The WATCHTOWER

Reflections of an Olympic Track Star

Also In This Issue:

Keeping A Balanced View Of Time

JULY 15, 1976

®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

July 15, 1976
Vol. 97, Number 14

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

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

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

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My Struggle To Be Best —WAS IT WORTH IT?

Reflections of an Olympic Track Star

FOR years I had dreamed of this moment, competing in the Olympic Games. It was Saturday, October 17, 1964, the eighth day of the Games in Tokyo, Japan.

Every one of the 75,000 seats in the National Stadium was filled. The streets of Tokyo appeared deserted—practically everyone was at a television set. The time had arrived for the finals of the 200-meter dash.

I lined up at the starting blocks along with seven other sprinters. Each of us had survived the series of elimination heats run on previous days. For this distance, we were the fastest humans in the world.

The pressure was almost unbearable, and it wasn't just the millions watching that made it so. There was the nationalism. The Games were turning out to be one big competition between the Russians and the Americans. Daily comparisons of medals won by each country flashed world wide. Our schools, mayors, governors, and even the president, had sent telegrams telling us to remember that we were competing for our country, and that our country is best.

The newspapers, too, put pressure on us, counting the medals we were supposed to win. They made it sound as if winning was a life-or-death matter, as though the country would lose its honor if we lost. In fact, Kokichi Tsuburaya, the Japanese marathon runner, did commit suicide after losing. He left a note apologizing for 'failing' his country.

So I began to think: 'I can't let my country down. I can't face them back home if I lose.' I was the 200-meter world-record holder, so they *expected* me to win.

Blacks, searching for identity, also applied pressure. I was often told how other blacks had lost, and let our people down. So now *I had to win* for the blacks of America. Yet other blacks exerted pressure to boycott the Games, to show America that it couldn't win without us blacks.

But mostly I thought about my family and friends. I didn't want to embarrass them. I was their hero. They supported me; they cheered for me. When I won, they won. When I lost, they lost. Perhaps you may understand this better if I give you an idea of my background.

Rise To Prominence

I grew up in Detroit, Michigan, the ninth of eleven children. As long as I can remember, mother and dad were separated. Mother worked long hours doing housework trying to support us.

I was always athletic. Since reading and writing were difficult for me, being the fastest kid on the block or the best player meant something; it was a boost in life.

In high school, almost right away I did very well in sports. For three years—1959,

1960 and 1961—I made the All-American High School Track Team. The 220-yard dash was my speciality. I was also selected for the All-State teams in football and basketball for two years.

Ordinarily, college would have been out of the question. But now universities started bidding for my services. I traveled to several campuses around the United States and the universities would try to entice me with gifts. As a result, despite the poverty of my family, I was able to have money in my pocket, and even to drive a Cadillac! I received my driver's license in the dining room of a bar, without even taking a driver's test! One of the nearby universities that was trying to recruit me arranged for this.

However, I chose to go to Arizona State University, and quickly gained world prominence in the track world. In my sophomore year I broke the world record for the 220-yard dash. World leaders wanted to meet me and shake my hand. In Moscow I met Nikita Khrushchev. But all the fame and world travel to compete in track meets seemed unreal to me.

Back at Arizona State I enjoyed favored treatment simply because I was a fast runner. People would shower me with gifts—'sugar daddies' athletes called them. So I had money all the time, new clothes and a car. Often I would send money home to help out members of my family. Sure, I liked the favors and attention. But I knew it wasn't proper; we were supposed to be unpaid amateurs. Yet this was the way things were.

UNJUST REALITIES

Though my abilities brought me praise, just the month before coming to Tokyo I'd been run out of a motel in the southern United States because I was black. The lady hollered at me, "We don't serve your *kind* here." It was late and all I wanted was a place to sleep.

About this same time whites murdered three civil-rights workers in Mississippi. Dogs were being turned on blacks in the South just because they sought a better education. But my world travels convinced me that injustices exist everywhere. In other lands personal freedoms that I took for granted in the United States were often severely restricted.

My heart went out to suffering persons. But what could I do? I realized that the problem in the United States wasn't just a racial one. When blacks were in control they'd sometimes treat fellow blacks just as badly as whites did. Common sense told me that there really wasn't anything I could do, and so I decided I wasn't going to jeopardize my prospects by getting involved.

As for me at that time, everything was going well. When I was a kid we were so poor that I'd go to bed hungry at night, and I didn't want that again. So I learned to be the well-mannered, mild type of person that the system liked. People often told me: 'If you just win the big one in the Olympics you'll have nothing to worry about. Some big company will hire you because you're an Olympic hero.' So I just wanted to avoid trouble and win in Tokyo.

Some say I was a 'natural' runner, 'the smoothest sprinter since Jesse Owens was in his prime.' But let me tell you, I worked hard to develop my ability. It was a struggle to become the best. But if winning in the Olympics would do for me what people said, then I figured it was worth it.

I never felt so much pressure in my life as when we lined up at the starting blocks for the Olympic finals.

THE OUTCOME

I bent down at the starting blocks in Lane Seven. My strategy was to get out in front before we came to the curve, and make the others strive after me, to make

them strain a little harder. Because if a person is not running relaxed, he can't do his best.

The official announced: "On your mark. Get set!" Then the gun sounded: "BANG!" I got a good start. Coming into the curve my thoughts were: 'It worked! I'm ahead! I'm going to win.' All I could see was the finish line. I lifted my legs high and stretched out, and there it was. I'd won!

I was in another world. Everything seemed motionless; I was emotionally high. It was a new Olympic record, and it was said I would probably have broken my own world record if there hadn't been a head wind.

Standing at the top of the victory stand, with "The Star-Spangled Banner" playing, I wanted to be proud of what I'd done for my country. And I did enjoy the thousands cheering. But, at the same time, I realized it was phony. Because the same injustices that had been choking people before I stood there on the victory stand were still around.

I wondered: 'What's going to happen to me now that it's all over? What will my backers do? Will they abandon me? What kind of job will I get?' I was happy, scared as *well as* angry—all at the same time.

As I rode back to the Olympic Villages, I took my first real look at the gold medal. It wasn't what I expected; it was just an oversized silver dollar. I actually asked myself: 'What in the world! For all these years I have been working hard, and to receive this?' I was mad, when I should have been happy. It was a real letdown.

A few days later I ran the last 400-meter leg of the 1,600-meter relay. We set a new Olympic and world record, and I received another gold medal. After a trip to Australia to compete in some meets, I returned home.

Hit By Realities —The Consequences

On the way home I focused on the new phase of my life just beginning—getting a job and rearing a family. First, though, along with other Olympic team members, I went to the White House and received President Johnson's congratulations.

"I received another gold medal"

I expected to consider various job offers, and choose the one I wanted. For years people had been telling me that this is how it would be if I won for my country in the Olympics. But this wasn't true. Everywhere I went people didn't seem to care that I was an Olympic winner. Oh, they'd like to talk about it. But when it came down to hiring me, they just looked upon me as another black, someone who didn't fit in with their purposes. Naturally, I began to get bitter.

After a few months, I received a phone call asking if I was interested in playing professional football. I hadn't played football for two years, since I'd been concentrating on track. But I was desperate for

a job, and so said "Yes." The New York Giants signed me, figuring that with my speed I might be of use.

Well, desperate as I was, I really worked hard and made the team. For three years I did very well, and was for a time defensive captain. One sportswriter said: "Carr, joining the New York Giants, became one of the league's best defensive backs."

With just three games left in my third season I injured my knee, and the trainer told me I was through for the year. But later the doctor called and said that the coaches wanted me to play. Controversy developed over the seriousness of the injury, for earlier in the year I had been involved in a racial controversy on the team.

"The New York Giants signed me"

As a result, at the end of the season I was traded. The word was out that I was a troublemaker and couldn't play when I was hurt. I received similar treatment by the team to which I was traded. So I decided to quit, even though I had made $27,000 the previous year.

A LOSER

I tried, but couldn't find a decent job. Finally I invested in a fast-hamburger chain, and lost money. I became angry and bitter. People, I felt, were beginning to look on me as a guy who had a chance to make it, but didn't.

This affected me mentally. I was losing all grip on life. I became a daily marijuana smoker, dreaming how I would be on top again. My wife wanted to help, but couldn't. I felt that my family (we had two children now) would be better off without me. So I left home.

In time I hit rock bottom morally as a man, coming into association with drug dealers and prostitutes. I started gambling and sniffing cocaine. Having grown up in a Detroit ghetto, I knew many of these people I was now running with. Soon they looked upon me as one of the 'boys,' and arranged to set me up as a drug dealer.

After several months, I stopped and took a good look at myself. I had become involved in the very things I had always hated. Everything was negative; I had no pluses going for me. I didn't know what to do or where to turn. I had a Bible and started to read it, but it didn't seem to make sense. I decided to return home.

Achieving A Worthwhile Life

My wife was understanding. And that the children had truly missed me was evi-

dent by the look in their eyes. I took a job with the county, working with juvenile delinquents. But soon budget cutbacks were announced, meaning I would be laid off. Because of my pride, I felt desperate again.

With my wife's consent, I sold some property we owned and used the money to form an advertising agency. My partner was a very talented commercial artist, and I did the public-relations work. People knew and recognized me, and soon I was traveling back and forth to New York seeing clients. The business prospered.

On my returning from work one day, my wife asked if it would be all right if she studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. I asked, "Why?" She said that the parents of one of her students (she taught elementary school) had given her this book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. And another teacher had told her that if she wanted to know anything about the Bible, she should ask Jehovah's Witnesses.

Recently we had talked about various religions, for our boy was nearing school age and we felt it important that he have a religious education. But our discussion hadn't included Jehovah's Witnesses. I only knew that they were considered some kind of religious freaks. However, if she wanted to study with them, it was okay with me.

I was working around the clock, but at odd moments my wife would mention things she was learning. A week or so later the husband of the woman she was studying with visited me.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

He spoke of what a beautiful place the earth could be if only people lived together in peace. I agreed. Then he said: "Isn't it obvious that Almighty God isn't responsible for world conditions today?"

This surprised me. "If God isn't responsible, then who is?" I wanted to know.

"Satan the Devil," he said. And what amazed me was that he opened the Bible and showed me. Second Corinthians 4:4 says: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."—*Authorized Version.*

The Witness explained that Satan is "the god of this world." And this really made sense when he drew attention to the terrible injustices committed world wide. This is Satan's world and he is influencing its people, the Witness emphasized. And this helped me to understand another scripture I was shown. Jesus Christ said: *"The ruler of this world will be cast out."*—John 12:31.

Obviously, humans can't get rid of the powerful spirit person, Satan the Devil. But God can, the Witness explained. And he will, so that his purpose to create a peaceful earth under his Kingdom rule can be realized. This seemed reasonable. It was really something to think about.

HELPED TO A RIGHT DECISION

The Witness returned a number of times, and if he found me at home we'd have another Bible discussion. I really began to believe what I was learning, since it was right from God's Word. For instance, I didn't know that God had a name. Yet right there in the Bible at Psalm 83:18 it says that his name is JEHOVAH. I enjoyed learning such things.

But what the Bible says about Satan's being the god of this world began to bother me. And especially when it says that Christ's followers are no part of the world. (John 17:14-16) One reason was that I was involved with politics, a major advertising client being the top black candidate for mayor in Detroit.

So one day I told the Witness: "I know you're serious; you're trying to help me.

IN COMING ISSUES

- **Manifesting Faith Under Attack.**
- **Jehovah, a Helper Without Equal.**
- **Training Our Conscience to Do More for Us.**

But I'm just too tied up with my new advertising business, and I don't want to inconvenience you, having you come over when I may not be at home."

Well, shortly after this I hurt my back and was in bad shape, eventually ending up in the hospital. During this time the Witnesses came to visit me, and they really showed concern. I thought: 'These people don't know anything about me. They only know I'm Glenda's husband, and they're treating me like this.' I loved it, though.

Meanwhile, I'd seen changes in my wife. As an example: The little daughter of one of the Witnesses had died, and my wife was really concerned about the mother. I looked at her and thought: 'She hasn't ever acted like this before. Why is she so interested in cooking meals for this lady and going over there and helping her?' These things came to mind as I lay there in the hospital.

In the meantime our advertising business was suffering badly. It had grown to a four-man operation, and I was needed to keep things going. By the time I got out of the hospital the business had so deteriorated that everyone had given up. Again, I was a loser financially.

I knew what type of person I wanted to be—to be able to love and be loved, and to be happy. I saw the changes in my wife, and decided that this is what I wanted too. And what stuck in my mind was that Satan is the god of this system, and that I needed help to fight his influence. So when I got out of the hospital, I called the Witness and told him I wanted a Bible study.

HOW CHANGES WERE MADE

After my first study in December 1972, I went to the Kingdom Hall. Everyone was concerned and glad to see me. And I could see my wife light up, happy that I was there. I remember one of the speakers mentioning how the husband is head of his household, and should take the lead. And I thought, 'My wife has been doing this, studying with the kids, taking them to meetings, praying with them, and I haven't been doing anything.'

Next week the kids were sick, and my wife said: "Well, you stay with the kids, I'm going to the meeting." She didn't think I wanted to go. But I looked at her and said: "I'm the one who is supposed to be taking the lead. So you stay home with the kids."

She just looked at me, surprised—but I think she was glad. I felt good too, kind of proud that I was beginning to take the lead. I can count the times that I've missed meetings since. They've really helped me to make changes that have brought our family happiness.

In the meantime, I was able to find the type of job I always wanted, as advertising executive for a newspaper. I was busy—on the move—people knew me and I knew people, and I began to see how I could make advancement. In fact, I had several additional job offers. But I kept going to the meetings, and it was a good thing because what I learned there really affected my life.

For example, I knew the harm of hard drugs. And I had quit using them. But I was still smoking marijuana. It didn't dawn on me that it was really wrong, since its use is so common. But at a meeting

it was shown how smoking is unscriptural. The Bible says we should "cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit." It was clear to me that this meant giving up marijuana if I wanted to please Jehovah God.—2 Cor. 7:1.

At another meeting it was emphasized that adultery is wrong. The Bible says: "Let marriage be honorable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers." (Heb. 13:4) So I saw that I was going to have to make some deeper changes.

I wanted to please God and so I would go in prayer to him about these matters. But then I read something in *The Watchtower* about the need always to be truthful with Jehovah. So I told him from my heart that I did enjoy these bad things —and even had looked forward to them —yet that now, above anything else, I really wanted to please him. By thus being truthful with God and relying on him for help, I pulled away from these bad habits. Even marijuana smoking wasn't as hard to give up as I thought it would be.

'I began to study the Bible with my family'

It was amazing how much happier I was. I began to have a purpose in life, a direction. My children began to look to me for guidance. We all appreciated Jehovah and the meetings we attended together. It was just wonderful! I enjoyed these happenings and changes that were coming upon me and my family more than anything in the world.

I was convinced we'd found the truth. And I thought that all my friends—who were frustrated, going through problems and mixed up in immorality—would surely want to hear about it. But not one did, *not even one.* In fact, they started making fun of me, calling me "the preacher." "Here comes the preacher," they'd say.

So I could see that these people in the world weren't really my friends. I wanted as friends persons who loved God. So to symbolize that we had dedicated our lives to serve Jehovah God, my wife and I were baptized May 20, 1973.

I came to treasure above everything else the fine things that were happening to me—my good relationship with God, with my family and with fellow Christians. Although I had an interesting, well-paying job, it divided my interests, and there were bad associations and temptations connected with it. I kept thinking of the scripture: "Bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Cor. 15:33) So I quit my job as an advertising executive, even though it had been the type of job I had long desired.

MATERIALLY POORER, BUT RICH

A Witness in the congregation hired me as a painter's assistant. I didn't make much money, but I was happy. I wasn't worried about maintaining an image. I

just wanted to serve Jehovah. I knew that he is a *real person,* the only Person who can straighten out all injustices. Bible evidence—the fulfillment of prophecies, and the Bible's power to straighten out lives —convinced me of this.

After returning from a large assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1973, I told my wife: "I should be pioneering (doing full-time preaching)." Since we had more property that we could sell, there was nothing to stop me. So I started pioneering.

After a while I thought, 'We could be of more use where the need for Kingdom preachers is greater.' By coincidence Fred Cooper, a person with whom I went to high school, called me from Georgia. He is an elder in a congregation there, and he'd heard I'd become a Witness. I told him I was thinking of going where the need was greater. So we ended up selling our home and moving to Georgia.

Pioneering was a real joy, but due to my back problem and the need to get a job to support the family, I eventually had to give up pioneering in May 1975. However, in September I was appointed to be an elder in the local congregation. Since then both my wife and I have done some teaching in elementary school to meet expenses. No, we don't have much materially, but we are rich in more important ways.

To give you an example, my son takes an interest in spiritual things—he reads the Bible and our Bible study aids. About a year and a half ago, when he was seven, he asked me if he could join the congregation's Theocratic School. Inside I just bubbled with joy. At his age all I ever thought about was sports, about becoming a big sports star. And I knew Peyton could have been begging me to join a Little League team or something.

WHAT IS WORTH WHILE

I think sports are good—in their place. But right from the start there's deception. Athletes are idolized as special people—when they're really only flesh and blood like everyone else. And kids are pushed to excel in sports—it's actually a business, not a sport. And look at the damage done to youngsters who are put under pressure to be best when most of them simply can't be.

Even when one becomes the best, it's a deception. Why? Because it's not lasting, nor really satisfying. Stars are soon replaced and generally forgotten. Then disappointment, depression and physical problems often follow. What's worth while then?

Rather than competing with others to be best, helping and serving others is what brings true satisfaction. That is what Christ did. He came 'to serve, not to be served.' (Matt. 20:28) Yes, the warm unity that this spirit of unselfishness and love imparts in a family and a congregation is what makes life truly worth while—struggling to be best does not.—*Contributed.*

"Snow in the Day of Harvest"

● At Proverbs 25:13, the refreshing effect of a faithful envoy upon those sending him forth is compared to the "coolness of snow in the day of harvest." Evidently this refers to the refreshing coolness of a drink chilled with snow from the mountains, something that would be greatly appreciated by those working hard in the harvest.

Insight on the News

Paying for VD

● An unusual Wyoming court decision recently awarded a woman $1.3 million damages from a man who allegedly had infected her with VD. Her testimony revealed that she had willingly engaged in intercourse with the man, but was not told that he had gonorrhea until the last time. She complained of pain and damage to her reproductive organs from the disease, perhaps making it impossible for her to have children.

Her lawyer stated that "this case stands for the proposition that citizens have the right to be protected against being negligently infected by VD . . . by the same rights that protect them against negligent drivers or the negligent manufacturers of a product."

But was the negligence only on the part of the one who did the infecting? Are such persons alone responsible for the estimated 2.6 million cases of gonorrhea in the U.S.? Or does the fault lie in the moral climate that permits or promotes illicit sex outside of honorable marriage? That there is a price to pay for such conduct is only to be expected. "God is not one to be mocked," says the Bible. "For whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap; because he who is sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh." —Gal. 6:7, 8.

$6 Million Man

● The chemical value of a human body has often been estimated to be a few dollars at most. But such estimates consider only the raw materials and in their simplest basic form. Recently Yale University biochemist Harold J. Morowitz checked a supply catalogue for prices of the complex and sophisticated chemical compounds that actually make up the human body. He found such substances as hemoglobin priced at $285 per gram; insulin at $48.50 per gram; the enzyme trypsin, $36; the amino acid bradykinin, $12,000; the milk-stimulating hormone prolactin, $17,500,000; and so on.

Morowitz concluded that humans are actually worth an average of about $245 per gram, dry weight. After discounting the two thirds water in his own 158-pound frame, he arrived at a value of $6,000,015.44 for the remaining substances! However, he says that if chemists had to synthesize all those compounds from raw materials rather than just separating them from existing natural products, the cost would be more like $6 billion. And though it is impossible for humans to assemble these chemicals into cells, he nevertheless estimated the cost of doing so at $6,000 trillion.

Is it reasonable to conclude that such marvelous complexity is merely the result of blind evolutionary chance? Or is the sounder judgment that of one appreciative observer who said: "In a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made. . . . Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing"?—Ps. 139:14, 16.

Adding and Taking Away

● After eighty-six years, the Mormon Church recently added another two written "revelations" to its scriptures. Both of the "revelations" hold out greater opportunities after death for people who either have not heard the gospel, have rejected it, or were too young to be 'accountable' at death.

On the other hand, Mormon "revelations" have not been so kind to living black church members as to dead unbelievers. When a protesting Mormon lay high-priest recently performed an unauthorized ordination of a black, Church authorities rejected the ordination, in keeping with their rule banning black members from the priesthood. The racial ban appears to take away from the Bible that they also accept, which clearly teaches that "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh *righteousness*, is accepted with him. . . . [He] hath made of one blood all nations of men."—Acts 10:34, 35; 17:26, "Authorized Version."

In addition to adverse publicity, those who add to and take away from God's revealed Word must also consider the principle found in God's true Revelation: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." —Rev. 22:18, 19, "AV."

A LOOK AT SOME MIRACLES OF JESUS

WHEN you hear the term "miracle," how do you react? Do you feel that miracles are something that persons living today cannot accept? This is a popular view.

However, the Holy Bible, accepted by hundreds of millions of persons as the inspired Word of God, relates numerous miracles effected by divine power. Outstanding among these were the miracles performed by Jesus Christ.

Can these Bible accounts of miracles that took place thousands of years ago benefit people today? A look at some of Jesus' miracles can help us to answer this question.

MIRACLES OF HEALING

Jesus performed feats of healing unparalleled in all human history. Were these acts attended by superstitious ceremony, fiery speeches, or the taking up of money collections, as is the case with modern-day "faith healers"? Let us consider what took place during the year 33 C.E., at the time of Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem:

> "While he was going to Jerusalem he was passing through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he was entering into a certain village ten leprous men met him, but they stood up afar off. And they raised their voices and said: 'Jesus, Instructor, have mercy on us!' And when he got sight of them he said to them: 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' Then as they were going off their cleansing occurred."—Luke 17:11-14.

There is nothing fantastic in the record of this miracle. Just the simple command that the men afflicted with leprosy show themselves to the priests. Their healing took place en route, without Jesus being present. On other occasions the Son of God performed similar miracles of healing from a distance.—Matt. 8:5-13; John 4:46-54.

An unprecedented example of miraculous healing is found at John 9:1-7:

> "Now as he was passing along he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him: 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, so that he was born blind?' Jesus answered: 'Neither this man sinned nor his parents, but it was in order that the works of God might be made manifest in his case. . . .' After he said these things, he spit on the ground and made a clay with the saliva, and put his clay upon the man's eyes and said to him: 'Go wash in the pool of Siloam' (which is translated 'Sent forth'). And so he went off and washed, and came back seeing."

Did Jesus really heal congenital blindness? If not, this would be a perfect opportunity for the Pharisees, who were religious opposers of Jesus, to deny the whole episode and to expose him as a fraud. But did they?

The Gospel account continues: "However, the Jews did not believe concerning him that he had been blind and had gained sight, until they called the parents of the man that gained sight. And they asked them: 'Is this your son who you say was born blind? How, then, is it he sees at present?' Then in answer his parents said: 'We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how it is he

now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know.' "—John 9:18-21.

When questioned by the Pharisees, the man who received sight replied: "This certainly is a marvel, that you do not know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes. . . . From of old it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of one born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing at all."—John 9:30-33.

Nothing in that account bears the marks of fiction. There are no mythical details. Instead, we have mention of persons, places and conversation characteristic of Palestine during the first century C.E.

THE DEAD RETURN TO LIFE

Among all Jesus' miracles, the most outstanding were the cases of his raising the dead. The Bible relates three resurrections that Jesus performed. The first took place at Nain in Galilee and concerned the only son of a widowed woman. We read:

"As he got near the gate of the city [of Nain], why, look! there was a dead man being carried out, the only-begotten son of his mother. Besides, she was a widow. A considerable crowd from the city was also with her. And when the Lord caught sight of her, he was moved with pity for her, and he said to her: 'Stop weeping.' With that he approached and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still, and he said: 'Young man, I say to you, Get up!' And the dead man sat up and started to speak, and he gave him to his mother."—Luke 7:11-15.

Similarly, Jesus resurrected the daughter of Jairus, one of the presiding officers of the synagogue at Capernaum. (Matt. 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56) The most impressive resurrection that Jesus performed was that of his close friend Lazarus. The Gospel according to John describes it this way:

"When Jesus arrived, he found [Lazarus] had already been four days in the memorial tomb. . . . It was, in fact, a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said: 'Take the stone away.' Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to him: 'Lord, by now he must smell, for it is four days.' Jesus said to her: 'Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?' Therefore they took the stone away. Now Jesus raised his eyes heavenward and said: 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. True, I knew that you always hear me; but on account of the crowd standing around I spoke, in order that they might believe that you sent me forth.' And when he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice: 'Lazarus, come on out!' The man that had been dead came out with his feet and hands bound with wrappings, and his countenance was bound about with a cloth. Jesus said to them: 'Loose him and let him go.' "—John 11:17, 38-44.

Once again the Bible account presents no magic incantations. Just the simple command: "Lazarus, come on out!" The miracles of Jesus are an integral part of the often-praised "accurate history" of the Gospel records. Still, some individuals consider it unreasonable to believe in miracles. Why do they hold that viewpoint?

MIRACLES AND YOUR EXPERIENCE

"Seeing is believing," goes a popular saying. Some push that attitude to extremes. In certain cases they refuse to believe in what they have not personally experienced. Is it wise to reason that way?

It is important to bear in mind that our orderly, harmonious universe demands a Creator with incalculable intelligence and power. (Rom. 1:20) Would it prove too difficult for the Creator to maneuver the course of natural laws for a special purpose? Anyone who would deny this is going beyond his realm of knowledge into the area of blind speculation.

As for your experience, how far does it actually reach? During their limited lifespan, few persons have had opportunity to learn much by direct personal experience. For example, has your personal experience included direct observation of the approximately 800,000 varieties of insects that scientists have discovered? If you live in a Western land, have you visited the Orient, isles of the sea or other faraway places to observe firsthand their interesting people, peculiar customs and breathtaking scenery? Likely you have not; yet you have no difficulty believing that the insects, peoples and places exist. Why? Because in everyday matters you accept the testimony of others. Most of your knowledge has been obtained in this indirect way. Is it reasonable to reject the same type of testimony simply because it deals with miracles?

NON-BIBLICAL TESTIMONY

We have noted that the Bible presents the miracles of Jesus in a simple, straightforward way. Did you know that similar testimony exists in non-Biblical writings, even in some by opposers of Christianity? Consider:

Eusebius of Caesarea, in *The Ecclesiastical History,* provides an interesting statement by a certain Quadratus, who wrote an "apology" in behalf of Christianity to Hadrian, emperor of Rome from 117 to 138 C.E. Quadratus declares: "The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real. Both they that were healed, and they that were raised from the dead, were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilst he dwelt on this earth, but also after his departure and for a good while subsequent to it: insomuch that some of them have reached to our times."

As to the reaction of people to the miracles performed by Jesus, his twelve apostles and other Christians of the first century C.E., the publication *Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity* states:

> "*Seventy years* elapsed between the commencement of the ministry of Christ and the death of the last of the apostles. During all this interval, the miraculous gifts in question were exercised. Now, as every repetition in case of imposture multiplies the dangers of detection, and every extension of time makes it the more difficult to keep up the confederated plan, it is no inconsiderable evidence of the genuineness of the miracles of the Gospel, that they continued to be wrought and inspected during a period of so many years, and yet no instance of a failure or of deception was ever discovered by those fierce and untiring enemies with whom Christianity was always surrounded."

Regarding enemies of Christianity, T. H. Horne remarks in *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy*

Scriptures: "In fact, both Jews and heathens were constrained to admit them [the miracles]; though they ascribed them to various causes . . . While the facts were too recent to be disputed, Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles, Julian, and other adversaries, admitted their reality, but ascribed them to magic, and denied the divine commission of him who performed them. But to whatever cause they ascribed them, their admission of the reality of these miracles is an involuntary confession that there was something [supernatural] in them."

Miracles served a special purpose in connection with Jesus and his disciples. God foretold that the promised Messiah would be 'a prophet like Moses.' (Deut. 18:15-19) Since Moses performed miracles to prove that God was backing him up, the Jews expected that the Messiah would do likewise. (Ex. 4:1-9) As a result, when persons "saw the signs [Jesus] performed, they began to say: 'This is for a certainty the prophet that was to come into the world.'" (John 6:14) Too, the miraculous powers that the disciples of Jesus displayed made it evident that God had shifted his favor from the nation of natural Israel to the Christian congregation. (Matt. 21:43) Once this fact was well established, there was no longer a need for Christians to display miraculous powers, and such powers ceased according to divine purpose.—1 Cor. 13:8-10.

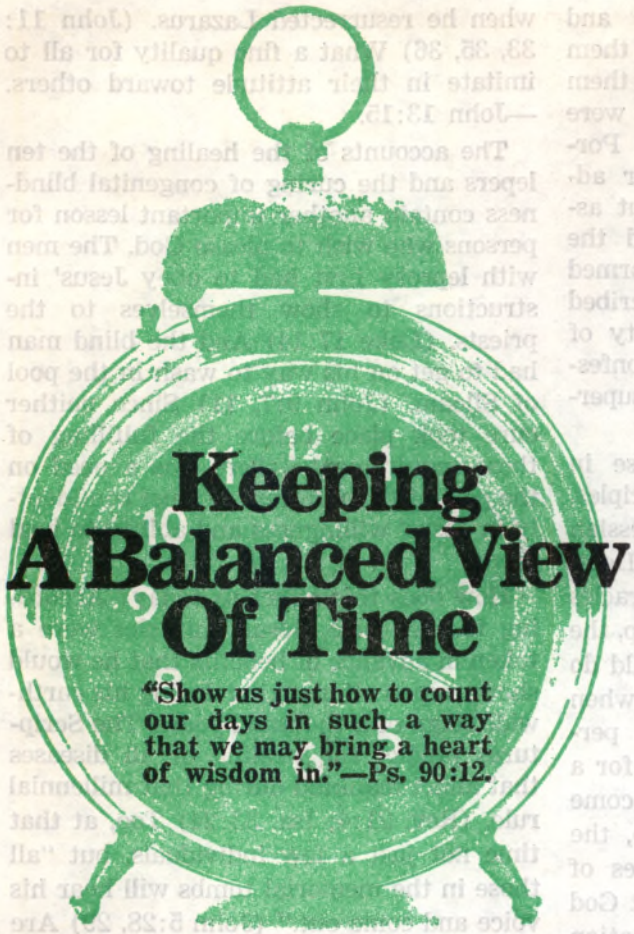
LEARNING FROM JESUS' MIRACLES

Can persons today benefit from the accounts of Jesus' miracles? Consider the occasion when he resurrected the son of the widow of Nain. What motivated Jesus to do this? The Gospel account states: "When the Lord caught sight of her, he was moved with pity for her." (Luke 7:13) Jesus expressed similar compassion when he resurrected Lazarus. (John 11:33, 35, 36) What a fine quality for all to imitate in their attitude toward others. —John 13:15.

The accounts of the healing of the ten lepers and the curing of congenital blindness contain another important lesson for persons who wish to please God. The men with leprosy first had to obey Jesus' instructions to show themselves to the priests. (Luke 17:14) And the blind man had to get on his way to wash in the pool of Siloam. (John 9:7, 11) Since neither cure took place before the fulfilling of these requirements, there was a need on the part of the sufferers to trust confidently in Jesus' willingness and ability to heal them.

How does this affect us today? According to the Bible, Jesus' miracles were a token in advance of benefits that he would shower upon all mankind during his earth-wide reign of a thousand years. The Scriptures predict the healing of all diseases that afflict mankind during that millennial rule. (Rev. 21:4; Isa. 33:24) Too, at that time not just a few individuals, but "all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) Are you confident that those promises will come true? Will you prove your faith by studying the Scriptures and obeying God's requirements for the present day?

Jesus' miracles are full of meaning for people today. They reveal his compassionate interest in human welfare and ability to rectify all physical woes that afflict mankind, including death. The Gospel records of Jesus' miracles also demonstrate the need to place full confidence in Jesus Christ as God's representative and "Chief Agent of life." (Acts 3:15) Since the miracles of Jesus are among the solidly attested events of human history, there is sound basis for such faith.



Keeping A Balanced View Of Time

"Show us just how to count our days in such a way that we may bring a heart of wisdom in."—Ps. 90:12.

LIFE is a precious possession. Without it nothing else matters. (Matt. 6:25-27; 16:26) But even in our modern world the life-span of humans remains short and all too soon comes to an end. Just as the writer of the ninetieth psalm long ago put it: "Seventy years is the span of our life, eighty if our strength holds; the hurrying years are labour and sorrow, so quickly they pass and are forgotten."—Ps. 90:10, *New English Bible.*

[2] In many lands, when a person has reached thirty years of age he is in what may be called the "prime of life." Yet, the shortness of the human life-span means that he is then already beginning to go 'downhill' physically, beginning to experience a slowing down of body abilities and functions. Yes, how quickly the years pass.

[3] No wonder, therefore, that we humans are generally very conscious of time. No wonder, too, that humans alone of all earth's living creatures are intelligently concerned about the future, actively planning for it, keenly interested in what it will bring. (Eccl. 3:11) Because of having just so much time ahead before their life runs out, people incline to become impatient to see the attainment of their desires.

[4] Imperfect man's situation is therefore very different from that of his Creator, who is eternal, timeless in His existence. The same writer of the ninetieth psalm wrote of Him: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or earth and world were born in travail, from age to age everlasting thou art God. . . . for in thy sight a thousand years are as yesterday."—Ps. 90:2-4, *NE.*

[5] But does this make Jehovah God indifferent toward time? No; nor does it prevent him from having a keen, active interest in the future and its developments. However, because of his being able to view things, not from the standpoint of imperfect, short-lived humans, but from that of eternity, Jehovah God is never pressured by anxiety to see something realized before time runs out on him. (Ps. 90:2; 2 Pet. 3:8) He is able to survey the whole stream of time and determine just when to act and to cause his unfailing purposes to work out precisely at the right time, the best time for all concerned, neither too soon nor too late.

1, 2. What do we all experience as to the passage of time?

3. Why do people get impatient about accomplishing their desires?

4, 5. (a) How is Jehovah God different as to his view of time? (b) Why is God's selection of a time to do a thing more desirable than that of humans?

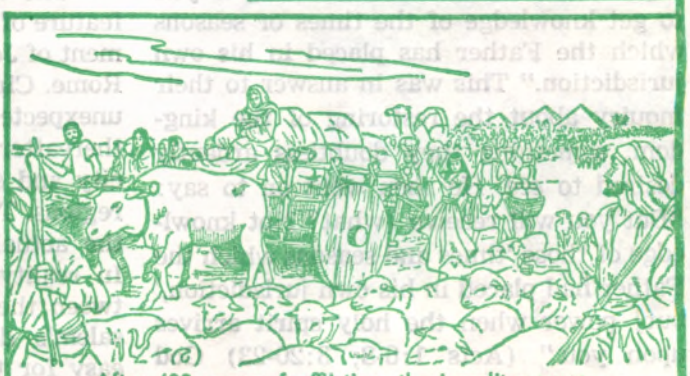
[6] With his knowledge of the future and his all-powerfulness, God is able to commit himself to a particular time schedule for the future, and at times he has made this known to humans. For example, he told Abram (Abraham): "You may know for sure that your seed will become an alien resident in a land not theirs, and they will have to serve them, and these will certainly afflict them for four hundred years." (Gen. 15:13; Acts 7:6, 7) True to the prophecy, at the end of the four hundred years Jehovah God freed Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, from slavery, and their exodus from Egypt began.

Messiah appeared at the exact time foretold

[7] Later, God foretold a seventy-year period of desolation for Judah, and when that period expired the Jews were released, right on schedule. (Jer. 25:8-11; Dan. 9:2) Similarly, the appearance of the Messiah was foretold to come 483 years (sixty-nine "weeks" of years) from the time of the issuing of the order to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, and precisely on time, at the completion of that period in the year 29 C.E., Jesus Christ was baptized and anointed as the promised Messiah.—Dan. 9:24-27.

Jehovah caused Israelite release from Babylon to restore land of Judah after 70 years

[8] So, when Jehovah God makes known a certain time for the outworking of some feature of his divine purpose, his faithful servants can rely implicitly on the exactness of the published schedule. But when he has not made such announcement, then it remains beyond their ability and power to determine the time of the realization of that purpose. That is the case with the timing of the outbreak of the



After 400 years of affliction, the Israelites were released from Egypt right on time

JEHOVAH'S PROMISES COME TO PASS EXACTLY AT HIS APPOINTED TIME

6. Even though God has eternal time, does this prevent him from committing himself to do a certain thing at a specified time?

7. (a) How was God's time schedule exact in connection with the Babylonish exile of the Jews? (b) With the Messiah's appearance?

8. Is it possible for us to know when a certain feature of God's purpose will take place if he has not announced a precise time?

"great tribulation" that God's Son foretold, a time of divine judgment that opens the way for the start of the thousand-year Kingdom rule, which will bring untold blessings for this earth and its inhabitants.—Matt. 24:21, 22; Rev. 7:14-17.

THINGS CONCEALED AND THINGS REVEALED

[9] Should we think it strange that God would retain certain knowledge for himself in this way? As far back as the time when the Israelites were approaching the Promised Land, the prophet Moses recorded these inspired words at Deuteronomy 29:29: "The things concealed belong to Jehovah our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons to time indefinite, that we may carry out all the words of this law." Yes, all that we really *need* to know to serve Jehovah God faithfully, and that we need in order to sustain us in our hope and conviction, this, God reveals to us. But where it accomplishes his purpose better, he can also conceal matters, with no hurt or lack to his servants.

[10] The Greater Moses, Christ Jesus, also said to his disciples, shortly before ascending to heaven: "It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction." This was in answer to their inquiry about the restoring of the kingdom, something they doubtless ardently desired to see. He then went on to say: "But you will receive [what? Not knowledge of those 'times and seasons which the Father had placed in his own jurisdiction,' but] power when the holy spirit arrives upon you." (Acts 1:6-8; 3:20-23) God would and did empower them to accomplish their assigned work and service in harmony with his revealed will for them. There were things, however, they did not know and, later, some disciples were inclined to jump to conclusions about certain promised events, in effect trying to hurry them up. (Compare 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5.) But all that they really needed to know to be of strong faith, conviction and courage, and to act wisely, God supplied to them.

[11] It was that way with regard to the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century of our Common Era. Christ Jesus revealed to his disciples the conditions that would precede and lead up to the destruction of that unfaithful city, the center of Jewish worship of that time. Seeing those conditions making up that "sign," his disciples would "know that the desolating of her [Jerusalem]" had drawn near. (Luke 21:10-20) He told them that "this generation will by no means pass away until all these things happen." (Mark 13:30) So it was a matter of immediate concern for them, something for their generation. But they were not told just when it would come.

[12] The time arrived when they saw the feature of the sign relating to the encirclement of Jerusalem by encamped armies of Rome. Circumstances (the temporary and unexpected withdrawal of Roman forces) thereafter allowed them to flee the doomed city and seek refuge in the mountainous regions. They still did not know just when the actual destruction would take place. In reality, about four years elapsed between the time of their flight and Jerusalem's desolation. It would have been easy for them during that time to relax their vigil or assume that they had mis-

9. What does God's word through Moses at Deuteronomy 29:29 show as to our understanding of His purposes?
10. (a) What do Jesus' words just before his ascension to heaven reveal as to our knowing certain times or dates? (b) When some of the early disciples made a mistake about timing of events, what did the apostle Paul write to them?
11. Did the disciples know the exact date for the destruction of Jerusalem, or what?
12. (a) Without having a date, how were the Christians in Jerusalem able to escape before the city was destroyed? (b) What test was there on those who withdrew as soon as Jerusalem was freed from siege?

read the sign and, as a result, fail to give strict heed to Jesus' warning: "Let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her." —Luke 21:20, 21.

[13] One thing is sure: Their generation did see the fulfillment of what God's Son had warned about. Those who had paid attention, who stayed vigilant, succeeded in escaping the disastrous calamity that ravaged Jerusalem. But history shows that hundreds of thousands of other persons did not. These were, in effect, asleep as to the significance of the conditions prevailing and the urgency of the day in which they lived. When Rome finally sent its forces back and sprang shut its military trap on Jerusalem in 70 C.E., it caught the city packed with thousands of visitors attending the Passover festival of that year. Of these and of the local residents, hundreds of thousands died within a period of just about five months. They had failed to show faith in the divine warning given through God's Son; they had not 'discerned the time of their being inspected.' —Luke 19:41-44.

[14] Today we live nineteen centuries removed from that momentous period. Yet our time is far more critical. Writing toward the close of the first century, and hence decades after Jerusalem's destruction, the apostle John described the same things Jesus had given as a "sign" to his disciples in his prophecy embracing Jerusalem's desolation. But Revelation, received by John from Jesus, was of things future, yet to take place. (Rev. 1:1) And what John recorded shows that the "sign" given by Jesus would take on a *global aspect,* with war, famine, high cost of food, and disease epidemics affecting large segments of people in many parts of the whole earth. (Rev. 6:3-8) He thereafter refers to "the great tribulation" through which a "great crowd" of God's servants would pass alive and in safety, persons out of all nations, tribes and tongues. (Rev. 7:9-15) That tribulation, too, was part of the things yet to come.

[15] This "revelation by Jesus Christ" therefore demonstrates that Jesus' prophecy, as recorded at Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, about the "great tribulation" was not limited to the first century. It shows that the tribulation Jerusalem experienced was but a miniature fulfillment of that prophecy and that its major fulfillment on a global scale will make Jerusalem's tribulation seem small indeed by comparison. Just as surely as the generation living and hearing Jesus' warning in the first century was the generation that experienced a fulfillment of his words, just as surely will this generation—the generation seeing the major fulfillment of his "sign" identifying the last days of this system of things—be the generation to experience the global tribulation due to come.—Matt. 24:34.

[16] What, then, has God revealed to us about this? He certainly has not left us without guidance. By prophecies such as those just considered he enables us to know where we are in the stream of time. The fulfillment of his prophetic word convinces us that God is not sleepy nor slow, and as the apostle Peter said regarding those acting wickedly, "the judgment from of old is not moving slowly, and the destruction of them is not slumbering." (2 Pet. 2:3) We have ample information and evidence to cause us to be confident that we live in the "time of the end" as regards the present unrighteous system of things. Yet, beyond this, there are things

13. (a) What time prophecy of Jesus was actually fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem? (b) Was that time warning, though not giving a precise date, profitable for Christians?

14, 15. What evidence do we have that Jesus' warning then to his disciples has a worldwide fulfillment in our time?

16. Since we do not have a day or even a year for the outbreak of the "great tribulation," is there reason to be indifferent?

that God has not revealed to us. One of those things is the time for the outbreak of the "great tribulation" prefigured by the tribulation that came upon Jerusalem, a tribulation that will be global in its fulfillment.

TIME FACTORS THAT GOD HAS NOT REVEALED

17 There are reasons why we cannot know this. For one thing, even though Bible chronology clearly indicates that we have reached the mark of six thousand years since the time of the creation of the first human, Adam, it does not tell us just how long after that event the sixth creative day came to its close and the seventh creative period or "day," God's great rest day, began. Genesis chapter two, verse three, says that Jehovah blessed and made sacred that "day," and it therefore seems reasonable that it will see within its bounds the removal of the wicked old order and the establishment of God's righteous new order by means of the thousand-year reign of God's Son. Thus there is reason for believing that that thousand-year period will form the closing part of that great rest day and will restore the earth and its inhabitants to a perfect state. That would enable God to say of that seventh day and its results—as he did of other creative days—that "it was good."—Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

18 But that great rest day did not begin immediately after Adam's creation. Other events took place after Adam's creation but before the close of the sixth creative day. One of these is of great importance to all of us. That is the creation of the first woman, Eve. Without that none of us would be alive today, for, as the apostle Paul states at 1 Corinthians 11:12, "just as the woman is out of the man, so also the man is through the woman," all of us needing a human mother to be born.

19 How much time elapsed between the creation of the man and that of the woman? The Bible does not reveal this. It could have been a relatively short time. Adam was created—not as a child or an adolescent—but as a full-grown, fully mature man, both physically and mentally. He did not have to crawl first to learn to walk, nor babble sounds until able to speak. He was created with these abilities and could communicate with his heavenly Creator and could be set to work to cultivate and care for his garden home. He could comprehend divine instructions and also the prohibition concerning the proscribed tree of the knowledge of good and bad. (Gen. 2:15-17) In those respects, then, he would have been in position to receive a wife at any time.

20 True, and yet Adam was in certain respects like a newborn infant upon being created. Why? Because, fully adult though he was, the day of his being created was still the first day he had lived. Everything he saw—every tree, flower, plant, every stream, lake, river, every creature of all the bird, animal and fish creation—he was seeing for the very first time. This was true of everything he did. When he walked he took his very first step; and so too with the experience of running, climbing, touching, smelling, tasting, eating—all were brand-new experiences for him. What enormous curiosity he must have felt as he examined the fascinating handiwork of Jehovah God and became acquainted with his garden home! How long would he be allowed time to satisfy that curiosity before taking on added responsibility as a family head?

21 That Edenic home does not seem to

17. We know that we are at the close of six thousand years of human history, but what relationship does *this have to* God's rest day?

18, 19. (a) What took place, after Adam's creation, before God's rest day began? (b) How was Adam, at his creation, quite different from a newborn baby?

20. Yet, in what respects could Adam at his creation be compared to a newborn infant?

21, 22. What factors make it possible that Adam was quite some time in Eden before Eve was created?

have been some tiny plot of ground. It contained all the varieties of trees within its boundaries, according to Genesis the second chapter. And there was a "river issuing out of Eden to water the garden," one large enough to separate and form the headwaters of four major rivers, some of which still flow today. (Gen. 2:8-10) It would take time for Adam to go exploring all of this in order to become familiar with the area he was assigned to care for and cultivate.

22 "But," one might ask, "would it not be pleasant if he were to share all these new experiences right away with a human companion, a wife, and thus learn together with her?" That might be, and yet might it not be more appropriate if he first gained considerable knowledge and experience beforehand? Then, when joined by his mate, he would be in position to answer her questions and explain things to her, thereby enhancing her respect for him as her informed head. (Eph. 5:22, 23) God's direct warning to Adam regarding the consequences of disobediently eating from the prohibited tree placed Adam in the position of God's prophet to the companion He would later create for the man. —Gen. 2:16, 17.

23 The only information the Bible actually supplies us is that, before creating Eve, God began bringing to the man all the creatures He had formed and "the man was calling the names of all the domestic animals and of the flying creatures of the heavens and of every wild beast of the field, but for man there was found no helper as a complement of him." (Gen. 2:18-20) It takes but a few words to describe this; but how long did it take in actuality?

24 The brevity of the Genesis account surely does not require our thinking that God simply gathered all the animals and birds into a big group and then had them file past Adam while he quickly called off names for them, one by one. True, he may have had to deal only with basic family kinds rather than all the varieties of creatures that have developed out of those family kinds. But even so, we cannot rule out the possibility that God's "bringing" these creatures to Adam may have involved their moving in sufficiently close to allow Adam to study them for a time, observing their distinctive habits and makeup, and then select a name that would be especially fitting for each. This could mean the passing of a considerable amount of time. And we may note that, when Adam did finally see his newly created wife, his first words were: "This is *at last* bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." (Gen. 2:23) This too could indicate that he had waited for some time to receive his delightful human counterpart.

25 What, then, does this mean? Simply this: That these factors, and the possibilities for which they allow, prevent us from saying with any positiveness how much time elapsed between Adam's creation and that of the first woman. We do not know whether it was a brief time such as a month or a few months, a year or even more. But whatever time elapsed would have to be added to the time that has passed since Adam's creation in order for us to know how far along we are within God's seventh "day," his grand day of rest. So our having advanced six thousand years from the start of human existence is one thing. Advancing six thousand years into God's seventh creative "day" is quite another. And we do not know just how far along in the stream of time we are in this regard.

26 This does not mean, however, that

23, 24. What, respecting time, does Adam's naming all the animals indicate?

25. What conclusion can we reach as to the time that elapsed between the beginning of man's history and the creation of Eve, along with God's 'resting'?

26, 27. In view of what we have discussed, is chronology of no interest to us?

chronology is of no concern to us. It is natural that we should be interested in it, since God has seen fit to make it an integral part of his inspired Word. Of the ancient prophets, the apostle Peter says that "they kept on investigating what particular season or what sort of season the spirit in them was indicating . . . when it was bearing witness beforehand about the sufferings for Christ and about the glories to follow these."—1 Pet. 1:10, 11.

[27] We today are rightly concerned to know what "season" we are *now* in, and God provides us with that needed information. God's prophets of old had absolute faith in the certainty of the fulfillment of all that God had said. Though not knowing certain details or time factors, we can and should have that same solid faith in the unchangeableness of God's purpose. God's Son has provided us with powerful reason to stay alert to the outworking of that purpose, as the following article shows.

A SOLID BASIS FOR CONFIDENCE

THOSE who have become dedicated, baptized servants of God have committed their souls to him. Everything that they have, everything that they are or will be, is in the hands of God—their present, their future, their entire lives and hope of life in God's new system of things to come. They have, in effect, "burned their bridges behind them," giving up any "lease" or hope they might have had in this world's system now or what it may bring about in the days ahead.

[2] About this, an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ said, in spite of the fact that he was then in prison, and that ridicule and opposition had made some of his so-called Christian "brothers" turn away from him: "I am also suffering these things, but I am not ashamed. For I know the one whom I have believed, and I am confident he is able to guard what I have laid up in trust with him until that day." —2 Tim. 1:12.

[3] "That day" is the day that Christians have universally looked for, when God will clean up the earth and bring to pass the doing of his will "as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matt. 6:10) We have *God's word* on this. This time will certainly be one of relief, or rest, to humankind. What confidence can we have that we will enjoy it? The very strongest, for the Bible tells us that "God rested on the seventh day from all his works," and he promises to obedient ones that they may enter into his rest. (Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:1, 4, 9) Do we really *believe* that promise?

[4] The Israelites, on being delivered from slavery in Egypt, had the promise of entering into God's rest, and of having, during their lifetime in the Promised Land, a

1. What is the situation of Jehovah's people as to connections with this world?
2. How did Paul feel, even though ridiculed by the world and also by some professed "brothers"?
3. What confidence can Christians have as to the coming of Jehovah's "day" and their entering into God's "rest"?
4. What opportunity was set before the Israelites on coming out of Egypt, but how did they view God's word about it?

beautiful rest from former slavery and oppression. They would enjoy life in a part of the earth that God had preserved as a paradise-like garden. (Deut. 11:11, 12; Gen. 13:10) But the majority demonstrated a serious lack of faith in God's word to them. They expressed this unbelief to the point of wanting to return to Egypt. They viewed that word or promise of God as something no longer alive, a dead promise, as something weak, unable to be carried through to its completion.

THE SURENESS OF GOD'S WORD

5 It was in this connection that the apostle Paul wrote the familiar words recorded at Hebrews 4:12: "The word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart."

6 That word or promise to Israel was not dead or weak. In fact, the few who exercised faith *did* enter into that earthly "rest" in the Promised Land. (Num. 14:5-9, 30; Josh. 14:6-10) Similarly today, we have God's precious promise concerning life in a new system of righteousness. We have heard his "word" that the generation living in this "time of the end" will be the generation that will experience the "great tribulation." (Matt. 24:34) We have heard his word of promise that we can enter into his "rest" now, by faith, and that a great crowd of his servants will survive that tribulation to enter into the new order that follows. (Rev. 7:9-14) That "word" is alive and has power to accomplish everything that Jehovah has purposed; it will not fail. (Isa. 55:10, 11) Why not? God, who gave that word, is alive and is constantly working out the details that bring his word to a fulfillment. He is not asleep or forgetful of any detail of that "word," as men may be. (Num. 23:19) How can this be said with full confidence?

7 Well, do we not have positive evidence? We can point to hundreds of proofs. The Scriptures as well as history are full of instances in which God's word was carried out.* And have not belief in and application of this word in our lives, this resting of our hope in God's provisions and our faith in his promise, had good effect in our lives, making us happy? What prospect would be ahead of us if we should leave this word and go along with the world? —Matt. 16:25, 26.

8 As to proof of the reliability of God's word, this very thing we are discussing —that some professing Christians could lose faith—was foretold by Jesus, Paul and Peter. We see this apostasy clearly in the religious systems of Christendom. (Matt. 13:38, 39; Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thess. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:1-3) Peter also pointed out to the Christians of his day that he and his fellow workers were not following artfully contrived stories, but following eyewitness accounts, and that even then they, the first-century Christians, had more than the mere prophecies. They had "the prophetic word made more sure" before their own eyes by witnessing actual fulfillments.—2 Pet. 1:16-19.

9 How much more evidence we have today, nineteen centuries later! Peter concluded: "You are doing well in paying attention to it [the prophetic word] as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and a daystar rises, in your hearts." (2 Pet. 1:19) More than ever before the

* See the book *"All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial,"* pages 343-346, published by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Brooklyn, N.Y. (1963) Here scores of historical fulfillments of God's prophecies are listed.

5, 6. (a) What proves that God's word to Israel was not weak? (b) Why can we have full confidence in God's word today, about our entering into his "rest"?

7, 8. (a) Name some things that give us added assurance as to the sureness of God's word. (b) What did Peter say as to its sureness in his day?

9. Why is it just as important for us as it was for the apostles to concentrate on the prophetic word of God?

word of God deserves our closer, *heart-concentrated* attention. For do we not observe, just as God declared in his prophetic word, the difficulties now being experienced by the world? And do we not see the expansion of the good news throughout the earth, with millions gathering together to make up that "great crowd" of survivors of the "great tribulation"?

BE CAREFUL TO KEEP A BALANCED VIEW

[10] Jehovah's word or message is *true* when it speaks about our entering into God's rest now and remaining in it through the "great tribulation," after which Christ's thousand-year reign will transform the earth into a paradise garden. God's word is indeed 'sharp like a two-edged sword.' It will show what we really are, revealing what our thoughts and the intentions of our heart are. Are we serving Jehovah God because we love him, trust him and have full confidence in what he says? Or are we 'becoming weary in well-doing,' looking for a certain date primarily as bringing a relief to *ourselves,* with little concern for the lives of other people? (Gal. 6:9) Are we appreciative of all the good things we have had from Jehovah and from association with his people? Have not the things we have learned helped us in our family lives? Do we not love the many genuine friends we have now gained as a result of knowing the truth?—Mark 10:29, 30.

[11] It may be that some who have been serving God have planned their lives according to a mistaken view of just what was to happen on a certain date or in a certain year. They may have, for this reason, put off or neglected things that they otherwise would have cared for. But they have missed the point of the Bible's warnings concerning the end of this system of things, thinking that Bible chronology reveals the specific date.

[12] What do Jesus' own words show concerning the proper attitude as to the end —to look for a date, or what? He said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth. Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21: 34-36.

[13] Did Jesus mean that we should adjust our financial and secular affairs so that our resources would just carry us to a certain date that we might think marks the end? If our house is suffering serious deterioration, should we let it go, on the assumption that we would need it only a few months longer? Or, if someone in the family possibly needs special medical care, should we say, 'Well, we'll put it off because the time is so near for this system of things to go'? This is not the kind of thinking that Jesus advised.

[14] Then what did Jesus and the apostles mean when they spoke of being alert as to the signs of the end, or as to "awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah"? They meant for us to be absolutely confident that the day will not come one moment later than Jehovah purposes. Peter said that this should prompt us to "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion," being watchful that we are living by Bible principles and that we are busy proclaiming the

10. (a) What does God's word reveal about us? (b) What questions can we ask ourselves in this connection?
11. What mistake may some persons have made as to their Christian course?

12, 13. What did Jesus *not* mean by his words at Luke 21:34-36?
14. (a) When Jesus and the apostles spoke concerning the time of the end, what attitude were they recommending for us? (b) Does the fact that the end is near mean that Christians must make big changes in their way of life, or what?

Kingdom message and convincing people of the urgency of turning to God. (2 Pet. 3:11, 12) All of us can make improvements in our worship of God, cementing a closer relationship with him. Perhaps we have up to this time done the best we can, and have made improvements as we went along. Does the fact that the end is very near, then, mean to us that we should make big changes in our way of living and serving God? Not necessarily so. However, there may be major improvements that we Scripturally need to make. Also, if there are areas in our life in which we can 'buy out' time from vain pursuits in this system we should do it. In this way, many have continued to experience the joy of full-time "pioneer" service over the years. All of us can check to see what we can do.—Eph. 5:15, 16.

15 But it is not advisable for us to set our sights on a certain date, neglecting everyday things we would ordinarily care for as Christians, such as things that we and our families really need. We may be forgetting that, when the "day" comes, it will not change the principle that Christians must at all times take care of all their responsibilities. If anyone has been disappointed through not following this line of thought, he should now concentrate on adjusting his viewpoint, seeing that it was not the word of God that failed or deceived him and brought disappointment, but that his own understanding was based on wrong premises.

16 However, say that you are one who counted heavily on a date, and, commendably, set your attention more strictly on *the urgency* of the times and the need of the people to hear. And say you now, temporarily, feel somewhat disappointed; are you really the loser? Are you really hurt? We believe you can say that you have gained and profited by taking this conscientious course. Also, you have been enabled to get a really mature, more reasonable viewpoint.—Eph. 5:1-17.

17 The Scriptures repeatedly tell us that the end will come as a complete surprise upon the world. The apostle spoke of this, saying: "You yourselves know quite well that Jehovah's day [for judgment] is coming exactly as a *thief in the night.*" (1 Thess. 5:2) So that true Christians would not be 'overtaken as thieves,' Jesus said even to his disciples back there, and to us today: "Keep on the watch, therefore, because *you do not know* on what day your Lord is coming." Thereafter he said: "Prove yourselves ready, because *at an hour that you do not think to be it,* the Son of man is coming." (Matt. 24:42-44) These clear statements of Jesus indicate that God's servants will never be given the date of Christ's "coming" for judgment until it actually takes place. In fact, it will come at what appears to them an 'unlikely' time.—Luke 12:39, 40.

DO NOT BE DECEIVED BY THE NATIONS' 'SURVIVAL' THROUGH CRISES

18 Note, though, what Jesus actually warned about. His words do not indicate that, as the "great tribulation" draws close, the world situation will get to be such that everybody, everywhere, will be in a state of near starvation. Otherwise, how could there be any danger of Jesus' disciples becoming "weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking" at that time? Remember, too, that Jesus used as examples the conditions in Noah's day before the flood and in Lot's day before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He showed that at that time there was an

15. If a person has regulated his life with the view that the end would come on a certain date, what should he now do?
16. If you have counted heavily on a certain date in all sincerity, what comfort can you find in the situation?
17. How do we know that we will not be given, in advance, the precise date of Christ's "coming" for judgment?
18. Why should we not think that all the nations, everywhere, will get to an almost starved state before the "great tribulation" breaks?

appearance of normalcy in the way people were living. They were 'eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, buying, selling, planting and building,' right up to the day when destruction suddenly broke upon them.—Luke 17:26-30.

19 So we will not expect to see this world's systems grind almost to a halt or reach a state of virtual collapse as a necessary prelude to the "great tribulation." We will not be deceived if these systems seem to make an apparent 'comeback' from severe crises, as if that apparent recuperation would have a postponing effect on the arrival of God's day of judgment. We will not start 'rebuilding' with the world, as though this system will continue indefinitely. The apostle Paul's inspired words at 1 Thessalonians 5:3 show that men of this world will actually be proclaiming, "Peace and security!" just before 'sudden destruction comes instantly upon them like the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman,' with every possibility of escape being cut off from them.

20 There is nothing wrong with eating and drinking, nor with marrying or raising a family, buying, selling, planting or building. But what is wrong is doing as the people did in the days of Noah and Lot—letting these things so involve or engross us that we lose sight of God's purposes and his righteous standards and put fleshly things in first place in our lives. To do that is to go to sleep spiritually. Contrary to that course, the apostle Paul says: "But you, brothers, you are not in darkness, so that that day should overtake you as it would thieves, for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We belong neither to night nor to darkness. So, then, let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses." —1 Thess. 5:4-6.

21 Showing what it means to be awake and to prove that we are "sons of day" rather than of darkness, Paul says at Romans 13:11-14: "You people know the season, that it is already the hour for you to awake from sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than at the time when we became believers. The night is well along; the day has drawn near. Let us therefore put off the works belonging to darkness and let us put on the weapons of the light. As in the daytime let us walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts, not in illicit intercourse and loose conduct, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not be planning ahead for the desires of the flesh."

22 Clearly, then, the fact that we do not know just when the "great tribulation" will break nor when the thousand-year reign of God's Son will begin does not lessen the need for alertness today. It greatly *increases* and *heightens* the need for being awake, watchful, ready. If we knew the exact time we might be tempted to relax and to feel that as that time drew nearer we could begin to get ourselves ready. But our not knowing requires us to be ready *all the time.* The whole tenor of God's Word the Bible, and particularly the counsel of his Son, is to that effect.

23 The apostle's counsel therefore applies forcefully to us, when he says: "Therefore keep comforting one another and building one another up, just as you are in fact doing." (1 Thess. 5:11) We will use every opportunity to help, not only our brothers, but also those outside the congregation, to take the course that will enable them to "succeed in escaping all

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19. What will we have in mind, although the nations may be able to "patch" things up and keep things running?

20, 21. (a) What do we want to avoid in eating and drinking, building, and so forth, as was taking place before the Flood? (b) How do the words of the apostle Paul at 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6 warn us as to escaping the impending peril of that "day"? (c) How does Paul show, at Romans 13:11-14, what it means to be awake?

22. Should the fact that we do not know when the "day" will come cause us to relax our alertness?

23. What course does Paul tell us to pursue while we await that "day"?

these things that are destined to occur." (Luke 21:36) As parents, we will endeavor to set a fine example of spiritual appreciation and alertness for our children so that they too may stay awake and on the watch with us.

MOVING AHEAD WITH INCREASED CONFIDENCE

[24] The chronology in the Bible is not there without good purpose. That chronology indicates that we are at the close of six thousand years of human history. While not revealing when God's day of adverse judgment upon this wicked system of things will begin, this chronological fact does add one more reason to the many, many other reasons we already have for being confident that the remaining time is very short. It gives added support to these reasons as a basis for strong confidence in God's word, that it is alive and powerful and will lead us on into a righteous new order.

[25] So, then, for the love of God, for the love of his Son, for the love of truth and righteousness, yes, for the love of life itself—let us keep awake, show ourselves spiritually alive and active, today and *every* day, and we will succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur. Jehovah God, the God of truth, has given us his solemn "word," and "none that rests his faith on him will be disappointed." (Rom. 10:11) May He and his Son richly bless you, and may you continue serving faithfully, now and to all future time.

24. As to the nearness of the end, of what value to us is chronology?

25. With a solid basis for confidence, therefore, we will have what attitude?

'Who Is the Faithful and Discreet Slave?'

◆ Just three days before his death, Jesus Christ gave his apostles a prophecy of things to take place after his death and resurrection, down to the conclusion of this world's wicked system of things. Jesus' words revealed that during all this long period of time there would be a "faithful and discreet slave" who would be giving God's household "their food at the proper time."—Matt. 24:45.

How can we identify this "slave"? We need to look back to God's words to his ancient nation Israel, to whom God said: "You are my witnesses, . . . even *my servant* whom I have chosen." (Isa. 43:10) So Israel as a *nation* was here designated as God's "servant" or 'slave.'

However, the apostle Paul pointed out that, by then, natural Israel no longer constituted God's "servant." Why? Because the nation had rejected Christ, only a remnant of Jews exercising faith in him. Paul wrote: "For he is not a Jew who is one on the outside, nor is circumcision that which is on the outside upon the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one on the inside, and his circumcision is that of the heart by spirit, and not by a written code."—Rom. 2:28, 29.

Thus the 'servant' or "slave" that Jesus foretold must be the members of *spiritual* Israel on earth—not an individual person, but a *body*. They would therefore be the spirit-begotten joint heirs with Jesus Christ, who are to share as kings with Christ in his heavenly kingdom during a thousand-year reign over the earth. (Rev. 5:9, 10; 20:4-6) Their duty while on earth has been to disseminate spiritual food among the members of the household of God, especially seeing that they are equipped spiritually to face the issues confronting them from time to time.

COLOSSIANS counseled on truth and conduct

AMONG the inspired letters that the apostle Paul wrote while imprisoned in Rome is the one to the Christians in Colossae. Although it could well be that Paul never visited Colossae, he took a keen interest in the spiritual welfare of the congregation there.

Most likely it was Epaphras, a co-worker of Paul, who established or helped to establish this congregation. And apparently it was the report brought by Epaphras that motivated Paul to write to the Colossians. From his letter it appears that the congregation was doing very well. But, at the same time, it was being exposed to certain false teachings, against which Paul wanted to fortify his Christian brothers.

The letter to the Colossians is very much like Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In fact, no other two letters of Paul show such a similarity. Not only are some 78 verses of the 155 of Ephesians very much like or even identical with what is found in Colossians, but the arrangement of the material is also similar. Typical is Paul's counsel to sing praises; it is almost identical in these letters, and such counsel is not found in any other letter of his. (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) Likewise, only at Ephesians 4:25 and at Colossians 3:9 does Paul speak out so strongly against lying within the congregation.

Lovingly, Paul begins his letter to the Colossians, as he does so many letters, by commending them. He speaks of their faith, hope and love, which calls to mind 1 Corinthians 13:13 where these three qualities are mentioned together. Paul and Timothy 'have not ceased praying for them that they might be filled with accurate knowledge, wisdom and spiritual comprehension so as to please Jehovah fully.' Paul also rejoices because of their steadfastness and the firmness of their faith. —Col. 1:3-12, 23.

CHRIST'S ROLE OF PRIMACY

To have the role of primacy means to come first, and Paul goes on to show that that is certainly true as far as Christ is concerned. As to existence, he is the firstborn of all creation. As to his person, he is the very image of the invisible God. He was God's only direct creation; for all other things, whether visible or invisible, came into existence through him.—Col. 1:15-18.

Moreover, it is none other than Christ who has delivered Christians from Satan's dark world to Christ's spiritual kingdom. On what basis? On the basis of Christ's ransom sacrifice, which gives Christians forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:13, 14) Two more times Paul stresses Christ's important role in this. God saw good to use Christ "to reconcile again to himself all other things by making peace through the blood he shed on the torture stake." And again, 'All you who were at one time alienated and God's enemies because your minds were on works that were wicked, God has again reconciled by means of Christ's fleshly body through his death.' —Col. 1:19-22.

Christ's primacy is also seen in that he is the head of the congregation of God, even as he was

the firstborn from the dead; yes, Christ is first in all things. All fullness is said to dwell in him in that Christ supplies all that is needed; there is no need to go to anyone else for direction and help. Because of who he is and what he has done, all things, whether in heaven or on earth, will be reconciled to God. Due to his sacrifice the sacred secret that was long hidden has now been made known, which secret includes the hope of Gentiles sharing heavenly glory with Christ. Moreover, in Christ are contained all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.—Col. 1:24–2:5.

RELIGIOUS ERRORS REFUTED

Similar as many verses of Colossians are to those found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, there are also striking differences, indicating that in each case Paul had a certain set of conditions or facts in mind. The one letter does not simply copy the other. In Ephesians Paul quotes directly from the Hebrew Scriptures but he does not do so in Colossians, even as he does not in his letter to the Philippians. On the other hand, in his letter to the Colossians Paul refutes certain false teachings, which he did not find it necessary to do in the letters he wrote from prison to the other two congregations.

In ancient Colossae there appear to have been worldly-wise Greek philosophers, followers of Judaism, and religious fanatics. Paul warns against all three of these groups. First, 'since concealed in Christ are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' why pay attention to these Greek worldly-wise philosophers? He counsels, 'Look out, be on guard. Do not let your minds be captured by empty and delusive philosophies, by traditions of men that are based on the elementary things of the world and not upon Christ.'—Col. 2:3, 8.

Next, in warning against the Judaizers, Paul explains that, on the basis of Christ's sacrifice, God has moved the handwritten law of Moses out of the way. "Therefore," he says, "let no man judge you." In what? "In eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath; for those things [were but] a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ." —Col. 2:13-17.

Finally, combating the spiritistic fanaticism of the ancient Phrygians, Paul warns against those who take delight in an insincere humility and the worship of angels—either professing to worship as do angels or actually worshiping the angels themselves. This hypocritical humility makes strict rules regarding material things: "Do not handle, nor taste, nor touch." All such may involve a severe treatment of the body, but it is "of no value in combating the satisfying of the flesh." (Col. 2:18-23) How true this is can be seen from the records of the prevalence of homosexuality in religious institutions. Their members practiced asceticism but came far short as to sexual morality, this calling to mind Jesus' words about straining out a gnat but gulping down a camel!—Matt. 23:24.

COUNSEL AS TO CONDUCT

So Paul dealt first with these doctrinal matters; his doing so equipped the Colossian Christians back there, even as it equips us today, to deal with or resist errors. Then he counsels them and us about our hearts and our conduct. To have right conduct we must set our affections on spiritual things, on the things of Christ, and deaden our fallen inclinations toward fornication, moral uncleanness, unbridled sexual appetite and hurtful desires, which are really a form of idolatry, as they come between a Christian and his God. Paul's

repeated mention of sexual immorality seems to indicate that Colossae back there was as sexually depraved as is this modern world.—Col. 3:1-5.

Christian conduct also requires us to put away all anger, abusive speech, obscene talk. And, of course, as Christians we cannot be lying to one another. By working to improve our conduct we will be stripping off our old personality and clothing ourselves with the new personality, which is made new, through accurate knowledge of God's will and purpose, according to the image of God and Christ. —Col. 3:6-11.

Christian conduct has also its positive side. It means clothing ourselves with tender affection, compassion, humility, patience and mildness, being ready to forgive one another freely, even as God has freely forgiven us. We are to clothe ourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union, and to let peace control our hearts, being ever thankful to God.—Col. 3:12-17.

FAMILY AND OTHER OBLIGATIONS

Next Paul spells out the obligations of family members. Wives are to be in subjection to their husbands. In turn, husbands are to keep on loving their wives and not to be "bitterly angry with them." Children are to obey their parents "in everything." At the same time fathers are counseled: "Do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted."—Col. 3:18-21.

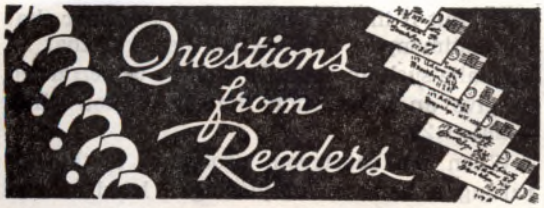
As for slaves or employees, they are to be obedient to their masters or employers as if trying to please Jehovah. And "whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men." Why? Because in due time Jehovah God will reward such sincere service. On the other hand, masters or employers are to keep treating their slaves or employees justly, for they also are accountable to a Master, Christ, in the heavens.—Col. 3:22–4:1.

Then, as Paul proceeds to draw his letter to a close, he admonishes us to persevere in prayer, "remaining awake in it with thanksgiving." And he asks that the Colossians remember him in their prayers, that God may give him an opportunity to make known the sacred secret and do so as he ought to.—Col. 4:2-4.

As in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul counsels: "Go on walking in wisdom toward those on the outside, buying out the opportune time for yourselves." We are to let our speech be with graciousness, "seasoned with salt," that is, made tasty, "so as to know how [we] ought to give an answer to each one."—Col. 4:5, 6.

After all this admonition and instruction Paul turns to purely personal matters, mentioning by name a number of Christians. Tychicus and Onesimus will bring the congregation this letter and tell them how Paul is doing. Several of those with Paul also send greetings. In particular does Epaphras pray for them that they "may finally stand complete and with firm conviction in all the will of God." Surely we should all want to pray similarly for one another.—Col. 4:7-17.

What fine counsel and instruction is contained in Paul's letter to the Colossians! Though in many respects the letters of Colossians and Ephesians may be quite similar, there is no question about each being distinctive and directed to a certain congregation with its own circumstances or problems. While some Bible scholars like to speculate as to which of these letters Paul wrote first, that is of little importance. What is important is that Jehovah God inspired Paul to write both of them. Let us show our appreciation by becoming familiar with them and then acting in harmony with the fine counsel they contain.



● How are we to understand Hosea's apparent withholding of sex relations from his restored wife Gomer?—Hos. 3:3.

The Watchtower of March 15, 1976, page 188, paragraph 25, makes comment on this verse, indicating that Hosea was disciplining his restored wife "with sexual restrictions, including, apparently, his own holding back from husbandly attentions." The Scriptural sense in the Hebrew supports this conclusion of Hosea's withholding sex relations.

The *New World Translation* renders Hosea 3:3 according to the literal Hebrew. "Then I said to her: 'For many days [an unspecified period] you will dwell as mine. . . . You must not come to belong to another man; and *I also will be for you.*'" What does this latter phrase seem to mean, *"I also will be for you"?* Just as the restored wife, Gomer, was forbidden to have adulterous relations with any other man, so likewise Hosea would be that way toward her too, not having sex relations for a time. Note that other Bible translations make it even more definite that Hosea was to withhold sex relations from her for a time: "Nor will I be thine" (*Jewish Publication Society,* 1917), "and I will do the same for you" (*Jerusalem Bible*), "nor will I myself come near you" (*An American Translation*), and "have no intercourse with a man, nor I with you" (*New English Bible*).

What, then, was the reason for this restriction? Mercifully Hosea had taken back his "wife of fornication," repurchased her for the price of a slave and forgiven her. Yet Hosea had a natural interest in having his wife submit to a period of marital purification. This would be a cleansing time when Gomer was to remain in a state of detention, in conjugal inaction, debarred from intercourse even with her legal husband Hosea.

How does this reconcile with 1 Corinthians 7:2-5, where it says that husband and wife are not to deprive each other of their sexual due except by mutual consent? What happened here in Hosea's case is not to be taken as a pattern for Christian marriage mates to be withholding sex relations from each other as a form of personal punitive action. Rather, the Hosea-Gomer case demonstrates a form of mercy on the part of the forgiving mate where marital unfaithfulness has occurred. The innocent mate accepts the return of the truly repentant mate as a cleansed one.

In a similar way, as enacted by Hosea and his wife, Jehovah took back unfaithful Israel in the restoration time that followed 537 B.C.E. and then purified her. Israel was forbidden to establish any adulterous relationship again with Gentile princes or idolatrous priests or other paraphernalia of idolatrous worship. Jehovah himself withheld the appointing of a non-Davidic king to sit upon any throne until Messiah, the rightful king, would come. (Ezek. 21:27) Hence, during a purification period the disciplined, repentant remnant of natural Israel began patiently to look forward to their Messianic Liberator from Gentile control.

Likewise, from and after 1919 the trembling, quivering remnant of the true spiritual Israel were brought into a renewed covenant or marriage relationship with Jehovah. Accordingly, they were debarred from any spiritual adultery with apostates, rulers or priests, as Christendom still persists adulterously in doing. Only after a period of purification did Jehovah restore close intimacy with the remnant of spiritual Israel. Finally, the remnant came to realize that Jehovah was indeed their loving husbandly protector and that they were in a secure relationship with him under the new covenant, of which Jesus Christ is the Mediator.—1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

● If a Christian must testify in court, is it proper for him to place his hand on the Bible and swear to tell the whole truth?

There is no Scriptural objection to doing so, though each person must decide whether to comply or to ask to be excused from this.

The practice of taking an oath while touching some object that is viewed as sacred has been widespread. For example, the ancient Greeks lifted up the hand to heaven or touched an altar while taking an oath. Among the Romans a juror held a stone in his hand and swore that if he were lying Jupiter should cast him away as he then cast away the stone.

Such acts manifested mankind's inner inclination to recognize that there is a divine power to whom humans are accountable and who observes what is said and done. Certainly the

worshipers of the true God, Jehovah, recognized this. And the Bible shows that they took oaths, in the presence of God, as it were, or with him as a witness. (2 Sam. 3:35; 1 Ki. 2:23, 24; Ruth 3:13; Jer. 38:16) True worshipers also permitted others to put them under oath.—Gen. 21:22-24; Matt. 26:63.

Sometimes when an oath was taken before Jehovah, the one swearing to it also made an accompanying gesture. The angel speaking to the prophet Daniel "proceeded to raise his right hand and his left hand to the heavens and to swear by the One who is alive for time indefinite." (Dan. 12:7; Gen. 14:22) Even God spoke of himself symbolically as raising his hand in an oath. (Isa. 62:8; Deut. 32:40) Another gesture that evidently was used in confirming an oath was that of placing the hand under the other person's hip or thigh.—Gen. 24:2, 3, 9; 47:29-31.

Of course, a true Christian does not have to take an oath so as to back up every statement that he makes in daily life. His Yes should mean Yes, and his No, No. (Matt. 5:33-37; Jas. 5:12) But if in court he is asked to swear that his testimony is truthful, he may feel that he can take such an oath. Or he may be permitted to give an affirmation that he is not lying. —Gal. 1:20.

When the courtroom procedure is that of raising a hand or of placing a hand on the Bible when swearing, a Christian may choose to comply, having in mind the Bible examples of accompanying an oath with a gesture. But more important than whether a person makes a certain gesture with his oath is the fact that he is swearing before God to tell the truth. Such an oath is serious. So if a Christian feels that he can and should answer a question put to him in such circumstances, then he is under oath to tell the truth.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

August 15: Keeping a Balanced View of Time. Page 432. Songs to Be Used: 43, 95.

August 22: A Solid Basis for Confidence. Page 438. Songs to Be Used: 20, 119.