And now, is not Boaz, with whose young women you have continued, our kinsman? Look! He is winnowing barley at the threshing floor tonight. And you must wash and rub yourself with oil and put your mantles upon you and go down to the threshing floor. Do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. And it should occur that when he lies down, you must also take note of the place where he lies down; and you must come and uncover him at his feet and lie down; and he, for his part, will tell you what you ought to do." How did Ruth respond? "At that she said to her: 'All that you say to me I shall do.' And she proceeded to go down to the threshing floor and to do according to all

7. (a) How only can Naomi keep her hereditary possession in Elimelech's name and also make a contribution to the royal line leading to the promised Shiloh? (b) How does this provide a challenge to Ruth?

8. How does Naomi propose to Ruth that this solution to their problem be put into effect, and how does Ruth respond?

that her mother-in-law had commanded her."—Ruth 3:1-6.

⁹ Naomi is like the apostle Paul. In his relationship to the church or congregation, Paul says: "I personally promised you in marriage to one husband that I might present you as a chaste virgin to the Christ." (2 Cor. 11:2) Likewise, Naomi arranges for the marriage of Ruth to the right man. So Ruth goes out into the field and lies down at the feet of Boaz. When he wakes up in the middle of the night she proposes that he take her as wife in order to raise up a seed to the dead man Elimelech.—Ruth 3:7-9.

ANOTHER "GO'EL" INTERPOSES

¹⁰ This was not immoral action on the part of Naomi and Ruth. It simply manifested confidence in the honor of the one in the position of a repurchaser, a *go'el*. That Boaz did not misunderstand her motive or misinterpret her proposal of levirate marriage as an unvirtuous overture is evident from his reply. "At that [Boaz] said: 'Blessed may you be of Jehovah, my daughter. You have expressed your loving-kindness better in the last instance than in the first instance, in not going after the young fellows whether lowly or rich. And now, my daughter, do not be afraid. All that you say I shall do for you, for everyone in the gate of my people is aware that you are an excellent woman. And now while it is a fact that I am a repurchaser, there is also a repurchaser closer related than I am. Lodge here tonight, and it must occur in the morning that if he will repurchase you, fine! Let him do the repurchasing. But if he does not take delight in repurchasing you, I will then repurchase you, I myself, as sure as Jehovah lives.'"—Ruth 3:10-13.

9. How is Naomi like Paul in taking this course?

10. Why was this not immoral action on the part of Naomi and Ruth, and how did Boaz view Ruth's proposal of levirate marriage?

¹¹ Boaz is an honorable man, a man of great self-control, and he reminds Ruth that there is a man in the family relationship that is closer to Naomi than he is. He himself is the nephew of Naomi, whereas this closer relative is a brother-in-law of Naomi. He is the one who should have the first opportunity to buy this hereditary possession of Naomi, to act as the repurchaser, the *go'el*. This does not mean that Boaz is not willing, after being an old bachelor for so long without family responsibilities, to do his duty, even if it means becoming father of a family. He is willing to make his contribution to the royal line leading up to the promised Shiloh of the tribe of Judah, to which Boaz belongs. This applies in the antitype to the Lord Jesus Christ as the heavenly *go'el*, Repurchaser or Redeemer. But first of all he leaves the Naomi class and the Ruth class exposed to whoever is pictured by "So-and-so," the brother-in-law of Naomi. This brings about a test of the Naomi and Ruth divisions of the remnant of today. Who wins? Who fails? The account tells us.

¹² Ruth goes her way to her mother-in-law before the first rays of the morning sun light upon the city. She is joyful as she carries wrapped in her cloak six measures of barley that Boaz has given her as a token of his promise. She is greeted by the aged Naomi with the words: "Who are you, my daughter?" Recognizing the import of Naomi's expression, she points out that she is not yet the wife of Boaz, but relates everything that occurred and that Boaz told her. Naomi then says: "Sit still, my daughter, until you know how the matter will turn out, for the man will have no rest unless he has brought the matter to an end today." Ruth waits ex-

11. (a) Why did Boaz not immediately accept Ruth's proposal and act toward her as a repurchaser? (b) How does this apply in the antitype?

12. How do Ruth and Naomi react to the position Boaz has taken?

pectantly, with a bright hope for the future; Naomi waits with the hope of fulfillment of a lifelong desire.—Ruth 3:14-18.

THE REPURCHASER FACES A CHALLENGE

¹³ Now the climax of events on this significant day rapidly begins to unfold. "As for Boaz, he went up to the gate and began to sit there. And, look! the repurchaser was passing by, whom Boaz had mentioned. Then he said: 'Do turn aside, do sit down here, So-and-so.' Hence he turned aside and sat down. . . . He now said to the repurchaser: 'The tract of the field that belonged to our brother Elimelech, Naomi, who has returned from the field of Moab, must sell. As for me, I thought that I should disclose it to you, saying, "Buy it in front of the inhabitants and the older men of my people. If you will repurchase it, repurchase it; but if you will not repurchase it, do tell me, that I may know, for there is no one else but you to do the repurchasing, and I am next to you."' At that he said: 'I shall be the one to repurchase it.'"—Ruth 4:1-4.

¹⁴ Ah, yes, "So-and-so" is willing to buy the property; that will increase his own proprietary holdings in Bethlehem. And as for this old woman, Naomi, she has lost her power of reproduction, so there is no fear of having a child by her to whom the property will pass on; so he will have the whole property of Naomi to himself, in addition to what he already has. "Then Boaz said: 'On the day that you buy the field from Naomi's hand, it is also from Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead

man, that you must buy it so as to cause the name of the dead man to rise upon his inheritance.' " Ah, now that is a different matter. It is too much responsibility; it might complicate matters. Faced with this unexpected challenge, the repurchaser replies to Boaz: "I am unable to repurchase it for myself, for fear I may ruin my own inheritance. You repurchase it for yourself with my right of repurchase, because I am not able to do the repurchasing." So he takes off a sandal and hands it over to Boaz as an attestation of the agreement. —Ruth 4:5-8.

THE NEXT ISSUE

- How Early to Start Teaching Your Children.
- Living a Dedicated Life.
- How Is Jehovah Different from All Other Gods?

¹⁵ "So-and-so" has failed to meet the challenge. But not Boaz. He accepts the arrangement; he is happy to do so. And he says to the closer relative and all the people: "You are witnesses today that I do buy all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon from the hand of Naomi. And also Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, I do buy for myself as a wife to cause the name of the dead man to rise upon his inheritance and that the name of the dead man may not be cut off from among his brothers and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses today." Thus Boaz fulfills Jehovah's purpose regarding responsibility toward a brother, whereas "So-and-so" is disgraced in the eyes of all the people in the gate.—Ruth 4:9-12.

¹⁶ But, whom does "So-and-so" represent in modern times? And how does this challenge affect us, some thirty centuries later? Since "So-and-so" stood in the way of Boaz for a while, he represents a class here on earth who stand in the way of Jesus Christ the bridegroom to whom both

13. What action did Boaz take to bring the matter to an end?

14. How did "So-and-so" respond to the challenge of becoming the repurchaser?

15. What course did Boaz follow?

16. Whom does "So-and-so" represent in modern times?

those of the Naomi class and those of the Ruth class are betrothed spiritually. This "So-and-so," who was the brother-in-law to Elimelech and who could have taken the place of Elimelech and could have raised up a seed, pictures one who fails of his duty, a mere pretender Christ, a false prophet, of whom the Lord Jesus Christ warned his followers saying: "For false Christs and false prophets will arise [in the time of the end] and will give great signs and wonders so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones," that is, the Naomi class and the Ruth class. (Matt. 24:24) So it is with this false Christ class of today. Oh, they want to capture the congregation, the remnant espoused to the Lord Jesus Christ, and they want the patronage of these and the support of these, but they do not want the responsibility of making the Naomi class and the Ruth class fruitful with Kingdom interests; that would be too much work. It detracts too much from their own selfish interests. They are not interested in the kingdom of God. They prefer the League of Nations and now the United Nations

of the present time. They do not want to tie in with the royal lineage of Shiloh, the King Jesus Christ. This attitude of mind and course of action could fit only the religious clergy of Christendom. They have failed to accept the challenge of Jehovah's service and make his purpose their way of life. From such Jesus warned us to flee!—2 Tim. 3:5; Rev. 18:4.

ACCEPTING JEHOVAH'S WAY IS BLESSED

¹⁷ On the other hand, Boaz, true to his promise, takes Ruth as his levirate wife. (Ruth 4:13-15) Their marriage did not produce a king or the Shiloh; the time of the Kingdom of Israel had not yet begun. But they did produce one who became the grandfather of King David, the eleventh in line from Judah and with whom Jehovah made a covenant for an everlasting Kingdom (Matt. 1:3-6; 2 Sam. 7:12, 13) and one in the line that leads eventually to the Lord Jesus Christ, the permanent heir of King David. (Luke 3:23-31; 20:41-44) Ruth's interests and Naomi's interests are all intertwined. Ruth is the mother, but Naomi adopts the baby and

acts as its nurse, as though it were the son of her own dead husband Elimelech, the one to take over the hereditary possession of Elimelech. Accordingly the neighbors say: "A son has been born to Naomi." And they began to call his name Obed [meaning "servant" or "one serving"]." (Ruth 4:16, 17) Thus, Boaz and Ruth, in accepting the challenge presented to them, with the interests of Jehovah's purpose at heart, unselfishly devote their lives to



Ruth unselfishly presented her baby to Naomi, who adopted it as though it were her own son; the child came to be an ancestor of the Messiah

17. How are Boaz and Ruth blessed in accepting the challenge presented to them, and in what way are Naomi's interests intertwined?

fulfilling that purpose and Jehovah blesses them in allowing them to produce one of royal prospects indeed in the line of the promised Shiloh, whose "scepter will not turn aside from Judah, neither the commander's staff from between his feet, . . . and to [whom] the obedience of the peoples will belong."—Gen. 49:10.

¹⁸ Now, finally, in our own day the Naomi class and the Ruth class of the spiritual remnant are in line to become the bride of Christ, the Shiloh of Jacob's prophecy. But they do not produce the anointed king of God's Messianic Kingdom, no more than Boaz and Ruth did so. They do, though, produce a class that serves God. Just as the name of the boy that was born to Ruth in Bethlehem was called Obed, meaning "one serving" or "servant," so the modern Ruth and Naomi classes produce or make up a class that is described in Jesus' prophecy at Matthew, chapter 24, as the "faithful and discreet slave" class. Also both sections of the spiritual remnant of today, the Naomi section and the Ruth section, have intense love for one another like the unbreakable love of Ruth for the older widow Naomi, to whom Ruth 'is better than seven sons.' Nothing except death can make a separation between the two.

A TIME FOR ZEAL AND DEVOTION

¹⁹ What a lesson in zeal and devotion is to be found in the dramatic yet moving Bible book of Ruth! And what an example the modern-day Naomi and Ruth classes provide for those living now in the time of the end of this wicked system of things! This is no time to turn to a course of self-determination, preferring a way of our own choosing due to selfish interests

or pursuits. Neither is it a time for indifference to the purpose of God now approaching a culmination for this system of things. Naomi surely realized that she might not know if she would be used in the line of Shiloh, yet she was willing to devote her whole life to making it possible. And Ruth, being a young woman, could have married any kind of young man, a rich one if she had wanted to or a poor one if she had loved him, but instead she was willing to marry an old man just so her son could become Naomi's son. But both of them did it because they loved Jehovah and wanted to have a part in fulfilling Jehovah's purpose. What an example of unselfish love! Yet both Naomi and Ruth, in their own time and among their own neighbors, might have been considered just "ordinary" people.

²⁰ Today we are living in the "time of the end," the time in which all these prophecies are having such a grand fulfillment. Paul wrote this warning for us: "Moreover, this I say, brothers, the time left is reduced. Henceforth let those . . . making use of the world [be] as those not using it to the full; for the scene of this world is changing." (1 Cor. 7:29-31) If we think we can live like the people of this system do, occupying our time with the pursuits of just living, then we are due for a rude awakening because, as Paul is inferring, this world is rapidly disappearing and soon there will be no living in it at all. Today, there is so much to live for in view of the prospects of the Messianic Kingdom blessings soon to flow to all the earth, and there is so little time left to live in this present wicked system. Even if we were to give up everything this system has for us, "making use of the world," as Paul said, "as those not using it to the full," how could this compare to the course taken by Ruth, and

18. What relationship exists between the Naomi section and the Ruth section of the remnant today, and what is produced thereby?

19. What example of unselfish love do Naomi and Ruth provide for those on whom the end of this system has come?

20. What warning did Paul give, and how can we receive Jehovah's blessing of reward today?

by the Ruth class who have already spent years in fulfilling Jehovah's purpose? Yet just as Jehovah has blessed both the Naomi and the Ruth sections of the anointed remnant with Kingdom fruitage, so will

he bless anyone who now fully accepts the challenge of Jehovah's service and makes Jehovah's purpose his way of life. What better reward could anyone have than that?

Men are

'SEIZING GOD'S KINGDOM'

-How?

IN THE spring of the year 29 C.E. John the Baptist began "preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying: 'Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" (Matt. 3:1, 2) The work of John served to get ready a prepared people who would accept the king of that kingdom and put themselves in line for membership in it. Thus for the first time in human history the "kingdom of the heavens" became a goal toward which men could press.

But an individual's attaining membership in this heavenly Kingdom was not to be an easy thing. Strenuous effort would be required. Alluding to this, the one anointed as King, Jesus Christ, stated: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of the heavens is the goal toward which men press, and those pressing forward are seizing it."—Matt. 11:12.

The Greek verb that conveys the thought of 'pressing forward' implies 'forceful endeavor.' By whom was this forceful endeavor put forth? By enemy attackers? No, but by persons who believed the preaching of John the Baptist and accepted Jesus Christ as King. Theirs was a determined striving and struggling for the Kingdom. They took hold of the

privilege of being prospective members of the Kingdom as if seizing spoils or taking a city by storm. They spared no effort to make that privilege their own. But what prompted them to do this?

As noted by Jesus in one of his illustrations, it began with their hearing the "word of the kingdom." The "seed" or "word of the kingdom" took root in their heart. They got the 'sense of the word,' that is, a real appreciation of the priceless value of membership in the Kingdom developed in their hearts. (Matt. 13: 19-23) The Kingdom came to mean more to them than anything else, motivating them to do what was necessary to 'seize' it. (Matt. 13:45, 46) Therefore they repented of their transgressions against God's law, turned around from a wrong course and submitted themselves to water baptism in symbol of their repentance and conversion. Genuine heart appreciation caused them to keep on exerting themselves to make their calling for the heavenly kingdom sure.—2 Pet. 1:10.

Because of barriers, continual exertion was necessary to seize the Kingdom. But who had set up these barriers? Jehovah God had set them up to prevent unworthy ones from entering the Kingdom. Only persons drawn by him and meeting his requirements could gain entrance. (John 6:44; 1 Cor. 6:9-11) Such persons must follow a narrow road, find the narrow gate, keep on asking, keep on knocking and the way would be opened. (Matt. 7: 7, 8, 13, 14) Their gaining entrance might

even entail giving up prominent positions, the pursuit of promising commercial interests, yes, something as dear as an eye or a hand.—Mark 9:43-47.

Any person failing to maintain moral and spiritual purity would be debarred from the Kingdom. The apostle Paul reminded the Christians in Galatia: "The works of the flesh are manifest, and they are fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, practice of spiritism, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies, drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these. As to these things I am forewarning you, the same way as I did forewarn you, that those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom."—Gal. 5:19-21.

However, besides combating fleshly tendencies to maintain moral and spiritual purity, those who gain entrance into the Kingdom must bear fruitage. Regarding those who get the 'sense of the word,' Jesus Christ said: "As for the one sown upon the fine soil, this is the one hearing the word and getting the sense of it, who really does bear fruit and produces, this one a hundredfold, that one sixty, the other thirty." (Matt. 13:23) But what is this fruitage? Is it the result obtained in assisting others to become disciples of Jesus Christ? Or, is it the fruitage of God's spirit, the fine qualities of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness and self-control?

The fruitage in this case is neither new disciples nor fine Christian qualities. The seed that is sown is the "word of the kingdom." Accordingly, the fruitage must be a manyfold duplication of that seed. Yes, the bearing of fruitage refers to making expressions about the Kingdom. Such expressions stem from an appreciative heart. (Luke 6:45) Because of genuine love for others, those in line for the Kingdom have continued to make expressions

concerning it so that many other people might be moved to take steps to gain God's approval and blessing.

Of course, they also produce the fruit of God's spirit, even as God's spirit moves them to speak the Kingdom "word" or message. The prospective heirs of the Kingdom appreciate that in everything they must show an unselfish interest in others. Like Jesus, they must feel compassion for those who find themselves in a sad condition spiritually. (Matt. 9:36) Then, too, they cannot be insensitive to the needs of their brothers. There must be a willingness to spend and be completely spent in behalf of fellow believers. First John 3:16-18 admonishes: "We are under obligation to surrender our souls for our brothers. But whoever has this world's means for supporting life and beholds his brother having need and yet shuts the door of his tender compassions upon him, in what way does the love of God remain in him? Little children, let us love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth."

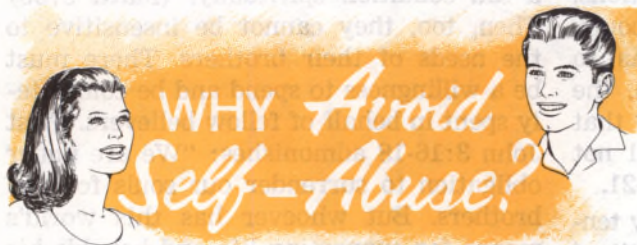
The lofty requirements set by Jehovah God guarantee that those who gain entrance into the Kingdom, becoming kings with Christ, will continue to do good toward their subjects and treat them compassionately. Having proved themselves to be unselfish, lovers of right and haters of bad despite reproach, bitter persecution or even the threat of death, obviously they will not become corrupt and misuse their authority when all pressures toward wrongdoing are gone.

Of course, as is true of any government, the majority are subjects and not rulers. The number of those 'seizing the kingdom' as heavenly heirs is limited. (Rev. 14:1, 3) But would it not be grand to live under the administration of persons who have demonstrated their love under test so as to have received God's approval? If this

is your desire, seize the opportunity to become a loyal earthly subject of God's kingdom by doing the very things that are required of its prospective heavenly rulers.

True, this will require real effort. But we should be grateful that this is the case. The high standards that must be met, whether to 'seize the Kingdom' as an associate ruler of Jesus Christ or to gain

life as a subject thereof, screen out those who, because of their selfishness and lack of love, would only make life difficult for others. So, may we make it our determination to be among those who show their appreciation for the value of the Kingdom by exerting every effort to be persons approved by God to receive its blessings.



THERE are many ways in which a person can abuse himself—such as by overeating or not getting enough sleep. But “self-abuse” is used in a more specific way (according to dictionaries) to refer to misuse of one's sexual organs by masturbation.

This practice is one that is not hard to fall into. But it can prove difficult to break. And it may affect not only young men but also young women. What attitude should we take toward this practice? Does it really merit the name “self-abuse”?

First of all we need to decide what is going to be our guide. Will we rely on what the majority of doctors say? From a physical standpoint they claim that occasional masturbation is harmless. Like most psychiatrists, they say that damage comes only if the practitioner has feelings of guilt that cause mental and emotional disturbance, these in turn producing physical upset. So, many condone the practice.

Doctors and psychiatrists are, of course,

imperfect humans and are subject to error: As an example, an article entitled “Emotional Control Means Longer Life” quotes psychiatrist Dr. Richard Nies as saying: “For more than 60 years it was thought the way to be most human was to be able to express oneself without inhibitions . . . Today psychologists

suspect the validity of this approach. Now it is believed more constructive to teach ways of rational control rather than to let your emotions run freely.”—Long Beach, Calif., *Independent Press Telegram*, March 12, 1969.

So human views are subject to change. But there is a source of counsel that young people can turn to that is stable and free from error or misjudgment. That is God's Word, and if we want, not just “longer life,” but everlasting life in God's favor we should seek his wisdom and counsel in preference to that of dying men. He can do for us and for our happiness what men could never do.

The real question then is, not how much physical harm could result from masturbation, but whether spiritual harm unavoidably results or not. Can anyone rightly engage in the practice without feeling guilt before his Creator?

True, the words “masturbation” and “self-abuse” do not appear in the Bible.

Helpful facts that young people want to know

So human views are subject to change. But there is a source of counsel that

But what do you understand from the inspired counsel of the apostle Paul at Colossians 3:5? To those not wanting to lose God's approval, he says: "Deaden [Do not *excite*], therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness." Unlike fornication, masturbation is something a person may do by himself or herself. But does that keep it from being unclean? Or is it just as much a giving in to, and being dominated by, "sexual appetite"?

Then, too, the apostle writes of those who "gave themselves over to loose conduct to work uncleanness of every sort with greediness." (Eph. 4:19) In his letter to the Colossians, quoted earlier, Paul mentioned "covetousness," and in this text "greediness." Really, does not masturbation express both of these undesirable qualities? How? Well, is it not an expression of desiring something that does not rightly belong to one? God has provided marriage as the sole arrangement in which to satisfy sexual desires. But the person who practices masturbation is, in effect, trying to obtain that satisfaction without paying the price. The price is the assuming and shouldering of the responsibilities and obligations that go along with marriage. In this connection note that, when the apostle counseled persons who were 'inflamed with passion,' he did not tell them to seek relief through the unnatural means of masturbation but through God's provision of marriage.—1 Cor. 7: 2, 9.

Actually, masturbation may endanger your future happiness in marriage. If a person is used to satisfying his or her passions through masturbation, this develops the habit of thinking only of one's own pleasure and satisfaction. But in marriage, there is need, especially on the part

of the man, to show concern for the other person's pleasure and satisfaction as well. Otherwise, marital relations deteriorate and there is distress and disillusionment. This very thing, of husbands thinking of their own satisfaction and disregarding their wives' needs, is one of the greatest problems in marriage. Much of it undoubtedly stems from a premarital masturbation habit.

But what if one is too young to make marriage advisable? While postponing marriage, would not masturbation protect one against some worse violation of God's law, such as fornication or homosexuality? It might seem so. But is that sound reasoning?

No. Masturbation weakens a healthy conscience and love for what is right. And they are your greatest protection in this regard. Weakly giving in to sexual desires by masturbation would certainly not give you strength when faced with a situation tempting you to commit fornication—or even homosexuality. Just the opposite, it cultivates wrong thinking and wrong desire.

Like drug addiction, masturbation can become something that one resorts to every time he or she feels pressure and tension of any kind and lacks the strength or will to face up to and overcome the problems causing such tension. So it can produce a vicious cycle, eventually making a person its slave. But God says we should control our bodies, not let them control us.—1 Thess. 4:4, 5.

OVERCOMING WITH SELF-CONTROL

It goes without saying that what you think about has a lot to do with the way you feel and the things you do. So what do you really want? Do you want to feel disturbed by sexual desire most of the time, perhaps slipping into the practice of

masturbation or unable to free yourself from it if already addicted? Then all you have to do is to let your mind dwell on sexual matters. But if you want to keep such sexual urge from cutting into your enjoyment of life and your really accomplishing worthwhile things, then exercise self-control and turn your mind to other matters.

When pictures, reading matter or other things containing sexually stimulating material come your way, do not weakly give in. If you let your mind dwell on such things or engage in conversation that revolves around them, you will pay the consequences in an upset feeling and the building up of pressure within yourself. That is because the longer you look at or talk about such things the deeper your heart becomes involved. And your heart is a major factor in moving you to act.

But what if, under even ordinary circumstances, you feel passion building up within you? How can you find relief? Not by resorting to self-abuse, but by getting your mind, heart and body onto another track. You can do some work, physical exercise, play a game or go for a walk. Find someone to talk to who has your respect, even call someone like that on the phone if necessary. Reading—even aloud—the Bible or publications explaining the Bible is one of the finest helps. And, above all, take the problem to your heavenly Father, Jehovah God, in prayer.

There are, of course, many additional things of a simple and sensible nature that one can do to help to avoid or reduce sexual tension. See that your clothing does not unnecessarily cause friction of the sexual organs. Before retiring, try to see that what you read or talk about has a calming effect rather than the opposite. So, too, with any eating you do at this time. In sleeping you may find it helpful to sleep on your side rather than on your back

or face down. And especially important is good masculine or feminine hygiene. Lack of cleanliness can produce irritation of the genital organs and pull one's attention in that direction. You can go to one of your parents for information on such hygiene.

Proper hygiene calls for certain handling of the sex organs, and one might feel this would be a temptation to misuse them. But because your motive is right—with the aim of *avoiding* sexual tension—you may well find that such care will instead help you to take a more healthful view toward these organs, keeping them in proper focus and appreciating that they were never meant to 'take you over' and rule your whole life.

If you are now fighting the practice of self-abuse, remember: You are certainly not the first or the only one who has faced this problem. Others have conquered and so can you, gaining the blessing and clean feeling of a right standing with God.

So, do not isolate yourself because of this problem. Being with others, provided, of course, that they are wholesome persons, is a protection for you. If you sleep in a room alone and you find that you seem to feel special stress in this direction at night, you may be able to arrange matters to share a room with another member of your family as a protection.

True, because of refusing to give in to the temptation to let passion take over, you may spend a sleepless night occasionally. But what of it? You will probably find that the following night you will be sufficiently tired to drop right off to sleep.

Even though you find yourself having a hard struggle to break a masturbation habit, never feel that Jehovah God and his Son Christ Jesus have given up on you. If you sincerely keep working to overcome it, they will kindly and patiently help you to build up the needed strength and bring you off victorious.—Phil. 4:6, 7.

"DIVINE RULERSHIP" DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES

ALL persons who are sincerely interested in the kingdom of God will be glad to know that the Watch Tower Society is making arrangements for a series of district assemblies, to begin late in June. The theme is "Divine Rulership"—an appropriate one for this time when the incoming of God's new order is so very near!

Each assembly will feature an upbuilding and thoroughly enjoyable four-day program. To benefit from it to the full, plan to be on hand when it begins early Thursday afternoon, and stay until the conclusion on Sunday afternoon.

The assemblies are presently scheduled for

UNITED STATES

June 29-July 2: Laurel, Md.; Pawtucket, R.I. (tentative); Santa Rosa, Calif.; Scarborough, Maine (tentative).

July 6-9: Albuquerque, N. Mex. (Spanish only); Allentown, Pa.; Cicero, Ill.; Corvallis, Oreg.; Detroit, Mich. (Spanish also) (tentative); Fargo, N. Dak.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Madison, Wis.; Mobile, Ala.; Montgomery, Ala.; Pittsburgh, Pa. (tentative); Rochester, N.Y.; Springfield, Ill.; Tacoma, Wash.; Troy, N.Y.

July 13-16: Abilene, Tex.; Amarillo, Tex.; Anchorage, Alaska; Charleston, W. Va.; Columbia, S.C.; Houston, Tex.; Little Rock, Ark. (tentative); Nashville, Tenn.; Oakland, Calif. (tentative); Puyallup, Wash.; Reno, Nev.; Richmond, Va.; Roanoke, Va.; St. Petersburg, Fla.; San Antonio, Tex. (Spanish only); San Jose, Calif. (Spanish only).

July 20-23: Butte, Mont.; Denver, Colo.; Des Moines, Iowa; Duluth, Minn.; Hallandale, Fla.; Hilo, Hawaii (tentative); Inglewood, Calif.; Long Beach, Calif.; Los Angeles, Calif.; Louisville, Ky.; Mangilao, Guam; Miami, Fla. (Spanish only); Pendleton, Oreg.; Pleasanton, Calif.

July 27-30: Bakersfield, Calif.; Jersey City, N.J. (tentative) (Spanish and French); Oklahoma City, Okla.;

fifty-nine cities in the United States, twenty in Canada and some in the British Isles, in addition to those in other lands. So there should be an assembly city not far from where you live.

Unless otherwise indicated, the programs for the assemblies listed here will be in English. But, as noted, some of the programs will include sessions in other languages or will be exclusively in another tongue.

Check the list and select the one that you will attend. Then start making plans to be present, and look to Jehovah for his blessing on your efforts.

Pleasantville, N.J. (tentative); Pomona, Calif. (Spanish only).

August 3-6: Honolulu, Hawaii; Jersey City, N.J. (tentative); Queens, N.Y. (tentative).

August 17-20: Honolulu, Hawaii.

BRITISH ISLES

July 20-23: Cork, Irish Republic.
(Others to be announced later.)

CANADA

July 6-9: Ottawa, Ont. (tentative); Regina, Sask.

July 13-16: Brantford, Ont.; Fort Erie, Ont.; Vancouver, B.C.; Winnipeg, Man. (tentative).

July 20-23: Fredericton, N.B.; Kelowna, B.C.; South Porcupine, Ont.; Windsor, Ont. (tentative); Yarmouth, N.S.

July 27-30: Prince George, B.C.; Victoria, B.C.

August 3-6: Lethbridge, Alta.; Toronto, Ont. (Italian only).

August 17-20: Montreal, Que. (French) (tentative); Saint John's, Newfoundland.

August 24-27: Edmonton, Alta.; North Battleford, Sask.; Summerside, P.E.I.



● Since it was not the season for figs, why did Jesus curse a fig tree that had no fruit on it, as reported at Mark 11:13, 14?—U.S.A.

When Jesus saw this fig tree it was Nisan 10 (March 28) of the year 33 C.E. In the case of fig trees in that region the buds for the first fruit crop of the season appear about

February, on branches that grow the previous season, whereas leaves do not appear until the final part of April or in May. By the time the tree is in full leaf it should be bearing ripe fruit. Since the tree seen by Jesus was unusually early with its leaves, he could expect it to have unseasonably early fruit suitable for eating. The fact that the tree had no fruit indicated that it was unproductive. Its appearance was deceptive.

Jesus cursed the tree, causing it to wither. Why? Solely because of its deceptive appearance? Evidently Jesus' act had a more vital purpose. It was really an object lesson for the benefit of his disciples. This we learn from

a latter portion of the account, where Peter said: "Rabbi, see! the fig tree that you cursed has withered up." And Jesus replied: "Have faith in God. . . . All the things you pray and ask for have faith that you have practically received, and you will have them." (Mark 11:20-22, 24) It was Jesus' faith in God that made his curse effective.

Additionally, the tree itself could well represent the ancient Jewish nation, which had an appearance of being fruitful in view of its covenant relationship with Jehovah God, and because of the Jewish religious leaders' showy display of self-righteousness. (Matt. 6:5; 23:25-28) However, the nation had failed to produce good fruitage to God's glory. It rejected Jesus Christ, the very one sent by God and revealed to be God's Son by his miracles and teachings. But why did the nation reject Jesus? Because of lack of faith in God's Word. (Luke 13:5-9) Consequently the faithless, unrepentant

nation was to wither and die much like the unproductive fig tree.—Matt. 21:43.

We today can benefit from the lesson taught by Jesus' cursing of the fig tree. Were we to lose faith in God's ability to answer the prayers of his servants and to reward those earnestly seeking him, this would lead to our rejection, to our being cursed like unproductive fig trees. (John 15:2-6; Heb. 6:7, 8) God's Word tells us: "Without faith it is impossible to please [God] well, for he that approaches God must believe that he is and that he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him."—Heb. 11:6.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

March 12: Fully Accepting the Challenge of Jehovah's Service. Page 76. Songs to Be Used: 26, 12.

March 19: Make Jehovah's Purpose Your Way of Life. Page 83. Songs to Be Used: 71, 17.

February, no branches that grow the previous season, whereas leaves do not appear until the final part of April or in May. By the time the tree is in full leaf it should be bearing ripe fruit. Since the tree seen by Jesus was unusually early with its leaves, he could expect it to have unreasonably early fruit and also for nothing. The fact that the tree had no fruit indicated that it was unproductive. Its appearance was deceptive.

Jesus cursed the tree, causing it to wither. Why? Solely because of its deceptive appearance. It didn't bear fruit, but had a more vital purpose. It was really an object lesson for the benefit of his disciples. This we learn from



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