# The WATCHTOWER

*Announcing* JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

OCTOBER 1, 1973
Semimonthly

JEHOVAH BLESSES THE LOYAL ONES

GOD TAKES ACTION AT THE APPOINTED TIME

RELEASE FROM A CLIMATE OF FEAR

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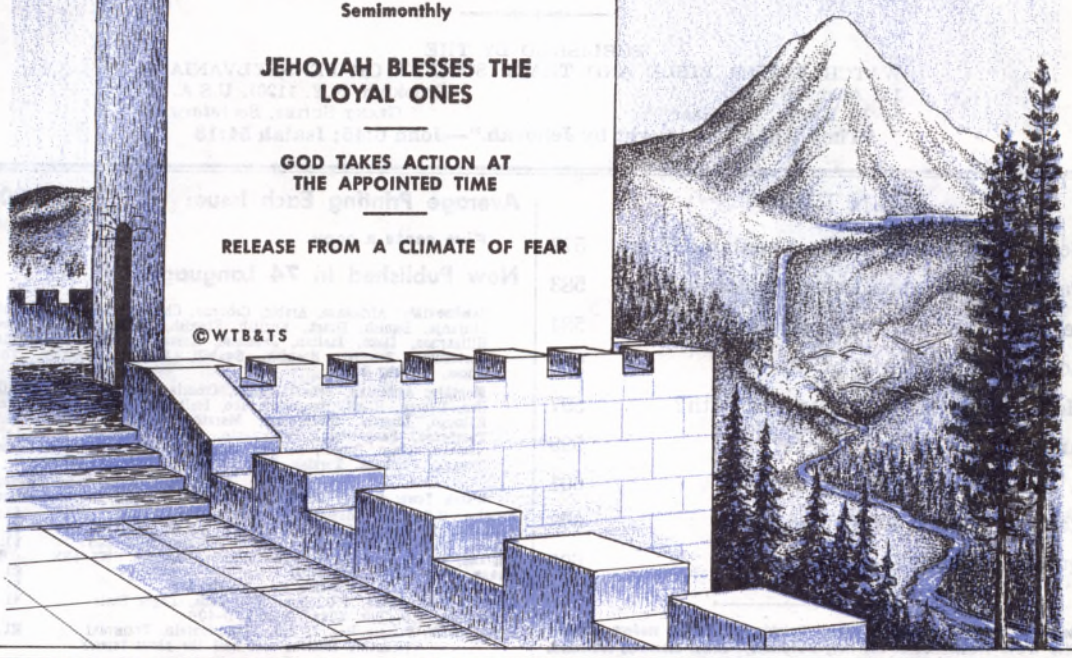

"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

## 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**

## CONTENTS

| | |
|---|---|
| God Takes Action at the Appointed Time | 579 |
| Patient Endurance Bears Fruitage | 583 |
| Jehovah Blesses the Loyal Ones | 584 |
| Loyalty in the Time of the End | 590 |
| How Strong Is Your Love of Truth? | 597 |
| Are You a Discreet Guest? | 599 |
| A Bible That They Approve | 601 |
| Release from a Climate of Fear | 603 |
| Questions from Readers | 606 |

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The WATCHTOWER
Announcing JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM
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# God Takes Action AT THE APPOINTED TIME

IMPATIENT man is often quick to challenge God's view of matters. Man wants things done *now*. He asks: 'Should not a loving God immediately solve all of mankind's major problems?' You, too, may have asked the same question.

Actually, intelligent men should *expect* God's intervention in human affairs to be very carefully timed. Why do we say that? Well, look around you. Is not virtually everything in creation 'timed' in some way?

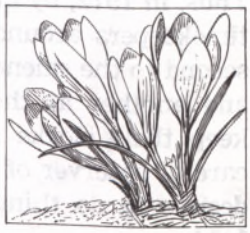
### THE EXACT TIMING OF PLANTS AND BIRDS

Observe, for instance, the plant world. Why do some flowers, like asters, always bloom in autumn, while others, like some crocuses, always bloom in the spring? Botanists have long been baffled by such timing. In the last half century, however, they became aware of what is called 'photoperiodism.' Plants respond, not only to temperature, but also to length of daylight. In the slowly cooling autumn, days shorten and nights get longer. In the warming spring, days get longer and nights get shorter. Springtime crocuses and autumn asters have precise timing mechanisms to detect these changes. Each one, therefore, opens right on time.

**The Creator made asters so they bloom in the autumn . . .**

Birds also have a superb sense of timing. They do not need calendars and wristwatches to tell them when it is time to migrate. "What prompts birds to start their migration at approximately the same time each year—what internal clock or what external stimuli?" asks R. T. Peterson in *The Birds*. Scientists have made many guesses at an answer—but they still do not really know. Is it simply, as some persons say, that colder temperatures urge the birds to go where it is warmer? Bird experts present some surprising facts:

"One might think, then, that temperature would be the cause of migration. In the spring the black-poll warblers



**. . . other flowers bloom only in the spring**

**At their appointed time the birds migrate**

enter the United States by way of Florida, where they arrive in the latter half of April. The weather there is almost as warm as it was in their winter home in northern South America. By the end of May they have reached the pine forests of Canada and Alaska. . . . When they reach Alaska, the daily temperature averages only about 45 degrees, *30 degrees colder* than it was in Florida a month earlier. The blackpolls have flown into a climate that is much colder. Most migrating birds do the same thing."—*Traveling with the Birds* by Rudyerd Boulton.

"Nothing that we can see compels them to move, yet they abandon the delights of their winter home and proceed northward as soon as the proper time comes. This 'proper time' seems to have no relation to the weather or to food."—Ernest Ingersoll in *The Encyclopedia Americana.*

Yet with remarkable timing the birds leave and later reappear in the same places year after year. As Jehovah said through the prophet Jeremiah: "The stork in the heavens—it well knows its appointed times; and the turtledove and the swift and the bulbul—they observe well the time of each one's coming in." (Jer. 8:7) And what about man's sense of timing?

### MAN IS TIME CONSCIOUS

Man is extremely conscious of time. Thus, in 1972, by international agreement, timekeepers around the world added one second to the calendar at the close of June and another at the end of December to keep their clocks accurate. Yes, man, a careful observer of the timing in creation, desires to do things 'on schedule.'—Gen. 1:14.

Do not all these examples clearly illustrate that virtually everything in creation seems in some way timed? Does this not, in turn, indicate that the Creator of all these things must similarly be very much aware of time? Obviously. Creation should impress on all persons that the *events* God has purposed will also indeed occur—but at precisely the correct time.

Further, Jehovah cannot be called arbitrary for seeming to delay the carrying out of certain features of his purpose toward man. Rather, what to man's limited view appears as a "delay" proves to be in some way necessary for achieving the blessings that follow.

### GOD'S SON CAME AT "THE FULL LIMIT OF THE TIME"

For instance, right after the sin in the garden of Eden man may have expected or hoped for the promised "seed" that would crush the serpent to appear in their own lifetime. (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 8:20, 21) But the one who proved to be the Seed, Jesus, did not show up until some 4,000 years after Adam's sin. The apostle Paul says: "When the *full limit of the time arrived,* God sent forth his Son."—Gal. 4:4; Rom. 5:6.

Why this lapse of 4,000 years until the "full limit of the time"?

Jehovah knew that men had to be *prepared* to receive the Seed at his appearance. During the 4,000 years from Adam to Christ, men had to come to appreciate fully their need for a savior. They would find in that period of time that only God could save them from sin and death. Read Galatians chapters three and four in the Bible to see how this was made especially clear to the Jews.

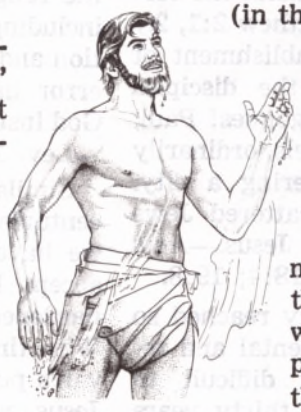
As God's chosen people, they had had the law of Moses since 1513 B.C.E. On receiving the Law faithful Jews must have sincerely hoped that by means of it they could show themselves to be righteous.

(Compare Hebrews 7:18.) But the opposite proved true. It 'made transgressions manifest, until the seed should arrive'—the Jews were compelled to acknowledge that they were sinners.—Gal. 3:19.

But the Law also served to assist the Jewish nation. Paul says of the Jews: "The Law has become our tutor leading to Christ." Anciently, a tutor was not the actual teacher, but a trusted slave or 'steward' who readied his master's children for a later instructor. Tutors impressed elementary matters like conduct on the children and protected them from harm. The Law acted in this way toward the Jews, disciplining and preparing them for their Instructor, Jesus. They learned from their "tutor" godly morality, such as that found in the Ten Commandments.—Gal. 3:24.

At the proper time the ancient tutor turned over a prepared and disciplined "child" to his instructor; Paul refers to this as "the day [the child's] father appointed beforehand." Similarly, at the "full limit of the time" Jesus arrived to instruct the prepared Jews. (Gal. 4:2, 4) With what results?

Humble Jews, appreciating their need for a savior, listened to Jesus. What he said, so to speak, took up where the "tutor," the Law, left off. The "tutor" had said, for instance: "You must not commit adultery." But the Instructor went a step farther, teaching: "Everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Jesus got down to motives. —Matt. 5:27, 28.



**The Messiah appeared at the appointed time —after preparations had been made**

Also, Jesus' place—as a mediator, an atoning sacrifice and the everlasting priest—in God's arrangement could be clearly understood because of God's typical arrangement for the Jews under the Law.—Heb. chaps. 5-10.

Thus God used the 4,000-year period from Adam to Christ for man's good. He provided prophecies by means of which the promised Seed would be identifiable when he did appear. And he readied men for Jesus' teachings and position in His arrangement.—Compare the forty-year period discussed at Deuteronomy chapter 8.

But it might be asked: Could not the same effect have been achieved several hundred years earlier? Was not the writing of the prophecies that would identify the Messiah all completed by Malachi's time over four hundred years before Jesus' birth? Yes. Then what benefit was there in having *more* centuries to pass?

### THE PERIOD BETWEEN MALACHI AND JESUS

When the inspired Hebrew canon was completed, Persia ruled the ancient world from India to Africa. More than a hundred years later Alexander the Great conquered the Persians; long-range cultural effects followed. Says the *Encyclopœdia Britannica:* "The conquests of Alexander the Great caused Greek (in the form of this *lingua franca* or κοινή [*koi·ne'*]) to become the speech of the whole Near East (Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, Egypt). Under the Romans these regions continued to use Greek." Thus, a common language existed through much of the ancient world when Christianity appeared in 33 C.E. It facilitated the quick dissemination of the message about Jesus in written and oral form.

Further, the Romans, who

followed the Greeks on the world stage, built up a vast network of roads. Historian Edward Gibbon claims: "All [Roman Empire] cities were connected with each other, and with the capital, by the public highways, which, issuing from the Forum of Rome, traversed Italy, pervaded the provinces, and were terminated only by the frontiers of the empire." Early Christianity's spread through the ancient world was greatly hastened by the use of these roads connecting distant parts of the empire.

But something else was under way in the time of Malachi: the Jewish Diaspora or Dispersion. After the destruction of Samaria (in 740 B.C.E.) and of Jerusalem (in 607 B.C.E.) the Jews scattered from one end of the ancient world to the other. Greek geographer Strabo (a contemporary of Jesus) says of the Jews: "They have penetrated already into every state, so that it is difficult to find a single place in the world in which their tribe has not been received and become dominant."

Wherever the Jews went they built their synagogues for worship. Each synagogue had its copies of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Jewish hope of the Messiah thereby became known far outside the borders of Israel. (Compare Matthew 2:1, 2.) Logically, following the establishment of Christianity, where would the disciples preach? In the Jewish synagogues! Paul, for instance, in his wide travels, ordinarily went there first when entering a city. Many of these prepared, scattered Jews accepted the message about Jesus.—Acts 13:5, 14, 42-44; 17:1-3, 10; 18:4; 19:8.

The good news in this way reached so far so quickly that governmental and religious opposition found it difficult to block its spread. Less than thirty years after Jesus' death the apostle Paul said that the "good news" had been preached "in all creation that is under heaven." (Col. 1:6, 23) Jehovah's awaiting the "full limit of the time" proved to be wise and resulted in blessings for honest-hearted men.

However, not all the Jews were dispersed throughout the ancient world; many returned from exile in Babylon to Judah. In this case, of what benefit was the passing of several centuries before the Messiah appeared?

Jehovah allowed the nation to rebuild Jerusalem, which would figure prominently in their identification of the Messiah. Their priesthood, with its sacrificial arrangements, resumed functioning at the restored temple. Yet already God knew that, as a nation, they would reject the Messiah and that "the city and the holy place" would be brought to "ruin." (Dan. 9:24-27; Zech. 9:9) But it would take time for the wrong motives of the nation to manifest themselves fully.

This case is somewhat paralleled by one that took place about 2,000 years earlier. God had told Abraham that He would not immediately give his descendants the land of promise. Some four hundred years must pass first until 'the error of the Amorites [Canaanites] came to completion.' (Gen. 15:13-16) By the expiration of that time, the religious practices of the Canaanites, including such things as sacred prostitution and child sacrifice, showed that 'their error had come to completion.' Rightly, God instructed Israel to clean out the land. —Lev. 18:1, 24-30.

Similarly, the time period of several centuries before Jesus appeared served, as we have seen, to ready humble Jews to accept him. But, generally speaking, it hardened the nation to reject the Messiah. With time Israel drifted away from Jehovah's pure worship. (Matt. 15:1-9) When Jesus came they had him put to death. Time had not softened the nation as a whole. It brought their wrong inclinations to full bloom. When God ceased his special

dealings with Israel, it was fully deserved. —Matt. 3:10-12.

**TODAY—GOD AWAITS THE PROPER TIME TO ACT FURTHER**

In our time, too, we would similarly expect God to await the 'proper time' to cause his Son's kingdom to eliminate all rival governments and remove such conditions as wickedness, war, crime and oppression, and to restore this earth to a paradise state. (Eph. 1:10) The Bible records a sign that Jesus gave when he was on earth that would mark the "conclusion of the system of things"; it has been undergoing fulfillment since 1914.

This entire sign, climaxed by the "great tribulation" and the end of this "system of things," will take place before the generation of 1914 'passes away.' (See Matthew chapters 24 and 25; Mark 13 and Luke 21.) However, Jesus also said that no one but God knew the "day and hour" for the "great tribulation" to occur. We can be sure that Jehovah will act—but not until the proper development of all details and the arrival of his exact appointed hour. That is why he has not ended this "system of things" before now.

Suppose, for instance, Jehovah had destroyed this system a hundred years ago. The argument could have been raised that God had not given mankind enough of a chance to work out its own problems, perhaps with the sophisticated technology then coming of age.

But now God has given man ample opportunity to solve his own problems. Every conceivable way he can devise has been tried. Consequently, even men of this system are compelled to admit that the issues before them are unsolvable by human means. Only God can do it. A writer in *BioScience* magazine, referring to the "global crisis" facing mankind, says:

> "Symptoms [of crisis], both ecological and social, are apparent in almost every country on the earth: air and water pollution, chemical pollution of food chains, decay of cities, chronic food shortages and starvation, increasing drug abuses and alcoholism, rising rates of juvenile delinquency, crime, and suicide, and a sense of hopelessness that transcends national borders and political systems. However, the enormous dimensions of the environmental crisis . . . make it difficult for us to perceive the nature of the problem and its causes, not to mention solutions."

No human has reason to challenge God's timing of matters. Everything in Jehovah's creation reveals his careful sense of timing. Further, what appear to be periods of "delay" on God's part really result in the greatest possible blessing and good. In what time may be left before God brings on the "great tribulation," learn how you can be preserved through it into God's righteous new order. By studying with Jehovah's witnesses, find out how you can grasp the eternal blessings that God has in store for those who love what is right. —Acts 17:31; 2 Pet. 3:9, 15.

## *Patient Endurance Bears Fruitage*

● In La Réunion, an island in the Indian Ocean, an elderly witness of Jehovah over a period of ten years tried to share Bible truth with her daughter and son-in-law. Eventually the son-in-law got so irritated about his mother-in-law's 'preaching her religion' that one day he said in answer to her knock: "Come in, but leave your Jehovah outside." He began to talk so insultingly about true worship that his mother-in-law began to cry. With tears streaming down her cheeks, she told him that he could at least come to a meeting of Jehovah's witnesses and see for himself. The man was so touched by his mother-in-law's tears that he said: "All right, dry your eyes. I'll come if you stop crying." And he did come. In fact, he enjoyed the meeting so much that he kept on coming. Now both he and his wife are baptized witnesses of Jehovah.

# Jehovah Blesses the LOYAL ONES

**"O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad. He is guarding the souls of his loyal ones."—Ps. 97:10.**

BY VIRTUE of being the Creator of all living things in heaven and on earth, Jehovah is the supreme King and only true God. The Bible speaks of him as being "King to time indefinite." (Jer. 10:10) Does he not, then, have the right to require loyalty from his subjects whom he created? (Eph. 4:24) Is it not only reasonable for him to execute sanctions upon disloyal ones but to bless those who are loyal? Do not human rulers do the same?

[2] Of the more than three billion (three thousand million) people on earth today, comparatively few give any thought to their obligation to be loyal to the Great Sovereign, Jehovah God. Nearsightedly they see only the nationalistic human government that is immediately over them. They think that loyalty to that government must come before all else. At its demand they are willing to violate the laws of God, doing what is bad in his eyes. But is this not a warped perspective of superiors? It is like employees in a business viewing the authority of supervisors as being above that of the owner. The authority of human rulers is not greater than that of the One who is King over all.

[3] Back in the first century of our Common Era a group of men showed the correct perspective when a body of human rulers made demands on them that involved disobedience to the Supreme Sovereign. They showed their loyalty to him by their reply, saying: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) In a big issue such as this it may not be difficult for a person to be loyal to God, but how about seemingly small things? How about things that may appear innocent but that can lead one to even more serious acts of disloyalty?

[4] The word "loyalty" conveys the thought of faithful adherence and devotion to a ruler or a leader. It also carries the thought of devotion to something or someone as well as trueness to any person or persons to whom one owes fidelity. In the Hebrew part of the Bible the Hebrew word for "loyalty" has reference to kindness. Yet it contains more than the thought of tender regard or kindness stemming from love, though it includes this so that the Hebrew word is often translated as "loving-kindness" or "loyal love." It is kindness that lovingly attaches itself to an object until its purpose in connection with that object is fulfilled, and is such as God expresses toward his servants and that they express toward him.

1. Why does Jehovah have the right to expect loyalty from us, and what actions does he have the right to take?
2. To whom do most people think their primary loyalty should go? Why is this wrong?
3. How did some men in the first century demonstrate their loyalty to God?
4. What thoughts does the word "loyalty" convey?

Thus it can be seen that loyalty can be two-way. It can be shown by subjects for a ruler and by a ruler for his subjects. Regarding Jehovah, it is written at 2 Samuel 22:26: "With someone loyal you will act in loyalty." This has proved true, as he has never failed to fulfill a promise to loyal servants.

### KING OF ISRAEL

[5] By looking back at the ancient nation of Israel we can see how God acted loyally with respect to it. That nation had a unique relationship with him. By a strong hand he had delivered the people from slavery in Egypt and brought them safely to the foot of Mount Sinai in Arabia. There he made a covenant or agreement with them, something he had not done with any other national group. He gave them a code of laws and ruled them as their invisible King. Regarding this unusual relationship, Moses said to them: "It is you Jehovah your God has chosen to become his people, a special property, out of all the peoples that are on the surface of the ground." (Deut. 7:6) Thus he was the real King of Israel. Jehovah also manifested his loyalty to them by giving them victories over enemy nations that were more populous and mightier than they. —Deut. 9:1-3.

[6] Jehovah properly expected them to manifest loyalty to him by not seeking after other gods. This was clearly set out in the laws he gave them. The first of the famous Ten Commandments states: "I am Jehovah your God, who have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slaves. You must not have any other gods against my face." (Ex. 20:2, 3) It would be a serious act of disloyalty to him, their God and King, for anyone in the nation to turn to the worship of foreign gods.

[7] Many years later when they were on the plains of Moab preparing to enter the land that God had promised them, Moses warned of sanctions that their invisible King would bring upon them if they should act in a disloyal way. Among other things, he said: "Cursed will you be in the city, and cursed will you be in the field." (Deut. 28:16) He also mentioned the blessings that would come upon them by being loyal. —Deut. 28:1-14.

[8] The Israelites had, in what God had done for them, a very real incentive for continuing in the way of obedience and loyalty to him. He had delivered them from Egyptian slavery and had provided for their every need during their forty years in the wilderness. He gave them miraculous manna for food, provided them with water, gave them a sanitary code that protected their health, and even prevented their shoes and clothing from wearing out during that period.—Deut. 29:5.

[9] Toward the close of their forty years in the wilderness they were attacked by the Amorites under the leadership of the kings Sihon and Og. Jehovah aided Israel in vanquishing these enemies. (Deut. 2: 32-36; 3:1-13) The Moabites noted this victory and became very fearful, especially when they saw the vast encampment of the Israelites spread out over the plains of Moab. They felt a "sickening dread of the sons of Israel." (Num. 22:1-3) The nomadic Midianites were also worried, and so their older men (elders) consulted with the older men of the Moabites. The latter observed: "Now this congregation will lick up all our surroundings like the bull licking up the green growth of the field."

5. How did Jehovah manifest loyalty to the Israelites?
6. What did he expect from them, and how did he make this clear to them?
7. How was loyalty brought to the attention of the Israelites on the plains of Moab?
8. What incentive did the Israelites have to be obedient and loyal?
9. How did the Moabites and Midianites react to the presence of the Israelites on the plains of Moab?

(Num. 22:4) Events thus developed that would cause a seemingly small thing to become a serious test of Israelite loyalty to Jehovah, their King.

**BALAK PLOTS AGAINST ISRAEL**

10 Knowing that they could not gain a military victory over the Israelites without divine help, Balak, the king of the Moabites, sought the help of Balaam, a man who lived in the distant town of Pethor, evidently in the upper Euphrates valley near Haran. Although not an Israelite, Balaam had some knowledge and recognition of Jehovah the true God. Balak and his Midianite allies sent a delegation to Balaam requesting him to come and curse the Israelites. They conveyed Balak's plea: "Now do come, please; do curse this people for me, for they are mightier than I am. Perhaps I may be able to strike them and I may drive them out of the land; for I well know that the one whom you bless is a blessed one and the one whom you curse is cursed." (Num. 22:6) Balaam turned down the request after inquiring of Jehovah, saying: "Go to your country, because Jehovah has refused to let me go with you."—Num. 22:13.

11 A second delegation of more honorable messengers was sent by Balak. They offered Balaam rich rewards if he would come and execrate Israel. Despite the fact that, upon the visit of the first delegation, God had told Balaam not to go, Balaam again sought permission to go, being moved by his greedy desire for the rich reward. Jehovah permitted Balaam to make his own decision to do what was in his heart, but when Balaam chose to go with the delegation, He was displeased and sent His angel to offer resistance. This angel said: "Look! I—I have come out to offer resistance, because your way has been headlong against my will." (Num. 22:22-32) Disregarding this evidence of Jehovah's displeasure, Balaam continued to do what was in his heart when the angel said he could go with the men.—2 Pet. 2:15, 16; Jude 11.

12 After arriving in Moab, Balaam made three attempts to curse Israel, but each time Jehovah caused Balaam to pronounce a blessing. Understandably King Balak was furious. "It was to execrate my enemies that I called you, and, look! you have blessed them to the limit these three times." (Num. 24:10) This further evidence of God's displeasure over Balaam's desire to curse Israel did not diminish Balaam's greedy desire for the reward. He now reasoned with Balak and also with the Midianite rulers that if they could cause the Israelites to become disloyal to Jehovah, then Jehovah himself would curse them. Balaam suggested that they entice the Israelites into engaging in sex worship of Baal of Peor. (Num. 31:16) Regarding this, Revelation 2:14 says that Balaam "went teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication." It was a clever scheme.

**TEST OF LOYALTY**

13 By following Balaam's plan, the Moabites and Midianites would be striking at a weak point of the Israelites, their fleshly desires. This weakness had already caused them trouble. On one occasion during their trek through the wilderness they yearned for certain types of foods they had enjoyed while in Egypt. It was a matter not of their being hungry, but of their succumbing to their fleshly desire for

10. Why did Balak seek the help of Balaam, and what was his plea?
11. How did Balaam reveal the motivation of his heart?
12. (a) Describe the results of Balaam's efforts to curse the Israelites. (b) What alternate plan did he present to Balak and the Midianite elders?
13. (a) At what weak point did Balaam plan to strike? (b) How had this weakness already caused their loyalty to God to be tried by seemingly small things?

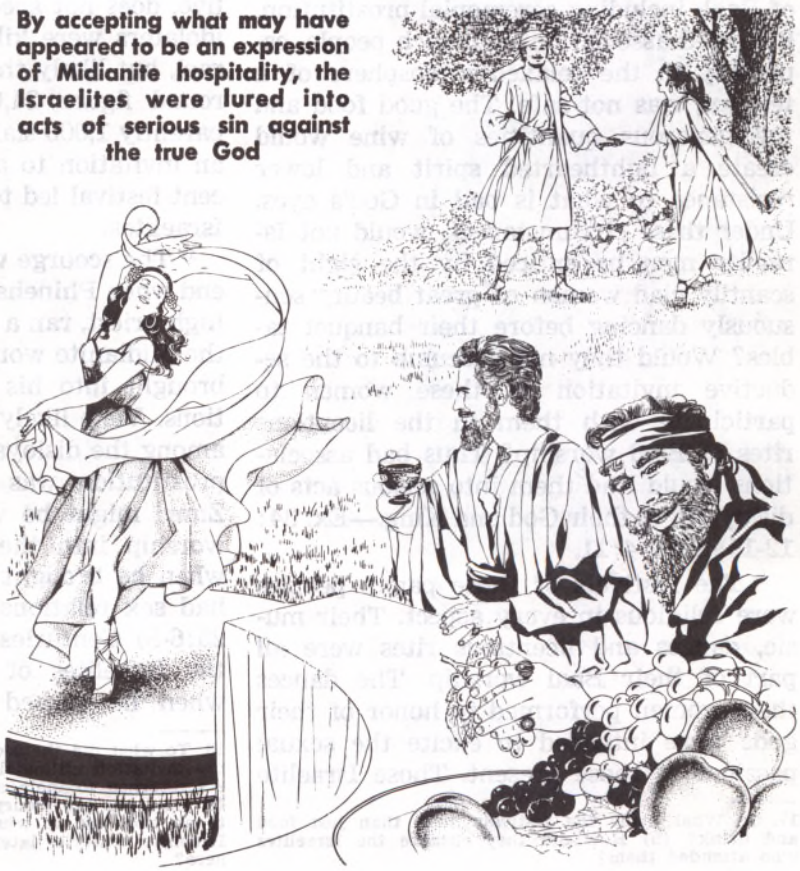
types of food they liked. They were dissatisfied with what God had provided them, and so they complained: "Who will give us meat to eat? How we remember the fish that we used to eat in Egypt for nothing, the cucumbers and the watermelons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic! But now our soul is dried away. Our eyes are on nothing at all except the manna." (Num. 11:4-6) This ungrateful expression brought Jehovah's anger upon them as it was a rejecting of his provisions. On another occasion they disrespectfully spoke of the manna as "contemptible bread." (Num. 21:5) Something as small as food was able to cause them to complain against their invisible King. Balaam planned to use this fleshly weakness, which would seem like a small thing, to lead them into a serious act of disloyalty to God.

[14] When presenting his plan to Balak and his allies, Balaam may have spoken something like this: 'Look, please, how beautiful are the women of Moab and of Midian. And in their dances they are most alluring and seductive. And, is it not so that the Israelites have been in the wilderness for forty years and has not their God given them only manna to eat? Could it not be that they will look upon the produce of the land with hungry eyes? If, now, the women of Moab and Midian were to extend their hospitality, might not these wilderness wanderers be ready for a real banquet of the best food and wine of Moab? Let them sit down to eat and drink. Let them taste the tempting dishes of Moab, and let their spirits be warmed with the heady wine of Midian. When they have become accustomed to the practice, then the women will know how to draw them into having relations with them, and let Israel bow down to the gods of Moab.'

[15] When the beautiful Moabite and Midianite women extended the invitation to the Israelite men to come to their festival, it no doubt seemed to the men as an in-

14. Describe how Balaam may have presented his plan to the Moabites and Midianites.

15, 16. (a) In what way may some of the Israelite men have reasoned when they received the invitation extended by the Moabite and Midianite women? (b) Why was their reasoning dangerous?



**By accepting what may have appeared to be an expression of Midianite hospitality, the Israelites were lured into acts of serious sin against the true God**

nocent expression of hospitality. They may have reasoned in this manner: 'What harm could there be in accepting the kind hospitality of the Moabites and Midianites? There would be no harm in sharing food and wine. The dances would be relaxing entertainment. Certainly, after the hard fight we had with the Amorites, we are entitled to some relaxation.' Such reasoning would be dangerous rationalizing of actions that would put them in a very precarious situation.

16 It would seem like a small thing to accept the hospitality of the Moabites and Midianites and to eat their tempting variety of delicious foods. But there was the matter of bad associations. These people were pagan sex worshipers who engaged in licentious rites as part of their worship of Baal, including ceremonial prostitution. Repeated association with such people, especially in the relaxed atmosphere of a festival, was not safe. The good food and the generous quantities of wine would create a lighthearted spirit and lower resistance to what is bad in God's eyes. Under these circumstances, would not Israelite men be enticed by the sight of scantily clad women of great beauty sensuously dancing before their banquet tables? Would they not succumb to the seductive invitation of these women to participate with them in the licentious rites of Baal worship? Thus bad associations would lead them into serious acts of disloyalty to their God and King.—Ex. 34:12-15; Hos. 4:11.

17 The festivals of those pagan peoples were religious in every aspect. Their music, dances and licentious rites were all part of their Baal worship. The dances their women performed in honor of their gods were intended to excite the sexual passions of those present. Those Israelite men who participated in this festival did indeed succumb to the enticements placed before them. Like a bull led to the slaughter they were led by their fleshly desires first to a seemingly innocent festival and then to lewd and idolatrous conduct, all of which was sin against God. (Prov. 7:22) "The people started to have immoral relations with the daughters of Moab. And the women came calling the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people began to eat and to bow down to their gods." —Num. 25:1, 2.

18 As predicted by Balaam, the anger of Jehovah rose up because of this badness and disloyalty on their part. He caused a deadly plague to sweep through the Israelite encampment, killing 23,000 people. (1 Cor. 10:8) Numbers, chapter twenty-five, does not specifically state how many idolaters were killed by the judges of Israel, but likely these were included in the round figure 24,000 plague victims, apparently 1,000 slain. Thus the accepting of an invitation to attend a seemingly innocent festival led to this calamity for those Israelites.

19 The scourge was finally brought to an end when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar the high priest, ran a spear through Zimri and the Midianite woman Cozbi, whom he had brought into his tent for immoral relations. Very likely Zimri was a ringleader among the disloyal ones. Since ceremonial prostitution was part of Baal worship, Zimri might be viewed as bringing Baal worship into the encampment of Israel when he brought Cozbi into his tent and had sex relations with her there. (Num. 25:6-8) Centuries later Jehovah reminded the Israelites of this disloyalty to him when he caused his prophet Hosea to

17. (a) What made the festivals more than just food and drink? (b) How did they ensnare the Israelites who attended them?

18. To what did the seemingly small thing of accepting the invitation ultimately lead when the Israelite revelers returned to their camp?

19. How was the scourge in the Israelite camp brought to an end, and in what words did Hosea remind the Israelites centuries later of the disloyalty that occurred here?

write: "They themselves went in to Baal of Peor, and they proceeded to dedicate themselves to the shameful thing, and they came to be disgusting like the thing of their love."—Hos. 9:10.

20 Balaam's scheme, while causing great damage to the Israelites, did not succeed, because loyal Israelites resisted the fleshly enticements to do what is bad in God's eyes. The scheme actually backfired on the Midianites, for God commanded the loyal Israelites to strike them down. "Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying: 'Let there be a harassing of the Midianites, and you men must strike them, because they are harassing you with their deeds of cunning that they committed against you cunningly in the affair of Peor and in the affair of Cozbi the daughter of a chieftain of Midian, their sister who was fatally struck in the day of the scourge over the affair of Peor.' " (Num. 25:16-18) The Midianite cities and walled camps in the area were consigned to the fire. Five kings of Midian, all the males, and every female who had had sexual intercourse, as well as Balaam, were put to death. (Num. 31:1-20) The Moabites, who were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot, were not executed, but because of their part in the scheme God barred them from coming into the congregation of Jehovah, "even to the tenth generation . . . to time indefinite."—Deut. 23:3, 4.

### LOYAL ONES BLESSED

21 Priest Phinehas proved to be one of the loyal ones, and for his quick action against Zimri and Cozbi he received commendatory mention. He tolerated "no rivalry at all" toward Jehovah's worship, and this was "counted to him as righteousness." For this he was given a covenant of peace with Jehovah that "must serve as the covenant of a priesthood to time indefinite for him and his offspring after him."—Num. 25:11-13; Ps. 106:30, 31.

22 It is the fine example of loyal Phinehas that we should want to follow today, not that of those who succumbed to fleshly desires. What happened to those disloyal ones serves as a warning example for us. (1 Cor. 10:11) It is an example of how the entertaining of wrong desires, even when seemingly small and insignificant, can lead to disaster.—Jas. 1:14, 15.

23 As those Israelites, like Phinehas, who remained loyal to Jehovah were blessed with the privilege of entering the Promised Land, so Christians today who maintain loyalty to Jehovah can expect to receive the grand blessings God has in store for those loving him. They will enter the magnificent new era promised to come under the reign of his anointed King, Jesus Christ. "Of the increase of his government, and of peace, there will be no end." He will rule "in justice and in righteousness, from henceforth, even forever." (Isa. 9:7, *An American Translation*) What an incentive this is never to give in to fleshly temptations and engage in acts of disloyalty to God!

24 With the hope of that new era ahead of us, we have a strong reason to resist temptations to do what is bad in Jehovah's eyes. But we must recognize that fleshly desires are a human weak point today just as they were in the days of those Israelites who encamped on the plains of Moab. The temptations to indulge those desires are very great because we are surrounded with worldly people who have given themselves over to loose conduct and sexual uncleanness. In a sense they are

20. Why did Balaam's scheme not succeed, and how did it backfire?
21, 22. How was Phinehas an example of loyalty to Jehovah, and what can we learn from what happened to the disloyal ones?
23. How does the position of loyal Christians today parallel that of the loyal Israelites on the plains of Moab, and what blessings do they anticipate?
24. What must we recognize about fleshly desires, and why is our situation similar to that of the Israelites when on the plains of Moab?

engaging in sex worship as were the Moabites and Midianites. Their literature, stage shows, motion pictures and television programs feature every depraved lust of the flesh that can be imagined by a corrupt mind. We must resist that bad influence. To succumb to it and be led into doing what is bad in God's eyes can be fatal for us, as it was for those 24,000 Israelites who perished for their disloyalty.

[25] When you, therefore, are confronted with temptations that may appear as small things but which can actually lead to doing what is bad in God's eyes, you will want to remember this test of loyalty that occurred on the plains of Moab. Choose the course of the loyal ones, and keep in mind what is written at Psalm 97:10: "O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad. He is guarding the souls of his loyal ones."

25. When confronted with fleshly temptations, what should we remember?

# Loyalty IN THE TIME OF THE END

**"For the time that has passed by is sufficient for you to have worked out the will of the nations when you proceeded in deeds of loose conduct, lusts, excesses with wine, revelries, drinking matches, and illegal idolatries."—1 Pet. 4:3.**

SINCE World War I we have been in a most unusual period in human history, a period that has been marked by unprecedented violence, great bloodshed and widespread moral degeneracy. Regarding a similar period thousands of years ago, the historical record of the Bible says: "Consequently Jehovah saw that the badness of man was abundant in the earth and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only bad all the time." (Gen. 6:5) "They took no note" of God's will for mankind. That described the condition of things in the days before the great flood of Noah's time. Jesus Christ said that similar conditions would exist in the last days of the present system of human rule. (Matt. 24:37-39) Since 1914 C.E. we have been living in those "last days."

1. Why does the badness of mankind seem to grow ever worse at this time?

[2] With mankind sinking steadily to an ever-lower level of morals, the pressure upon true Christians to view immoral actions as acceptable increases. The thinking of the so-called "new morality" permeates the worldly people around them and fills the literature and entertainment produced by such people. This exerts a bad influence upon all Christians. It requires determined resistance on their part. Some may even have participated in immoral living before becoming true Christians. But now that they have put on a new personality that is fashioned according to the high moral standards of God's Word, the time for living like the nations has passed. To revert to it would be like a dog returning to its vomit.—2 Pet. 2:22.

[3] Their becoming true Christians, however, does not mean they cease to experience desires of the fallen flesh. They do,

2, 3. What bad influence do Christians feel, and why must they resist it?

and those desires are a weak spot for them. Unless they constantly keep up a moral defense of self-control they can become vulnerable to attack at this weak spot. Satan, the god of this corrupt world of mankind, works on this weak spot through the corrupting influence of his world. He employs the same tactic today that he caused the Moabites and Midianites to use when they tried to corrupt the Israelites in the fifteenth century before our Common Era and thereby to turn Jehovah God against them. So today Satan tries to entice Christians through the lusts of the flesh to violate the laws of God and thereby bring God's adverse judgment upon them.—1 Pet. 5:8.

4 When a Christian finds pleasure in the morally corrupt literature and other forms of entertainment produced by the Devil's system of things, is he not leaving himself exposed and unprotected? Will not the entertaining of wrong desires lead to succumbing to them in time and thus sinning in God's eyes? (Jas. 1:14, 15) Continuing in that course will bring certain destruction from God, as it did for the 24,000 Israelites who were killed on the plains of Moab. Satan will have gained the victory over them by causing them to be disloyal to their God and King.—Num. 25:1-9.

### LOYALTY IN ALL THINGS

5 A Christian may think that he is loyal to Jehovah God because he zealously preaches the good news of the Kingdom, but loyalty involves more than that. The Israelite soldiers who fought valiantly against the Amorites thought they were loyal to God too, but many failed to see that loyalty must also be shown by one's entire course of conduct. If a Christian succumbs to wrong desires his preaching about God's kingdom means nothing. He actually proves himself disloyal to God's kingdom by violating its moral code. His unchristian conduct brings reproach upon the name of his God and King.—2 Pet. 2:2.

6 A Christian must manifest his loyalty to God and the Kingdom by his entire way of life, even in what might be viewed as little things. It must be strikingly different from the corrupt way of life of the world, even though this may cause worldly acquaintances and relatives to speak abusively of him. (1 Pet. 4:3, 4) Notice how Jesus made clear what must go along with one's interest in God's kingdom. "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom," he said. But then he added "and his righteousness." (Matt. 6:33) Thus, for a Christian loyally to uphold the kingdom of God, he must live in accord with God's righteousness that is expressed in the divinely written laws and counsel of the Bible. By his way of life he must manifest true Christianity.

7 Like the Israelites in the days of Moses, true Christians have a personal relationship with Jehovah God. This requires them to have love for what is clean and righteous, just as God does. His chief enemy, Satan the Devil, has love for what is corrupt and unrighteous, and so this world of disobedient mankind produces the corrupt and unrighteous fruits of its wicked god and ruler. (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:4) For a Christian to forsake what is righteous by giving in to wrong desires would mean that he disloyally follows another god, the wicked god of this world. He is producing that one's bad fruits. He would be like the unfaithful Israelites who were enticed by wrong desires when at the festival of the Moabites and the Midianites and became involved in Baal worship.

4. What can happen when a Christian permits his mind to dwell upon wrong desires?

5, 6. (a) What does loyalty to God involve? (b) What did Jesus say a Christian must seek in addition to the Kingdom? How?

7. (a) Because true Christians have a personal relationship with Jehovah, for what must they especially have love? Why? (b) Why is a Christian guilty of disloyalty when he forsakes what is righteous?

When we seek Jehovah's righteousness, we are striving for the greatest purity of thinking and conduct. We heed the Scriptural admonition: "Quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." —Rom. 12:2.

[8] Jehovah's name is upon true Christians who bear witness to his kingdom. That name stands for all that is upright and clean in the universe. The scepter of his kingdom, wielded by his Son, "is the scepter of uprightness." (Heb. 1:8) Should not subjects who are loyal to that kingdom and its supreme King, Jehovah God, reflect that righteousness in every aspect of their lives? Does not loyalty require this? They are bearing Jehovah's name all the time, and if a person believes he can practice something bad or even "off-color" in privacy, he reproaches that name. There is actually no part of our lives that can be called "private" as far as Jehovah is concerned. If we do what is bad in secret, it is secret only to other humans. Jehovah has seen it. Did he not see what the disloyal Israelites did in the tents of the Moabites and Midianites? Did he not see what disloyal elders of Israel did centuries later in private rooms in the inner court of Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem? Did he not see them engaging in idolatrous worship there? Such disloyalty to God cannot be hidden. They were deceiving themselves when they said: "Jehovah is not seeing us. Jehovah has left the land." (Ezek. 8:9-12) No true Christian would want to make the mistake of adopting this false reasoning as pseudo-Christians today have done who claim that God is dead.

[9] A Christian begins to get into trouble when he stops maintaining a strong defense. Instead of staying far away from situations that are enticing to wrong fleshly desires, he may try to walk as close to the brink as possible. Even though his conscience may tell him that the desire is not right, he may entertain it, and the longer he toys with it the stronger the wrong desire becomes. Like the disloyal Israelites, he does not resist the wrong desire for "injurious things." (1 Cor. 10:6) Such a situation can develop when two persons of the opposite sex who are not married begin in privacy to excite each other sexually by putting their hands on each other's private parts. This is a form of moral uncleanness and is unbecoming for a Christian, whose way of life should reflect Jehovah's righteousness.

[10] Can we be guided in such matters by what is acceptable in the world in general? No, for the world does not provide us with sound standards. It reflects, not the righteousness of Jehovah God, but the unrighteousness of the "god of this system of things," Jehovah's adversary. (2 Cor. 4:4) Rather than letting ourselves be lulled into a feeling of unconcern, or even deceiving our own selves, we ought to recognize honestly that when sexual passions are excited this can lead to an overpowering urge to satisfy those passions by sexual union. This is a fact of life. Such satisfaction is normal and proper with persons in the marriage arrangement. But for unmarried persons to satisfy those passions in such union is a serious violation of divine law; actually, it is disloyalty to God on the part of the Christian. Should not loyalty, then, guard us from risking such violation, making us avoid actions that dangerously excite sexual desire?

[11] In the modern practice of "dating,"

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8. Is there any part of our lives that can be called private in Jehovah's eyes? Explain with examples.

9, 10. (a) Explain how fleshly desires can get a Christian into trouble. (b) How is loyalty involved here?

11. (a) What argument do some persons present to justify passionate "petting," and why is the argument wrong? (b) How can unclean conduct, though not involving actual sexual union, still reach the point of being "fornication" (*por·nei'a*)?

many young couples engage in "petting" that does whip up strong feelings of passion. Yet some may argue that this is not wrong as long as there is no actual joining of the sex organs, since, as they understand matters, this is what the Bible specifically forbids for unmarried persons. Such reasoning is both mistaken and dangerous. Christians are urged to present their members no more "as slaves to uncleanness and lawlessness" but "as slaves to righteousness with holiness in view." (Rom. 6:19) Even if their passionate "petting" did not reach the point of "fornication" (Greek, *por·nei'a*) in the Bible sense of the word, it could still constitute "uncleanness" (Greek, *a·ka·thar·si'a*), an indecent, impure kind of conduct. "Uncleanness" is listed following "fornication" in the apostle's list of works of the fallen flesh, and he warns that those who unrepentantly "practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom." (Gal. 5:19, 21) Not only this, but such unclean actions might steadily become more gross in nature or extent until they reach the point where they rightly are classified as "fornication" (*por·nei'a*). This is because this word Scripturally refers, not just to sexual union between unmarried persons, but to all kinds of gross immorality or lewd conduct such as one might find in places of prostitution.

[12] It is natural for two persons who have agreed to marry to express affection toward each other. But this does not mean they can rightly indulge in the intimacies that are properly reserved for married persons. Not being free to have actual sexual union until married, they should not engage in the type of intimate 'love play' that, in marriage, is preliminary to sex relations. To do this would be uncleanness on their part, showing a lack of respect for God's arrangement, a lack of loyalty to his clean standards of holiness. So, in any expressions of affection, their loyalty should move them to exercise care and due restraint. Not only should they not offend local custom publicly and risk stumbling persons, but even when by themselves they should not engage in actions that would cause them shame if another person were suddenly to appear on the scene. Is it not true that the presence of others is often a good protection for us against our weaknesses and fleshly desires? Darkness and secrecy, on the other hand, lower our defenses and can weaken our resolves. (Compare Proverbs 9:16-18; John 3:20, 21; Ephesians 5:7-13.) Even though engaged, would not a Christian couple be wise to avoid jeopardizing their self-respect and their respect for each other by avoiding situations that lend themselves to unclean conduct? They can

**Unmarried Christians who are preparing for marriage can safeguard themselves against unclean conduct by avoiding spending time together in isolated privacy**

12. (a) Does being engaged give a couple the right to indulge in passionate lovemaking? (b) What situation should single persons avoid, and why?

avoid these by not isolating themselves from others to the extent that they no longer feel the healthful restraint of knowing that someone could easily come into the room or place where they are. Certainly those who are not engaged have reason to exercise even greater restraint, preferring to enjoy each other's company in open association with other persons, not in isolated privacy.

### CONGREGATIONAL ACTION

13 When the Israelites succumbed to fleshly desires at the festival of the Moabites and the Midianites and engaged in sex worship, action was taken against them by God and the representatives of the congregation of Israel. Those representative members personally killed likely as many as one thousand of the disloyal Israelites. (Num. 25:3-5) A parallel to this can be found in the Christian congregation today. While it is not authorized by God to execute disloyal members who practice serious sins, it is authorized to take action against them by disfellowshiping them from the congregation if they are unrepentant. (1 Cor. 5:11-13) This is necessary to keep the congregation clean. If it failed to do this, how could it rightly claim to belong to Jehovah and Jesus Christ, who are righteous? It is obligated to uphold the righteous laws of God.

14 Since all the gross immorality referred to by the term *por·nei'a* is lewd conduct that can prevent a person from inheriting God's kingdom, the Christian congregation rightly disfellowships persons who practice it and who manifest no sincere repentance. Similarly with those who persist in any form of "uncleanness." Uncleanness is, however, a broad term that admits of a wide range of degrees—even as a person physically can be only slightly soiled or can be definitely dirty, so too with moral uncleanness. In determining the extent of uncleanness, therefore, the motivation, the circumstances and the things leading up to the uncleanness must all be weighed to determine the gravity of the conduct. The concern of the Christian congregation to maintain its purity and cleanness, then, is not unreasonable but is according to facts, and it is neither hasty to take disfellowshiping action nor dilatory where a gross, unrepented-of practice requires it. This is in accord with what is written at 2 Timothy 2:19, which, among other things, says: "Let everyone naming the name of Jehovah renounce unrighteousness." The judicial action taken by the congregational elders protects the congregation and its reputation from being stained or sullied by uncleanness. It also provides a healthy warning to all in the congregation of what can result to one who entertains morally wrong desires.

15 Of course, if a person manifests heartfelt regret over a sin he commits and seeks forgiveness, he can be forgiven. God manifests a willingness to forgive such a person, and the Christian congregation acts in harmony with God's forgiveness. (1 John 1:9) The person might be publicly reproved for his misconduct, or he might be privately reproved for it by the judicial committee. (1 Tim. 5:20) Even the person who had to be disfellowshiped can get forgiveness if he later proves that he has truly repented and has changed from his bad course of conduct. So the

13, 14. What action by the Christian congregation parallels that taken by the faithful elders of Israel with respect to those who were disloyal to God, and why is this action necessary for those practicing immoral conduct?

15. How may a person receive forgiveness for bad actions?

situation is not necessarily hopeless for the one who sins.—Ezek. 33:11.

**AVOID ACTS OF DISLOYALTY**

16 It is important for us to recognize that we humans have fleshly desires that make *us* vulnerable. We, therefore, need to maintain a strong defense and recognize situations that can undermine our defense. Recognizing that the flesh is weak, the apostle Paul observed: "I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow." (1 Cor. 9:27) This means we must constantly fight to keep our sexual passions under control. We cannot let up on the effort to exercise self-control. If we read sensual literature that reflects the corrupt thinking of worldly people, will we be aided in maintaining a strong defense or will it not weaken us? We certainly are not strengthened if we permit our minds to dwell on wrong desires, are we? Instead, we will make ourselves even more vulnerable. It would be better to follow the counsel at Philippians 4:8, which says: "Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things." It does not say to think on things that are unrighteous and things that fire unclean desires. When we have our minds on things that are righteous, are we likely to engage in actions that are unrighteous?

17 We need to recognize that the Devil endeavors to entice us to do what is bad in God's eyes and, if we let him, he will lead us right up to the point of plunging headlong into immoral actions. If we permit ourselves to be drawn along and try to rationalize what we do, are we not asking for the trouble that is certain to come? Would it not be better to resist the enticement in the beginning? Would not the Israelites who became involved with Baal worship have been better off if they had resisted the very first enticements placed before them by the Moabites and Midianites?

18 Consider Eve's case. She knew that she was not even to touch the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden, because touching was the first step toward eating it. (Gen. 3:3) Not being permitted to eat the fruit from this one tree worked no hardship upon her, as there were many other fruits that she was permitted to eat. Her touching it manifested a wrong desire for what God had forbidden. Keeping this in mind, we may consider thoughtfully the counsel at 1 Corinthians 7:1: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman." In the Hebrew Scriptures, 'touching' is at times used to represent sexual contact. (Compare Proverbs 6:29; Genesis 20:6, 7.) This is likely because the chain of events that lead to sexual union begins with touching a person of the opposite sex in a passionate way. Jesus warned against even "looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her," saying that the one doing so "has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:28) It appears, then, that 'touching a woman' could include any bodily contact with one of the opposite sex in a way that springs from or excites such illicit passion. If a person cannot keep his passions under control and inclines toward 'touch-

16, 17. Over what must we maintain a strong defense? Explain how we can do it.

18. (a) What significance does the Bible attach to 'touching a woman,' and why? (b) How should this fact affect the viewpoint of single persons?

ing' those of the opposite sex in a passionate or unclean way, then, as the apostle Paul goes on to state, it would be better to marry. (1 Cor. 7:2, 9) Meanwhile, the wise course for Christians who are still single is to avoid either the passionate "looking" or the 'touching' that can so easily lead to serious wrongdoing. They will then have the satisfying joy of a clean conscience before God and man.

19 We have learned to love Jehovah God because of his righteousness, good laws and loving-kindness or loyal love. We rejoice in the prospect of the entire earth coming under the rule of his kingdom without interference from unrighteous governments. This we know will mean just and righteous rule for mankind, with permanent peace and security. Should not everyone who is happy to be close to this righteous Ruler of the universe as part of his earthly organization strive with all his might to reflect God's righteousness in his life by living according to His laws? This would certainly be showing loyalty to him, would it not?

20 A person's Christianity is shown, not only by giving a public demonstration to the fact that he has dedicated himself to Jehovah God by being baptized in water, but also by manifesting a Christlike personality. That involves a new personality that is "created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Eph. 4:24) At all times Jesus Christ conducted himself in harmony with the righteous laws of God. Those laws were in his heart, and they motivated the desires of his heart to be in harmony with God's will. (John 5:30) These same righteous laws should be in our hearts and motivate their desires.

19. Why should we strive to reflect Jehovah's righteousness in our lives?
20. How is displaying loyalty a part of imitating the example of Jesus Christ?

**BENEFITS FROM BEING LOYAL**

21 The pleasure that a person may have now from catering to wrong fleshly desires is only momentary. But the benefits from being loyal to Jehovah can be eternal. Why give up such eternal benefits for fleeting moments of pleasure? Moses chose to be "ill-treated with the people of God rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin," because the benefits from being a loyal servant of Jehovah are far greater. (Heb. 11:25) A very outstanding benefit we can anticipate today is being part of the "great crowd" of loyal worshipers of Jehovah who will be preserved through the coming "great tribulation" that will bring a disastrous end to the present system of things.—Dan. 2:44; Rev. 7:9, 14.

22 Another prominent benefit is living indefinitely in the new era that the kingdom of God will usher in. Is not living in peace and security under righteous rulers of far greater benefit to you than a few fleeting moments of illicit pleasure? Is not life itself of greater value than such pleasures? Disloyalty to Jehovah can mean eternal death, but loyalty to him can mean just the opposite, eternal life. "Furthermore, this is the promised thing that he himself promised us, the life everlasting." (1 John 2:25) These and many other notable benefits come to the loyal ones.

23 After having come to the very threshold of the new era, it would be tragic for a Christian to lose out because of entertaining wrong fleshly desires and becoming disloyal to the true God. How much wiser it would be to maintain a clean conscience by following an upright path of loyalty to God in this time of the end! —Ps. 37:28, 29.

21, 22. What are some of the benefits from being loyal to Jehovah, and how do these compare with fleshly pleasures?
23. So what is the wise course to follow today?

# HOW STRONG IS YOUR LOVE of TRUTH?

THE scene was in Queens, New York city. A woman had asked her butcher to grind a certain piece of meat for her. Before he could grind it, however, the man in charge replaced the meat with an inferior grade, and insisted that the butcher give this to the customer. When presented with the ground meat, the customer asked the butcher: "Is this the meat that I asked you to grind?"

What would you have answered? Would you have told the truth?

The customer had a right to know the facts. Yet, under the circumstances, it was not easy for the butcher to tell her the truth, and thereby expose the dishonesty of the man in charge. Nevertheless, he did. The result was that he was fired.

Would you have done what he did?

### DESIRE FOR THE TRUTH

When it appears to serve their interests, it is common for people to lie. But do you like it when you are lied to?

We like to hear the truth. Parents like to hear the truth from their children. Children want their parents to tell them the truth. A government desires citizens to tell it the truth, and citizens want the truth from their government. But what should particularly concern us is that Almighty God wants to hear our mouths speak truth. His Word says: "Speak truth each one of you with his neighbor."—Eph. 4:25.

Christianity is referred to in the Bible as "the way of the truth," and the apostle John spoke of "fellow workers in the truth." (2 Pet. 2:2; 3 John 8) Obviously persons "in the truth" could not deal in falsehoods.

The early Christians Ananias and Sapphira provide an example revealing God's detestation of deliberate deceit. They had sold a piece of property and made the pretense of contributing all the proceeds from the sale for use by fellow Christians; but actually they had held back some of the money for themselves. They thus schemed to give the impression to the congregation that they were more generous than they really were. For this deception —a deliberate, planned conspiracy to lie —God executed them.—Acts 5:1-11.

Clearly, God considers the practice of lying a serious offense. "All the liars," the Bible says, will go into "the lake that burns with fire and sulphur. This means the second death." (Rev. 21:8) Surely, then, we should be on guard that we do not let such a lying pattern start developing in our lives.

### AVOID THE INCLINATION TO LIE

Yet it is not always easy to tell the truth. At times there can be a strong inclination to lie, especially when a person has done something wrong that he wishes to conceal.

For example, some time ago Christian elders called at the home of a member of the congregation to discuss with him what they considered to be certain irregularities in his conduct. He did not want to discuss the matter, and so he sent a member of his family to the door with instructions to tell the elders he was not at home.

Later, when his falsehood became known, he excused it as only a 'little' lie. Still, it was a lie, and he involved another member of the family in the falsehood.

All of us, at one time or another and in some way or another, are bound to slip in what we say. "If anyone does not," the disciple James said, "this one is a perfect man." (Jas. 3:2) We may have exaggerated in telling something, or in some other way expressed an untruth. For example, we may have expressed approval and even enthusiasm for a project to please someone when we really did not feel that way.

How do you feel about yourself when you say things that you know are not true? Does it strengthen or weaken your self-respect? Is it becoming a pattern in your life to express untruths? Though the matters involved may be of only minor consequence, the effects of the untruth can be unexpectedly serious.

For example, suppose that a woman tells a neighbor, in the hearing of her child, that she 'really likes her new drapes.' Then later, in conversation at home, she mentions to her husband that the neighbors have new drapes and that she 'does not like them at all.' Will not her child, who hears her say this, assume that it is permissible to falsify? So, while there is certainly nothing wrong with being tactful, there is need to consider whether our words will lead to disrespect for truth.

Surely, the wise course is to exercise care as to our truthfulness, and not ignore the proddings of conscience. A secretary for a merchandise comptroller in a Chicago department store exercised such care. Her employer told her: "If anyone calls, tell them that I am not in." Some persons' conscience might allow them to say this. However, after thinking about the matter, the secretary's conscience troubled her. So she explained to her employer why, as a Christian, she could not tell persons that he was out when he was really in his office. He respected her for her high regard for the truth.

True, many statements may be considered minor untruths, 'little' lies. But if we do not exercise care to avoid them, is there not a danger that we may be led into more serious wrongdoing?

Of course, not everyone will appreciate a Christian's strong love of truth. For instance, one of Jehovah's witnesses, who worked for a landscaping firm in Holden, Massachusetts, received a call from a local bank. It wanted to verify some figures on a bill of sale for equipment. However, the figures on the company's file copy were different from those that the bank had.

When his employer returned, the Witness asked about it, and the employer became angry. An incorrect bill of sale, showing a much higher figure, had been issued to the bank. This was done, the employer explained, to obtain more money from the bank and for tax purposes. The employer wanted the Witness to call the bank and apologize for his "gross mistake" and verify the phony figures. The Witness explained why he could not do this, and when he saw that his employer had no regard for the truth, he quit his job.

It often requires real strength to be truthful. How strong is your love of the truth? Do you tell the truth only when it is convenient? If so, in what way are you different from persons who pursue honesty only as a "good policy," but lie when it appears that it will benefit them?

Our reason for telling the truth should be that it is the right thing to do; it is pleasing to God. If one truly loves Jehovah God and, above everything else, wants to please him, then no matter how strong the pressure of selfish interests may be, he will not become a willful liar. He will prove by his actions that he is a servant of "Jehovah the God of truth."—Ps. 31:5.

# ARE YOU a Discreet Guest?

WHAT kind of guest are you? What is your motive in visiting? Do you crave being the guest of those who can set the best table? Do you seek the invitation of those who are prominent, rich or powerful?

The world seeks these things. Many have made 'social climbing' their life's pursuit. The "Who's Who" list is their guide. But the Bible book of Proverbs points out the fallacy of this pursuit and gives counsel that will help one to avoid the snare that lies therein. The wise writer says:

*"In case you should sit down to feed yourself with a king, you should diligently consider what is before you, and you must put a knife to your throat if you are the owner of soulful desire. Do not show yourself craving his tasty dishes, as it is the food of lies."*—Prov. 23:1-3.

The proverb admonishes "you" the reader as to your conduct in the presence of those having authority, warning against the danger of attempting a too confidential association with powerful men. Not many people get to sit at the table of an actual king, but they do sometimes eat at the table of one having authority. Usually there is a large variety of dishes, good wine, and so forth, tempting one to intemperance. A guest at such a table should be doubly careful not to overindulge. He should restrain his appetite—figuratively, 'put a knife to his throat'—especially if he is one who has "soulful desire," easily led into eating or drinking too much. If wise, the guest will certainly watch all his conduct in this situation, for he does not want to be judged immoderate or greedy by such a man of authority.

"Do not show yourself craving his tasty dishes, as it is the food of lies," warns the proverb. The guest should not be deceived into thinking that this invitation to eat automatically means that he is a favored one, nor should he presumptuously try to become too intimate with the man. This could lead to his humiliation and possible downfall. Consider the case of Haman, who lost out just when he thought he was the most intimate with King Ahasuerus of Persia.—Esther 5:8-11; 7:1-10.

### DISCERNMENT IS REQUIRED

On the other hand, you may be a person in position to do a favor for someone else. Or you may have some authority as an elder in the Christian congregation. The need to use discernment when you are a guest in another's home is highlighted a few verses later: *"Do not feed yourself with the food of anyone of ungenerous eye,"* says ancient King Solomon, *"nor show yourself craving his tasty dishes. For as one that has calculated within his soul, so he is. 'Eat and drink,' he says to you, but his heart itself is not with you. Your morsel that you have eaten, you will vomit it out, and you will have wasted your pleasant words."*—Prov. 23:6-8.

The admonition applies to all persons. You may accept an invitation from a person and find that he outwardly presents

a very generous and hearty appearance, telling you to eat and drink freely. But actually he watches and begrudges every bite you eat. Not being the kind that gives something freeheartedly, he is expecting something back for what he gives. So he has calculated with an ulterior object in view, doing this "within his soul"—it is his way of life, the way he operates. If you get a craving for his good things, you may become a frequent visitor in his home. This would be playing into his hands. For your repeated visits can come to make you feel obligated, putting you somewhat under his power. This is what he has calculated.

Unless you exercise discernment and act to stop such intimate association at an early stage you will be caught unawares, as in a trap, and will find it very hard to get out. For example, if you are a Christian elder and the other individual comes to need correction or reproof, you may hesitate to give it. Because you feel somewhat indebted to him, there is a certain embarrassment, perhaps fear. You may excuse yourself from performing your duty as an overseer because you might seem ungrateful after accepting his "hospitality"—though actually, whether you realized it or not, 'his heart was not with you' all along. Or you may be afraid that he will be angry with you and remind you, even before others, that you were very willing to eat his good food.

Yes, your interest in his good things may lead you to be hesitant to endanger your 'pleasant' relationship with him. You may even go so far as to be partial, favoring this man in a dispute with another, thus committing injustice, injuring another person and causing harm to the congregation and reproach to yourself.—Prov. 17:23.

Then, "your morsel that you have eaten, you will vomit it out, and you will have wasted your pleasant words." When you realize the trap you are in, it makes you sick, so to speak, to think of his food. You find that the good, wholesome fellowship you thought you were cultivating did not develop. The pleasant words of friendliness and appreciation, the things spoken to upbuild spiritually and to encourage, have been wasted, as well as your time. You indeed feel like 'vomiting.'

The principle expressed in the proverb would also apply to things other than food. We could get into such a situation through love of our host's fine, comfortable home, his swimming pool, his boat or other comforts or entertainment he can provide.

### ANOTHER OCCASION FOR CAUTION

Lack of due caution and discretion can lead one to yet another kind of undesirable situation. Proverbs 25:17 states: *"Make your foot rare at the house of your fellowman, that he may not have his sufficiency of you and certainly hate you."* Even a good friend has some need for privacy, and your too lengthy, too frequent or unseasonable visits can cause him to get to the point where he actually resents your coming.

Again, this counsel would apply also to Christian overseers in calling on brothers to offer spiritual help. They should be discreet, trying not to call at inopportune times. If there is a real problem to discuss, it is often wise to make arrangements in advance. Overseers should not call so frequently as to become annoying to the household, and should refrain from being injudiciously lengthy in their visits.

Indeed, it calls for discernment, respect and a real interest in the other person's welfare in order to be a good guest.

# A BIBLE That They Approve

"BRITAIN, U.S. Begin Printing Common Bible." "400-Year Gap Bridged at Yale. Dean Weigle's 40-Year Effort Gives 2 Faiths Common Bible." "New Bible May End Controversy Among Faiths." Such were some of the headings in the public press that greeted the publication of *The Revised Standard Version Common Bible* issued in Britain on January 21 and in the United States on April 2, 1973.

Its preface says that leading Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars collaborated in producing this Bible. Also, that it has been approved by leading prelates of American Protestantism, of the Church of England, of the Roman Catholic Church and of the Greek Orthodox Church. It is said to be the first Bible since the Reformation that is acceptable to all branches of Christendom.

How did this *Common Bible* come to be produced? It is based on the *Revised Standard Version* (*RSV*) first published in its complete form in 1952. The *RSV* was approved by and gained favor among Protestants far and wide but apparently no thought was given to its being used by Roman Catholics. It had many good points because of the progress made in Bible scholarship. However, it took a major backward step from its immediate predecessor, the *American Standard Version* (*ASV*), in that it eliminated the distinctive and unique name Jehovah, the name of God, which is found almost 7,000 times in the *ASV*.

Then in 1966, doubtless due to the great popularity of the *RSV*, Roman Catholic scholars prepared an edition of *RSV* suitable for Roman Catholics. It incorporated the distinctive features found in Roman Catholic Bibles. For example, in it the apocryphal books of the Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, Tobit, Judith, 1 and 2 Maccabees and additions to the books of Esther and Daniel were distributed throughout the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). None of these had appeared in either the *ASV* or the *RSV*.

Also, dubious or spurious sections, such as Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53–8:11, were made a part of the regular text instead of appearing as footnotes. And, further, this Roman Catholic version used the term "brethren" (to convey the idea of spiritual relationship) instead of "brothers" when referring to the half brothers of Jesus, since Roman Catholics insist that Mary the mother of Jesus remained ever virgin. Clearly this was a Bible translation that was approved for Catholics but that would not be acceptable to many Protestants.

In an effort to get a *RSV* that would suit both Protestants and Roman Catholics, their scholars got together and produced the *RSV Common Bible*. The result is said to be that "all churches have official authority to use in church the one RSV Common Bible." And it is said that Pope Paul marveled that the notes almost invariably present "a single and identical interpretation, which can honestly be accepted by representatives of all the confessions that have taken part in this work."

Concerning this *Common Bible, The National Observer,* April 14, 1973, asked,

"The Revised Standard Version Common Bible New Edition: An Inspired Compromise?" And it does appear that to get a Bible approved by all, serious compromises were indeed made.

For one thing, agreement was reached by including what Protestants call the Apocrypha and what Roman Catholics call the Deuterocanonical books (meaning later canonical books), but grouping them together between the Hebrew and the Christian Greek Scriptures. By terming them "The Apocrypha/Deuterocanonical Books" both Protestant and Catholics seem to have been satisfied. However, concerning these books, none other than Roman Catholic Jerome, the translator of the *Vulgate,* stated: "All apocryphal books should be avoided; . . . they are not the works of the authors by whose names they are distinguished, . . . they contain much that is faulty, . . . it is a task requiring great prudence to find gold in the midst of clay."

Since the Greek Catholic Church recognizes as canonical not only these Apocryphal books but also 1 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh, these were added after the other Apocrypha with the explanation: "The following books of the Apocrypha . . . are not regarded as authoritative by the Roman Catholic Church and therefore are not included among the Deuterocanonical books. 1 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh are included in the Greek Canon of Scripture." For some reason, not clear, 2 Esdras also appears in this section.

The dubious passage of Mark 16:9-20 has been restored to the regular text but with a blank space and a footnote explaining that "Some of the most ancient authorities bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8." And similarly John 7:53–8:11 has been restored to the text, with a footnote that states: "The most ancient authorities omit 7.53–8.11." In a number of briefer instances a similar policy has been pursued. Verses that were omitted in the text in *RSV,* but appeared in footnotes, are now found in the text with footnotes stating that some authorities leave these out. Thus, unless the reader is careful, he will be regarding all these dubious portions as part of the inspired text of the Bible. Clearly, the Protestants yielded more than the Catholics in these matters.

It seems that in one minor instance the Protestant scholars did hold their own. And what was that? In referring to the half brothers of Jesus as "brothers" instead of "brethren."

The *RSV Common Bible* is hailed as a step toward the uniting of the various branches of Christendom, and as the first Bible in four hundred years acceptable to both Protestants and Catholics. But is there any reason for concluding that this "new Bible May End Controversy Among Faiths," as one newspaper put it? By no means! Did not the hundreds of different Protestant sects for centuries all use the *King James Version?* Did that cause them to be united? Then how can the mere fact that the *Common Bible* is approved by the various branches of Christendom serve to unite them? In fact, the book editor of the Jesuit weekly *America* acknowledged that it is not to be expected that the *Common Bible* will resolve differences among various faiths.

Of what good is agreeing on a common Bible when it is not accepted as the authority in faith and practice? Today many clergymen deny the Bible accounts of creation as well as that of the Flood and they question the miracles mentioned in the Bible. Moreover, they hold to teachings not stated in the Bible. Thus in a recent issue of the Roman Catholic weekly *Our Sunday Visitor* appeared a reader's ques-

tion: "I find it difficult to accept a doctrine that is not clearly taught in the Bible. How do you feel about this?" In reply Msgr. John V. Sheridan stated: "I understand what you mean. . . . a lot of our very elementary Christian doctrines are not explicitly expressed or defined in the Bible."

It is indeed fine that interest in the Bible continues to result in new translations. But that the *Common Bible* may 'end all controversy among faiths' is a vain hope. In fact, the interest in publishing Bibles calls to mind the words recorded regarding the way ancient religious leaders felt about the prophet Ezekiel: "You are to them . . . like one with a pretty voice and playing a stringed instrument well. And they will certainly hear your words, but there are none doing them."—Ezek. 33:32.

*THE man was getting old. If at all possible, he stayed near a companion, rarely going afar by himself. For he feared that otherwise he might meet death without anyone around to put a little water into his throat. This would be disastrous, he believed, because he would be in dire need of water to climb the steep hill that leads into eternity. Too, whatever companions surrounded him at death would entreat his spirit not to permit evil to enter the house that he was leaving, and entreat it to allow the women of his family to bear children.*

*In another part of the earth a man also viewed the prospect of death with dread. The belief of his people was that for a time the dead still possessed sensation, feeling. First, he believed, he would feel the crushing weight of the grave, then eternal darkness. Then, somehow, he would be leaning on two sticks cut from his garden when angels of death would arrive to ask his spirit: "Who is your God?" While he was being questioned, his head would strike the tombstone and he would sneeze and say: "Glory to Allah, lord of the universe." In order to be sure to answer properly after death, the man, while living, always rehearsed this statement when he sneezed.*

*At the same time, far away, another man was fearful that he might die a sudden or violent death, not because of the kind of death itself, but because he might not have time to be "shriven" (granted absolution by a priest's services), thus making his final peace with God. His relatives, however, were more fearful than he was, for they must quickly open all the doors and windows at the moment of his death, to liberate the soul. This is because they believe that great care must be taken not to offend the souls of the dead, who have malevolent powers. A member of the family places his hands over the dead man's heart and closes his eyes, lest he cast a spell. Mirrors in the house are covered so that both the living and the dead may not see the reflection of the dead person or of death itself. The man's cattle and bees, now belonging to a new owner, are quickly notified of the death so that they will not blindly follow their former master in dying.*

Yes, fear of death and, more especially, fear of the dead, are universal. The three persons just described were, respectively, a native of West Africa, a Moslem of Iran and a Catholic peasant of Poland. Their

views differed in detail, but they had the same fear of death and the dead.

Even in Russia, the efforts of a materialistic Communistic government have not eliminated the fear and mystery of death and the desire to live on after death. In fact, the permanent embalmment and display of Lenin's body and, later, the body of Josef Stalin beside it, is very similar to the ancestor worship of African and Asian tribes. It actually constitutes a cult of national heroes. And the elaborateness of state funerals and their ceremonials reveal their preoccupation with death to be greater than they would like to admit.

NEXT ISSUE—SPECIAL!

**Divine Victory—Its Meaning for Distressed Humanity**

One writer observes: "Even the most hard-boiled materialist, who his life long has loudly voiced the conviction that death is the end, realizes when the hour of death comes that his theory is only a hypothesis which may or may not be correct. He too then notices that as a person he is something other than an animal with a specially large and differentiated brain. He then sees that his materialistic theory does not cover his personality and that his alleged explanation of death amounts to ignorance."

### THE SLAVERY THAT FEAR OF DEATH BRINGS

The Bible is therefore fully true when it speaks of those "who for fear of death were subject to slavery all through their lives." (Heb. 2:15) How many persons under dictator rule have wanted to speak out against atrocities they see committed, but their lips are sealed by fear of death! How many have been controlled through threats against relatives living in dictator lands! But, more oppressively, fear of the dead, particularly of ancestors and dead members of the family, causes millions to live in a veritable climate of fear.

The Hindu, for example, believes he has many lives to live through a process of reincarnation, until he at last reaches a state of reabsorption into or identity with the "Oversoul," *Brahma*, the essence of the universe, immaterial, uncreated, timeless. One Hindu man recounted that all his life he had lived in dread of the many "deaths" and "lives" that he had ahead of him, as he would reappear in different animal and human forms for an indefinite period of time.

The Bushmen of Africa attribute all sicknesses and misfortunes mainly to the spirits of the dead, and a person neglecting to propitiate and appease his ancestors may bring harm even to others. The Chamula, a Maya Indian population of Mexico, though "Christianized" as Catholics, try to get the soul of the dead to leave the house by burning red pepper. The smoke supposedly drives the soul out so that it will not linger around the house.

The Bible describes death as an *enemy*, not a friend, of man. (1 Cor. 15:26) And truly death brings shock, grief, loneliness, confusion, a sense of loss and often great hurt to the personality of the survivors. It often cuts off men and women in the prime of life, when they are in their best position to do good for their fellowmen. Aging, which is really the gradual process of dying, debilitates many long before their actual death. Death is a bitter enemy.

But why the fear of the dead or their "souls" or "spirits"? And why the fear of a prospect of "hellfire" or "purgatory"? This is all because of a teaching not found in the Bible—the belief in the immortality

of the soul. And why is this so widespread, common to every language and tribe? Because it has an ancient source, ancient enough to affect all nations. When and where was this?

### ORIGIN OF FALSE BELIEFS ABOUT THE DEAD

There is no record of belief in immortality of the soul prior to the Flood. The Flood apparently erased all previous records, except that of the Bible, which speaks of no such belief before the Flood. Back then the Garden of Eden was still visible; the Flood destroyed this garden. And the account of the rebellion of Adam and the consequent bringing of death upon all his offspring was current knowledge.

For some time after the flood all mankind still spoke one language, under the patriarchal headship of Noah, the servant of God. It was in these postflood times that Nimrod, Noah's great-grandson, arose as a rebel and a professed benefactor of man. He sought to prevent mankind from obeying God's command to spread over the earth and to carry true worship of God with them. Of Nimrod, it is written that he was "a mighty hunter in opposition to Jehovah." (Gen. 10:8-10) Under his leadership those leaving the direction of Noah and his son Shem determined to build a tower. This tower was for a religious purpose unauthorized by God.

The people's action under Nimrod was truly a rebellion against God, as evidenced in God's frustrating their efforts by confusing their language. Now, though they moved out in all directions, their false religion went with them. (Gen. 11:1-9) Some remained at Babel, which city became a religious center. In the beliefs of the Babylonians with regard to death we can see the seed of the beliefs with regard to the dead that appear in the religions of all nations.

What did the Babylonians believe about the dead? Says Robert W. Rogers, in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (Vol. 1, p. 373): "In Babylonia, the great question of all the ages—'If a man die shall he live again?'—was asked and an attempt made to answer it. The answer was usually sad and depressing. After death the souls of men were supposed to continue in existence. . . . they lived in dark rooms amid the dust and the bats covered with a garment of feathers, . . . Those who fell in battle seem to have had special favor. They received fresh water to drink, while those who had no posterity to put offerings at their graves suffered sore and many deprivations."

### THE WAY OF RELEASE

Is there a way of release from this international climate of fear of death and of the dead? Yes, there is, by getting a knowledge of Bible truth, by coming to know what kind of God the Creator is and what he has provided for man. The apostle Paul states that God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to earth, was born as a man of flesh and blood—not to help angels, not to do anything for angels who had chosen a course of disobedience—but that "through his death he might bring to nothing the one having the means to cause death, that is, the Devil; and that he might emancipate all those who for fear of death were subject to slavery all through their lives."—Heb. 2:14-16; Jude 6.

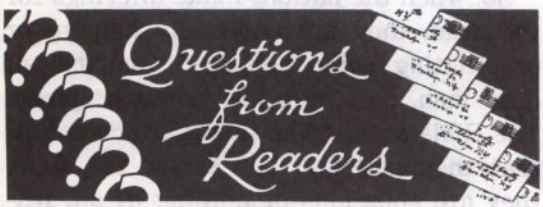
So, when the nations make offerings for the dead, they are not really helping or propitiating some supposed "spirits" of dead men, for there are no such spirits. The Bible says: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, . . . and they have no portion anymore to time indefinite in anything that has to be done under the sun."—Eccl. 9:5, 6.

There is, therefore, nothing to fear from the dead. They have no consciousness, nothing that lives on to interfere with or trouble those still carrying on with life "under the sun." It is futile to set out food for them, or to offer gifts in the form of weapons, clothing or special sacrifices.

The one who has held men in fear is the Devil. He had no power to cause Adam and Eve to die. It was Jehovah God who sentenced them to death and drove them out of the garden of Eden, away from the "tree of life." However, the Devil, by inducing the ancestor of all mankind, Adam, to sin, led to sin and death by inheritance for all men. (Rom. 5:12) God's Adversary can play upon the sinful tendencies, the weaknesses of men and women, and also on the ignorance of those who do not know the truth. He can lead men into an untimely death. Those who believe in the false idea that dead persons are yet in some way alive fall into the snare of the Devil and his associate wicked demons, who do indeed exist. A person is actually playing into the hands of the demons when he makes sacrifices and performs rites to help the dead, pays money to release souls from a "purgatory" or other imaginary place, or to appease the dead. Of such things, the apostle Paul writes: "The things which the nations sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God." —1 Cor. 10:20.

Being an enemy, death is truly undesirable and grievous to anyone who loves life. But it should not be a cause of excessive, crushing grief to one who knows the truth about death and about God's purpose to resurrect the dead during the thousand-year reign of his Messianic King. The Christians in the city of Thessalonica, surrounded by Grecian customs based on the Babylonian belief in the immortality of the soul, were told by the apostle: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant concerning those who are sleeping in death; that you may not sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope." —1 Thess. 4:13.

This true hope God gives to relieve men of fear of what comes after death, the great enemy that has caused so much distress. It removes the pain of death to know that the Lord Jesus Christ, after emptying the grave of all mankind, will also do away with every trace of sin (which brings condemnation to death) in all obedient persons. Then Adamic death, as the last enemy of man to disappear, will itself be thrown into "the lake of fire," the symbol of everlasting extinction. Thus the resurrection of the earthly dead during Christ's thousand-year reign will banish the climate of fear in which mankind has lived for centuries. It will be forever removed. What a grand release!—Rev. 20:13, 14; 1 Cor. 15:26; Rom. 8:20, 21.




● If, in earlier years, a person made a vow to God that he now realizes was unwise, does he have to continue conforming to it?—U.S.A.

This would depend on the nature of the vow and the person's circumstances at the time of making it. However, it is well first to consider what a "vow" is *in the Bible sense.*

In the Bible, vows were solemn promises made to God, not to any human or body of humans. They were also distinctive in that, in all cases described, the vows were always *conditional.* That is, the person making the vow, in effect, said to God: 'If you will do thus and so (perhaps providing salvation from some grave danger or granting success or victory in some effort), I will do thus and so.' If God acted on the person's behalf, the one making

the vow came under obligation to carry out what he had promised. Often payment of the vow involved making a sacrificial offering of an animal, or the devoting of some property to God's service. (Lev. 7:16; 22:21) In other cases the conditional aspect entered in because the individual vowed to refrain from doing something *until* such time as he had been able to attain a certain goal—with the help of God. —Compare Genesis 28:20-22; Numbers 21:2, 3; 30:2-4; Judges 11:30-39; 1 Samuel 1:11; Psalm 132:1-5.

It should also be noted that vows were something spontaneous, and hence unrequested, unsolicited. They were not something set forth as a general requirement for all who would enjoy a certain privilege or enter into a certain relationship. Hence, one's becoming a disciple of Christ Jesus and fulfilling the requirements that are set for all persons, including repenting and turning around and making public declaration of one's faith, and being baptized, do not involve a "vow" in the Scriptural sense.

Nor are Scriptural vows to be compared with the so-called 'monastic vows' that persons in later centuries were required to make in order to gain admittance into certain religious orders of church organizations. Those vows of 'chastity, poverty and obedience' placed those vowing under obligation to the religious orders and served those orders as a means of exercising control over their adherents. Higher church officials could absolve persons from certain types of vows, but with some vows release could be gained only through the titular head of the church, as in the papal arrangement. These, then, are not Scriptural vows, for Scriptural vows were entirely spontaneous and personal, between the individual and God. Furthermore, under the Law, although a woman's vow might be disallowed by her husband, or father (within a certain time after being made), in other cases no human could grant one release from a Scriptural vow. —Num. 30:3-15.

From this it is apparent that many so-called "vows" of today are not really such in the Scriptural sense. It is equally obvious that no vow could be binding if it would call on one to do something out of harmony with God's will, such as a vow to carry out some misuse of blood or one that would in any way link immorality with true worship.—Compare Deuteronomy 23:18; Acts 15:19, 20.

What, then, of vows that do fit the Scriptural description and are not contrary to God's will? Expressing God's viewpoint of vows made in Israel, the Law stated: "In case you vow a vow to Jehovah your God, you must not be slow about paying it, because Jehovah your God will without fail require it of you, and it would indeed become a sin on your part. But in case you omit making a vow, it will not become a sin on your part." (Deut. 23:21, 22) Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 also warns: "Whenever you vow a vow to God, do not hesitate to pay it, for there is no delight in the stupid ones. What you vow, pay. Better is it that you vow not than that you vow and do not pay. Do not allow your mouth to cause your flesh to sin." (Compare Proverbs 20:25.) Jehovah God being unchanging in his standards, the principles expressed would apply in the present time.

Since (apart from a woman's vow that could be disallowed by her father or husband) no human can grant release from a vow, we can see the need for giving serious thought to the making of a vow. A Christian should have a very good reason for doing so and should have no doubt as to his ability to pay whatever he promises in the vow. Otherwise it would be far better that he not make the vow.

What if the individual realized later that his vow had been rashly made, was a thoughtless one? He should not treat the matter lightly but should seek to fulfill the vow. The fact that this might be hard for him would be no excuse. It was certainly not easy for Jephthah to carry out the vow that he made to God, but he conscientiously paid it. (Judg. 11:30-39) Under the Law covenant, the failure to perform a sworn oath, even though such failure was not deliberate, was a sin. It did not carry a death penalty but required the making of a sin offering to God. (Lev. 5:4-6; compare Matthew 5:33.) And God warned that, though he might have granted success to the one vowing, the failure to pay the vow thereafter could lead to God's becoming "indignant" and 'tearing down' what the individual had accomplished. (Eccl. 5:6) So, it could result in a withdrawing, at least in some measure, of God's favor.

Those today who are concerned about this matter should therefore first ask themselves whether they have actually made a vow in the Scriptural sense or not. Was it a promise personally made to God, of a conditional na-

ture, one that was private, spontaneous, unrequested and not out of harmony with God's expressed will? Then every effort should be made to pay it. If the individual has failed to pay it, he must accept the consequences and seek to regain God's favor. Possibly he finds himself in a dilemma in that his vow (such as a vow of celibacy) puts him in a position where he feels that carrying it out is bringing him near the point of violating some divine standard of conduct, perhaps one regarding morality. He may feel that the only way he can protect himself from becoming guilty of immorality is by not paying his vow, throwing himself upon God's mercy for forgiveness. He himself must decide and no other person can grant him release nor assume any of his personal responsibility. He has to live with his own conscience.

Examination will often prove that what were thought to be vows were not really so in the Scriptural sense. This, of course, does not mean that all responsibility necessarily ends there. A Christian should be concerned not merely with paying *vows* to God but also in proving trustworthy in all his words, letting his *"Yes"* be "Yes," and his *"No,"* "No." (Matt. 5:33-37) He should always sincerely try to keep his promises and agreements both to God and to men. At times he may make an agreement with another person and later realize he has thereby brought himself into severe difficulty. He can follow the principle given at Proverbs 6:1-5 regarding the man going surety for another, namely: "Go humble yourself and storm your fellowman with importunities. . . . Deliver yourself."

In regard to vows and all other things, a Christian should always keep in mind the importance of maintaining a good relationship with Jehovah God.

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**"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS**

November 4: Jehovah Blesses the Loyal Ones. Page 584. Songs to Be Used: 6, 7.

November 11: Loyalty in the Time of the End. Page 590. Songs to Be Used: 75, 12.