The WATCHTOWER

Marriage
—An Arrangement Honored In God's Word

MARCH 15, 1977

®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

March 15, 1977
Vol. 98, Number 6

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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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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How Important Is It to OBEY?

THE baseball player knew only too well what was expected of him. He could use his bat as he pleased unless signaled to do otherwise by his manager. But this seemed to him to be a most important game and he was certain that he could improve upon the judgment of the manager. So, although he was instructed to "bunt," he did the very opposite; he gave the ball a wallop that resulted in a home run, thereby winning the game. The baseball fans *no* doubt acclaimed him a hero, but he was fined $100 for disobeying his manager. He learned that obedience was more important than winning a game.

That was years ago and other players since then have had to pay fines for various reasons. But it might be asked, Was it just, fair and reasonable to penalize a player for winning a game? No, he was not penalized for winning the game but for going contrary to orders. What would happen to the sport of baseball if each player could do as he pleased? Where would be the teamwork? Besides, while in this isolated case the batter's judgment may have been better, how often is this the case? Moreover, who can say whether the game might not also have been won had the *batter* obeyed? Yes, some people are hired and paid to call the signals, for that is what they are supposed to know best; others get paid for cooperating with them. Cooperation often means to obey, which this ballplayer failed to do.

The very sound of the word "obey" is irksome to many people. Some modern brides object to the word "obey" in their marriage vows. Ever so many people want to be free to do as they please, to do their "own thing." But life begins and continues only as long as we obey. How so? In that we all need to obey the laws of creation—such as gravity, cause and effect, metabolism, and so forth—to keep on living.

Not only is it in our interest to obey the laws of creation, but it is also in our interest to obey the laws that men have made for the orderly functioning of society. Anarchists would do away with all laws; but what confusion and jeopardy would result! Take just the simple matter of traffic lights at a busy intersection. Without those lights and the obedience of car drivers, the traffic at that point could be hopelessly snarled, not to mention how many persons might be killed because of accidents. No question about obedience to traffic laws being important!

Or consider the men in a symphony orchestra. The conductor might be a genius, but what good would that be if his men did not obey him? Musicians know only too well the importance of obedience, for their jobs depend upon their implicitly obeying the conductor, the notes and the first musician of their section! Is obedience important for them? It certainly is!

Examples could be multiplied, but the foregoing should suffice to underscore the importance of obedience in everyday mat-

ters of life. So, it is but to be expected that God in his Word, the Holy Bible, which he gave as a 'lamp to our feet and a light to our roadway,' should stress the importance of obedience in spiritual matters. (Ps. 119:105) In fact, the word "obey," in its various forms, occurs more than 160 times in the Bible, and hundreds of times we find references to God's commandments, laws, orders, judicial decisions and regulations, all of which call for obedience on the part of those loving Jehovah God. The very opening chapters of Genesis, the first book of the Bible, tell that all the trouble we have in the world stems from our first parents because they failed to obey God.—Gen. 2:17; 3:11-19.

By the very nature of things in every human society, if there is to be order, harmony and accomplishment there must be cooperation, and cooperation involves some measure of obedience. But who should decide who is to give the commands and who is to obey? Since God created the earth and man upon it, and these all belong to him, has he not the right to require that man obey him? And that being so, he also has the right to delegate to some the right to command and to others the requirement to obey them. And all of this God does wisely and lovingly, not arbitrarily.

God's Word commands: "Children, be obedient to your parents in everything, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord." (Col. 3:20) Is this a loving and wise command? Indeed it is, for not only did parents bring the children into the world, which of itself makes them responsible, but they have the greater experience and the obligation of providing their children with food, clothing, shelter, education, training, religious instruction and recreation. How can they properly discharge these duties if their children do not cooperate by obeying? No more so than a conductor can do justice to a piece of music unless his men fully cooperate by obeying him!

And there are other spheres of human activity where God requires individuals to obey. For example, obedience is called for in the marital relationship if there is to be peace, harmony and happiness in the family (Eph. 5:21-23), among citizens in relation to their governments for justice to prevail (Rom. 13:1-7), among servants or employees in relation to masters or employers so as to get work done (Eph. 6:5-8), and among individual members of a congregation in relation to their overseers or elders for mutual advantage. (Heb. 13:17) Of course, all such obedience is relative, meaning that it is rendered so long as it does not go against what God commands.—Acts 5:29.

"To obey is better than a sacrifice," the prophet Samuel told disobedient King Saul

There is an incident in the Bible that shows how vitally important it is for God's dedicated people to obey him in all things. Israel's first monarch, King Saul, had been commanded by Jehovah God to execute retributive justice upon the Amalekite nation for their dastardly attack while Israel was in the wilderness. Contrary to God's instructions, Saul failed to destroy the king and the flocks of the Amalekites, using the excuse that he saved the flocks for the purpose

of sacrifice. But the prophet Samuel told him: "To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams. . . . Since you have rejected the word of Jehovah, he accordingly rejects you from being king."—1 Sam. 15:22, 23.

How important is obedience? Truly very, very important!

Why MEDITATE?

IT TAKES time to meditate, that is, to ponder, muse or think seriously about a matter. But it is time well spent. Thoughtful meditation on wholesome things brings a fine reward.

The Bible provides excellent guidelines as to matters that should rightly occupy our thoughts. We read: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things."—Phil. 4:8.

When a person makes such upbuilding things the object of his continual meditation, this has a good effect upon his heart. His appreciation for the rightness of such noble matters grows, and he becomes more aware that his acting in harmony with his meditation has a good effect upon himself and his fellowmen. As a result, what he says and does comes ever closer to God's standard of purity and cleanness. This is shown by Jesus' words: "A good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart, but a wicked man brings forth what is wicked out of his wicked treasure; for out of the heart's abundance his mouth speaks."—Luke 6:45.

Accordingly, the more an individual concentrates on upbuilding, positive matters, the more will this be reflected in his speech and actions. It is just as the Bible proverb says: "The heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer, but the mouth of the wicked ones bubbles forth with bad things." (Prov. 15:28) Profitable meditation serves to deter a person's giving unbalanced, senseless answers. He will not be speaking just from the top of his head. Instead, he will weigh all the factors involved, taking the circumstances and feelings of other individuals into consideration, before answering on weighty matters. His heartfelt answer will then be one that he will not later regret.

Besides thus contributing toward the preservation of good relationships with fellow humans, meditation plays a vital role in maintaining a fine standing before the Creator. Like the inspired psalmists, we, therefore, do well to use times of quiet and solitude for meditating on the qualities and activities of Jehovah God. The psalmist David stated: "When I have remembered you upon my lounge, during the night watches I meditate on you. For you have proved to be of assistance to me, and in the shadow of your wings I cry out

joyfully." (Ps. 63:6, 7) Another psalmist declared: "I shall certainly meditate on all your activity, and with your dealings I will concern myself."—Ps. 77:12.

All who desire to be God's approved servants might ask themselves: Do I, like the psalmists, take time for meditating on the Creator and his activity? Do I reflect appreciatively on what he has done in my behalf—providing his Son as a ransom, opening my heart to respond to his truth, helping me to cope with daily problems of life, giving me a solid hope for the future, and much more? Do I think about his past dealings with mankind and the way he demonstrated love, mercy, justice, wisdom and so many other admirable qualities?

Such wholesome meditation can deepen our love for Jehovah God. As a consequence, our relationship will be like that of a child that trusts and loves its father and wants to please him. Our relationship with our heavenly Father will be a personal one, that is, we will really know him and his Son whom he gave in our behalf. When that is the case, it will be an impossibility for us to become willful practicers of sin. The apostle John pointed this out when he wrote regarding the effect of knowing and of not knowing Jesus Christ: "Everyone remaining in union with him does not practice sin; no one that practices sin has either seen him or come to know him." —1 John 3:6.

Children who deeply love and appreciate their parents do not viciously turn against them. So also those who know God and his Son Jesus Christ do not turn their backs on them, deliberately pursuing a course that is contrary to the divine will.

On the other hand, a weak relationship with the Creator may lead to grave danger. Yes, failure to meditate on spiritual matters can lead to one's losing out on God's approval and blessing. Jesus Christ pointed this out in his illustration about the sower. Explaining that illustration, he said to his disciples: "Those alongside the road are the ones that have heard, then the Devil comes and takes the word away from their hearts in order that they may not believe and be saved. Those upon the rock-mass are the ones who, when they hear it, receive the word with joy, but these have no root; they believe for a season, but in a season of testing they fall away. As for that which fell among the thorns, these are the ones that have heard, but, by being carried away by anxieties and riches and pleasures of this life, they are completely choked and bring nothing to perfection."—Luke 8:12-14.

In each of the three situations described by Jesus Christ there was insufficient heart appreciation for the "word of God" or the "word of the kingdom." (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:11) Hard-packed soil alongside the road was produced by the flow of traffic. Similarly, when a person allows others to tramp through his life to such an extent that undue demands are made on his time and energies, he will be too preoccupied to give any heartfelt consideration to the "word of God." Though he may hear it, his failure to meditate on it will keep the heart in an unresponsive state. As far as the other two circumstances are concerned, they, too, result from a failure to meditate enough on the right things. Hence, the measure of appreciation developed for the "word of the kingdom" is not strong enough to endure severe testing or to eclipse concerns over daily cares or desires for riches or pleasures.

Surely we do have good reason to take time to meditate on wholesome things. Such meditation can strengthen our relationship with the Creator, enabling us to remain clean in his eyes. It can also contribute much to our being a source of encouragement and blessing to others in word and deed.

Insight on the News

Tibet's Religion "Killed"

● "Official atheism has killed religion in remote Tibet," the "Smithsonian" magazine reports. The once-dominant Buddhist religion has been practically wiped out since the Communist takeover of that province more than two decades ago.

A correspondent of the magazine relates: "Of Tibet's 5,000 [Buddhist] monasteries, only about a dozen active ones remain; the rest are used as warehouses or are falling into ruin." The huge Drepung monastery outside Tibet's capital city of Lhasa was once the main center of Tibetan Buddhism, with 10,000 resident monks. Today only 300 monks live there, and no new monks are being recruited.

Bible prophecy foretold that in our day this world's religions, including Christendom, would suffer a similar fate. They are represented in the Bible pictorially as "Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth." The Bible then describes how the political elements of this world "will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire."—Rev. 17:5, 16.

In view of this, lifesaving is God's warning: "Get out of her [Babylonish false religion], my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues."—Rev. 18:4.

Improved Without Television

● A Japanese housewife wrote the following to Tokyo's "Daily Yomiuri" some time after her television set broke down: "The life pattern of my two children, seven and five-year-old boys, has since shown a remarkable change. Before the TV broke, my boys only watched TV after dinner. They never listened to my suggestion to read books. But now that the TV is broken, they are quite eager to read books."

This mother also said: "What most surprised me is that my five-year-old boy has mastered 48 Japanese kana [Japanese syllabary alphabet] in 10 days by himself. Now he can write postcards to his grandmother and friends in the countryside." She added: "Since they were brought up with TV, they at first complained about being without it. But they no longer complain about it now." Also, many other parents have noted improvements in both behavior and schoolwork after more carefully regulating their children's television habits.

Children often imitate what they see. And much of what they see on television has to do with violence and immorality. In this regard, an official of the National Parent-Teacher Association in the United States declared: "There is a causal relationship between violence seen on TV, and aggressive, violent behavior among children."

Therefore, wise parents carefully regulate the mental food that young minds take in, since, to a large extent, what a young mind feeds on determines the kind of adult the child becomes. Counsels God's Word: "My son, to my wisdom O do pay attention. To my discernment incline your ears, so as to guard thinking abilities."—Prov. 5:1, 2.

Marijuana Affects Fliers

● Seven professional and three private airplane pilots took part in an experiment designed to see what effects the smoking of marijuana had on flying ability. "Results of that experiment were frightening," reported the Denver "Post."

After smoking marijuana, the fliers were tested in a flight simulator and their reactions were recorded by a video camera. The marijuana caused "increased prevalence of major errors, minor errors, altitude deviations, heading deviations, and radio navigation errors," the study showed. Similar results have been obtained in tests involving automobile driving skills.

Hence, marijuana use can result in mental distortion. Indeed, people use it to produce a condition called a "high," or to become "stoned." Without question, then, it can contaminate both mind and body. That is why Christians totally avoid its use, particularly since God's Word says: "Let us cleanse ourselves of every defilement of flesh and spirit."—2 Cor. 7:1.

We Were Given A GOAL IN LIFE

As told by Russell Cantwell

I HAVE observed that few young people today really seem to know what they want to do with their lives. They have no particular career in mind, or any other goal toward which they are working. I am thankful to my parents that this was never the case with me.

My parents are still living, even though Dad is ninety-nine and Mother is in her eighties. Between the two of them they have spent over ninety years "pioneering," as Jehovah's Witnesses call the full-time Bible preaching activity.

It was back around 1908 that Dad and Mother began to study the Bible in earnest. One of my earliest memories is of seeing the Photo-Drama of Creation, which is a slides and film presentation of the story of the Bible. This was at the little country school where Dad taught in Arkansas. I must have been about three years old at the time.

In 1924, when I was four, Dad moved the family to east Tennessee. There he immediately began talking to the neighbors about his faith in God. The Kamer family was interested, and weekly Bible meetings were organized.

Another early recollection of mine is of visits of the "pilgrims," as the traveling representatives of Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. We three boys gave up our beds to our sisters and slept on the floor so that the visitor could have our sisters' bedroom. The kind attention and encouragement these men gave us children left a wholesome, lasting impression.

IMPORTANCE OF SPIRITUAL MATTERS

By the way they taught us, as well as by the example they set, Dad and Mother left indelibly imprinted on our young minds the importance of Bible study and Christian association. An experience that I remember clearly well illustrates this; I was only about six or seven at the time.

It was a Sunday morning and, as we were walking to Kamer's house for our regular Bible study, we were met by three carloads of relatives. Although Dad had not seen them for several years, instead of returning to the house he invited them, either to go with us for the study, or to go on down to the house and wait until we returned. I do believe that the entire group could have left in anger and Dad would not have been unduly disturbed, as he felt a strong spiritual obligation to his family and the Kamer family to conduct that Bible study.

Dad also trained us to speak to others about the things we were learning about God's kingdom. From as far back as I can remember he would take us children with him as he would call on people at their homes. In 1927 Dad decided that I was old enough to go alone to the doors.

OUR FAMILY LIFE

True, there was much hard work on the farm, and we were also busy with Christian activities. But, at the same time, our

parents saw to it that we had recreation. Dad taught us to swim. And there were family picnics, and family gatherings with others, which provided wholesome recreation and association.

Something else that contributed to our closeness as a family was the fact that Dad and Mother pulled together, and always had time for us children. I'm sure they had differences at times, but they never argued in front of us or contradicted each other. In this way we learned to respect parental authority.

At school we were often ridiculed by children who belonged to other religions. For example, they would call us "no hellers," because we didn't believe that God would torment people in a fiery hell. But Dad and Mother would take time to help us to prepare answers from the Bible to take back to school. This strengthened us, convincing us that we knew the truth of God's Word, and we came to take pleasure in being different, even as did God's servants in the past.

Years before, an uncle, who did not appreciate Dad's religion, told him: "Children have a hard enough time growing up without poking that religion into them." Years later, when we visited this uncle, he tearfully said to Dad: "Newt, I wish my children were like yours." However, when Dad reminded him of his earlier remark, and that it was our Bible training that made the difference in us, my uncle didn't like that at all. He even forbade Dad to mention God or the Bible in his home again!

A GOAL SET BEFORE US

Dad desired to devote more time to the witnessing work, and so in 1929 we moved to West Plains, Missouri. There we were able to provide rooms for two full-time Kingdom proclaimers. The example of these Witnesses started our family thinking about pioneering.

Due to the Great Depression we moved back to the farm in Tennessee, but we didn't give up the idea of pioneering. In 1931 a pilgrim named Louis Larson helped Dad to figure out how he could financially care for the family in the pioneer work.

There were six of us children still at home, three of us in school. A family conference was held, and after prayerful consideration we agreed to sell the farm and place full trust in Jehovah to provide. It was decided that we three youngest would continue our schooling, while the older ones would pioneer.

The faith and trust of my parents in Jehovah was a strong influence in my life. That night I made a prayerful commitment to Jehovah that I would do his will as my folks were doing and walk in the footsteps of Christ. What a thrill some time later to be baptized by Dad in symbol of my dedication to Jehovah!

The farm was put up for sale but, with the Depression, it was sold at 50 percent less than the original asking price. Then an accident and serious illness in the family took every cent Dad had, leaving us "broke." But he said there was only one thing to do, and that was to stay in the full-time witnessing work. This determination and firm resolve, along with Dad and Mother's constant devotion, strengthened my desire to serve Jehovah.

BEGINNING OF A CAREER

In 1934 we moved to an assignment in west Tennessee. There I decided to leave school and enter the full-time witnessing work. Dad approved, that is, if my object wasn't simply to get out of school but was to make the pioneer service a career. So at fourteen years of age I began my life's career witnessing among the farms in the vicinity of Waverly, Tennessee.

True, there were trials during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Sometimes we might eat the same menu for several days

and desire something more. But Dad pointed out that we had given up the pursuit of money and we never missed a meal, yet almost daily families would stop at our door and beg for food to feed children crying with hunger, and these families were trying to work for money.

In the areas that we pioneered in throughout the southern United States, there seldom were any other Witnesses nearby. So our close family association was a protection from seeking fellowship with unbelievers. (1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14) And we would save our pennies for months in order to drive a hundred or more miles (about 160 kilometers) to meet with other Witness youths to have a square dance or other enjoyable fellowship, such as a hike in the Smoky Mountains.

NEW ASSIGNMENTS

At the convention in Columbus, Ohio, in 1937 we heard Dad's name called over the public-address system, along with some 200 others who were selected to begin the new special pioneer work. Dad immediately accepted this new service privilege, and our entire family was then invited to share. We were assigned to New Haven, Connecticut.

A Connecticut state law gave the chief of police censorship power over door-to-door religious work in his community, and as a result Jehovah's Witnesses were being arrested throughout the state. In May 1938 I was arrested along with Dad and my younger brother, Jesse, while calling at homes talking to people about the Bible. Although hundreds of our Christian brothers and sisters had been arrested on various occasions, the Watch Tower Society decided to use our case to test the validity of the state law. The case went finally to the United States Supreme Court, where Jehovah gave us the victory.

We were next transferred as special pioneers to Staten Island, New York city, where we were privileged to work with those serving at the Watch Tower Society's radio station WBBR. Then in January 1939 we were asked to assist a newly organized congregation in Mount Vernon, New York, where Milton Henschel, Lyman Swingle and other members of the Bethel family were also assigned. Imagine our surprise the following month when my two brothers and I were invited to assist at the Society's printing plant for a few weeks. This extended into over six years of service there. A development on the evening of September 8, 1943, led to yet another assignment.

It was then that Evie Sullivan introduced me to Gladys in the Bethel lobby and asked if I would take her and her

My wife and I studying together

pioneer partner to their rooms a few blocks away. Their car was in urgent need of some repairs, so I spent several hours working on it that night while the girls sat on the curb and related their experiences in the witnessing work. This gave ample opportunity for me to observe their fine spirit of devotion to Jehovah.

In the spring of 1944 Gladys attended the third class of Gilead School while I was still at Bethel, and the following year we were married and I joined Gladys in the pioneer service. In 1950 I was invited to serve in the circuit work as a traveling representative of the Watch Tower Society. Our daughter Darla Lynn was born January 30, 1956, but it was lovingly arranged for us to continue on in the circuit work.

GIVING OTHERS A GOAL IN LIFE

We prayerfully asked Jehovah to help us to rear our daughter as our parents had reared us, always putting Kingdom interests first, and yet keeping balance and not neglecting our family responsibilities. I conducted our family study weekly, and Gladys would daily spend a few minutes instructing our daughter in God's Word and, as she grew older, longer periods of time were used.

Overnight, it seemed, Darla was of school age. We always kept an open and frank approach to even intimate matters, so as she grew older we always found it easy to converse and thus avoided the so-called "generation gap." Careful counsel in regard to association prevented her from developing bad associations that could lead to wrongdoing. Also, we were happy that she wanted to tell her classmates about God's kingdom. Her first Bible study was started with a third-grade classmate at Chino, California. This resulted in the student's making her dedication to Jehovah when she was sixteen.

In June 1972, in San Francisco, California, we received a letter through the mail. Surprisingly, it was from our daughter who was living with us. She wanted to express her appreciation, but was afraid she couldn't say all she wanted to face to face.

"I want to thank you," her letter said, "for bringing me up as you have. Always putting Jehovah first in our lives. Always letting your 'Yes mean Yes and your No No.' . . . I want to thank you for all the love and kindness you show to me. Listening when I have something to say. Understanding how I feel. Being patient with my moods and emotions. . . . Thanks so much for the wonderful example you set so that I truly can 'follow you as you follow Christ.' "

That letter warmed our hearts, and we thank Jehovah that we were able to impart to our daughter the same goal that my parents imparted to me—to put Jehovah's service first in her life. Our daughter and her partner are now serving as pioneers with the Henderson, North Carolina, Congregation. They were thrilled, and so were we, when seventeen persons with whom they conducted Bible studies attended the Lord's Evening Meal last spring.

For forty-three years now I've been in the full-time service. Presently I am an instructor of a Kingdom Ministry School, a training center for Christian elders. One of my brothers is in the circuit work in the United States and the other is serving as a branch coordinator in the Caribbean country of Dominican Republic. And both of my parents are still in the pioneer work!

Our personal experience moves us strongly to encourage young folks to make the full-time witnessing work their goal, yes, to make serving Jehovah God their life's career. And to parents we would say: Your children will not automatically serve Jehovah. You need to give them that goal in life. If you do, I can assure you that they will be forever grateful.

Marriage —An Arrangement Honored In God's Word

"Let marriage be honorable among all."
—Heb. 13:4.

THE marriage of a man and a woman should be a most happy occasion. It was for the first human pair. Evidently after waiting for a time, Adam, on finally seeing the woman who was to be his marriage partner, exclaimed poetically: "This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." (Gen. 2:23) Their entire married life could have been one of unending joy, for their Creator had made every provision for just such a life.

[2] Even now under the imperfect conditions resulting from that original pair's rejection of God's sovereign rule, marriage can still be a source of genuine happiness where sincere effort is made to put Bible principles into effect. Weddings are often cited in both the Hebrew and the Christian Greek Scriptures as representative of happy times among God's servants. (Gen. 24:67; Song of Sol. 3:11; John 3:29) When foretelling the desolation due to come on unfaithful Jerusalem, Jehovah said: "I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of exultation and the voice of rejoicing, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride; for the land will become nothing but a devastated place." (Jer. 7:34) Yes, the absence of weddings would be typical of the loss of joy and exultation that devastation would bring. By contrast, when speaking of the restoration of Israel from exile, Jehovah's prophet said of Jerusalem that, "with the exultation of a bridegroom over a bride, your God will exult even over you."—Isa. 62:1, 5.

1. How did Adam react when seeing his marriage partner for the first time, and why could their marriage have been one of unending joy?

2. (a) Can marriage be a source of happiness under imperfect conditions? (Prov. 5:18) (b) With what feelings do Jeremiah 7:34 and Isaiah 62:1, 5 associate marriage?

AN ARRANGEMENT TO BE HIGHLY HONORED

[3] In view of its divine origin and God's obvious blessing on the arrangement, it is easy to see why the inspired apostle gave this exhortation to the Hebrews: "Let marriage be honorable among all, and the

3. (a) Why should the marriage bed be kept without defilement? (b) What is the only Scriptural ground for divorce?

marriage bed be without defilement, for God will judge fornicators and adulterers." (Heb. 13:4) There is a very powerful reason for keeping the marriage bed without defilement. After describing the creation of man and woman by God, Jesus then quoted God as saying: "For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh." He thus showed that the words recorded in Genesis 2:24 were spoken, not by Adam, but by Jehovah God. Jesus went on to say that, in view of this union, "what God has yoked together let no man put apart." He stated that the only ground for divorce allowable by God was that of "fornication" (Greek, *por·nei'a,* meaning sexual misconduct of a gross kind with another person or even with an animal).—Matt. 19:3-9.

4 Jehovah God, therefore, takes very seriously the attitude shown by his creatures toward this divine marital arrangement. It should properly be a permanent, lifelong union, dissolved only by the death of one of the mates. (Rom. 7:2, 3) In warning his servants in Israel against viewing the union lightly, God said: " 'Jehovah himself has borne witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you yourself have dealt treacherously, although she is your partner and the wife of your covenant. . . . You people must guard yourselves respecting your spirit, and with the wife of your youth may no one deal treacherously. For he has hated a divorcing,' Jehovah the God of Israel has said." (Mal. 2:14-16) Yes, "God will judge fornicators and adulterers," and those resorting to unrighteous divorces to accomplish selfish ends. Those entering the marriage union should therefore realize what a serious and weighty responsibility they accept. The Creator of marriage expects his servants to honor it and contribute toward others' holding it in honor also.

5 Jehovah God describes a man's wife as his "partner" in the marriage covenant. Christian husbands cannot honor the marriage arrangement without honoring their marriage partner. As the apostle Peter counsels, they should be "assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one, since you are also heirs with them of the undeserved favor of life, in order for your prayers not to be hindered." (1 Pet. 3:7) Not only by tender dealings will the Christian husband honor such feminine partner, but he will do so especially in loyalty to the marital union they share. He should seek always to preserve it as a sacred responsibility. If failing to show his wife due gentleness and empathy would hinder his prayers, how much more so would his indulging in some degree of disloyalty to his mate, showing undue interest in someone outside the union. (Prov. 5:15-21) Not showing proper honor to his wife means dishonoring the marriage arrangement and its Maker. But the husband honoring the arrangement will love his wife as his own body, being willing even to give his life on her behalf.—Eph. 5:25, 28-33.

6 So, also, with the Christian wife. She expresses subjection to her husbandly head in the same way that the Christian congregation is "in subjection to the Christ." She shows him, not merely respect, but "deep respect." (Eph. 5:22-24, 33) If such deep respect keeps her from speaking disparagingly to him or about him, how much more so should it keep her from disloyally showing undue interest in someone outside their union, engaging in a flirtation

1. How does Jehovah God view disregard for the permanence of the marital arrangement?

5. (a) How should a Christian husband treat his wife? (b) In what way does a husband's failure to treat his wife properly affect his relationship with Jehovah God?
6. (a) What does God's Word require of a Christian wife? (b) What blessings come to a wife who follows the Bible's counsel?

to any degree. She can never honor God by dishonoring her husband or their marriage relationship. (Prov. 2:16, 17) But if she 'loves her husband and children, is chaste and a worker at home,' showing a "quiet and mild spirit," she will indeed be like a precious jewel and will bring praise to Jehovah God. She will gain her husband's unfading love and contribute toward his being held in high esteem by his peers.—Prov. 31:10-12, 23, 26-31; Titus 2:4, 5; 1 Pet. 3:1-4.

VALIDATING MARRIAGE IN BIBLE TIMES

[7] In Bible times, how was the marriage union established? Marriage was primarily a family or a tribal affair. There was no intervention by a secular government, nor concern for its authorization or validation of the marriage. There were, however, certain formalities. Marriage agreements were generally worked out by family heads. (Gen. 34:4, 6, 8-10) At least the suitor had to seek the approval of the father of the girl whom he sought to marry, as Jacob did upon falling in love with Rachel. (Gen. 29:18-20) The willingness of the girl might be asked, as was the case when Rebekah was sought as a wife for Isaac. (Gen. 24:8, 58) Customarily a bride price was paid over to the father, who would now lose the services of his daughter.—Gen. 34:11, 12; Ex. 22:16, 17.

[8] As was true in Eden, at the time of the wedding there was no particular ceremony or sermon to solemnize the marriage, but the bridegroom would go to his bride's home and escort her through the streets to his home. Thereby he publicly declared that he was taking her as his marriage partner. (Matt. 1:20, 24) She likely had specially prepared herself, bathing and using perfumed oil, perhaps putting on breastbands and a white robe and certain ornaments or jewels. (Ps. 45:13-15; Isa. 49:18; 61:10; Jer. 2:32) The streets were often lined with people seeking to get a view of the newlyweds, particularly by young virgin girls showing keen interest in and excitement about the wedding. (Jer. 7:34; Matt. 25:1-6) The bridegroom's arrival at his home might be followed by a wedding feast with many invited guests sharing in the rejoicing, they even being dressed specially for the occasion.—Gen. 29:22; Matt. 22:2, 3, 11; 25:10.

[9] By all these means both the bridegroom and the bride openly made known their entry into a marriage covenant and their acceptance of the responsibility this brought. In later times it seems that written records of marriages were kept. But more important than the witness of other humans to their union, the couple would be aware of Jehovah God's knowledge of the agreement and union into which they had entered. This fact should be by far the primary and most powerful force moving them to stay loyal to each other. It should make them strive to keep their marriage free from defilement, as well as motivating deep respect on their part for the marriages of all others.—Compare Genesis 20:1-7; 39:7-9; Job 31:9-12; Proverbs 6:23-35.

MARRIAGE HONORABLY USED TO ILLUSTRATE DIVINE ARRANGEMENTS

[10] All these marriage features are used beautifully in God's Word to illustrate and symbolize the union established between

7. What do the Scriptures reveal about the way in which the marriage union was established in ancient times?
8. Anciently, how did it become publicly known that a man and a woman were entering a marriage covenant?
9. What should be the strongest reason for proving faithful to the marriage covenant, and why?
10, 11. How do features relating to betrothal and marriage in ancient times illustrate the relationship of Jesus Christ to his Kingdom associates?

God's Son and those who become his Kingdom associates. (Rev. 21:2, 9, 10) As regards this "bride" class, formed of Jesus' anointed footstep followers, the Bible shows that it is the Father, Jehovah God, who selects such class for his Son and that these are bought with a price of very great value, the life of the very Son who becomes their spiritual husband and whose love was great enough to move him to die on their behalf. (John 13:1; Eph. 5:25-27) As Rebekah's expression of willingness was asked, so too these express their goodwill to 'follow the Lamb wherever he goes.' (Rev. 14:1, 4) While on earth they view themselves as engaged and seek to maintain themselves like a "chaste virgin," unsullied by the world and undivided in their devoted loyalty. (2 Cor. 11:2) They maintain that loyalty to Christ Jesus under the fiercest of tests and the most subtle temptations. They clothe themselves with a new personality that reflects the beautiful qualities of their heavenly Bridegroom, and by their righteous acts they maintain a clean identification, like a pure white garment.—Col. 3:9, 10, 12-14; Rev. 19:7, 8.

[11] In due time the bridegroom, now a heavenly King, will come to take them home to heavenly residences, resulting in a joyous feast. (John 14:2, 3; Rev. 19:9) By his establishing the Memorial of his death he has told his bride class, in effect: 'Do not ever forget me or ever stop loving me. Remember, I gave my life for you.' (1 Cor. 11:25, 26) When finally united with God's Son, these will enjoy a partnership with him, sharing submissively in the privilege of extending his Kingdom rule and benefits to mankind, who become children of the King.—Rev. 5:9, 10; 20:4, 5; compare Isaiah 9:6, 7.

[12] God has thus seen fit to represent things of highest importance to us through these marriage features. This supplies another strong reason for us to give due honor to marriage. To fail to do so would, in effect, dishonor the relationship between Christ Jesus and his anointed followers, as well as the blessings that their fruitful union will bring to mankind as a whole.

12. Why should the relationship between Jesus Christ and his anointed followers be a strong incentive for humans to maintain an honorable marriage?

NO ENCOURAGEMENT FOR DIVORCE

[13] It is true that Jehovah's laws provide for divorcing. God, however, shows that he nowhere encourages such action but, rather, urges a genuine and persevering effort to keep the marriage intact. Again using marriage in a figurative way, Jehovah represented himself as married to the nation of Israel through his covenant with them. (Jer. 31:31, 32) He had purchased them out of slavery in Egypt. (Deut. 9:26) In his relationship with Israel, Jehovah was ever loyal, never turning his affections to other nations nor entering into relations with them. Even when Israel proved rebellious, Jehovah was not quick to cast her aside. Out of love he showed amazing forbearance and long-suffering. Only after centuries of effort at preserving the union did Jehovah finally 'divorce' himself from the nation that had become like an adulterous wife.—Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8.

[14] So, no one can say that God asks us to do what he himself is not willing to do when he exhorts us to make every effort to keep marriage in honor and to work to preserve the marital union. Surely anyone who seeks a pretext for divorce for selfish reasons could never be pleasing to Him. Our respect, admiration and love

13. (a) Do Jehovah's laws ever encourage divorce? (b) As pertains to marriage, what can be learned from Jehovah's dealings with ancient Israel?

14. In view of Jehovah's example in dealing with Israel, what should married couples be moved to do?

for Jehovah, combined with our desire for his favor and approval, should move us to shun whatever might bring our marriage or that of anyone else into disrepute. Thereby we will never cast a bad reflection on God's use of marriage to illustrate his own dealings and the outworking of his purposes.

THE MARRIAGE BED UNDEFILED

15 Marriage has as its fundamental purpose the producing of families. (Gen. 1: 27, 28) Nevertheless, God's Word shows that his servants are not obliged to limit sexual relations solely to efforts to produce children. Such relations properly can fill emotional and physical needs and be a periodic source of pleasure to the married couple. (1 Cor. 7:1-5) In various texts 'love play' prior to intercourse is indicated as honorable. (Prov. 5:18, 19; Gen. 26:8, 9) Even marriage partners, however, need to be on guard so that their marital relations do not degenerate into something defiling. Letting unbridled passion take over could lead to that. How so?

16 Perverted practices engaged in by homosexuals, who, in such practice, do not have natural, normal copulation between themselves, have been adopted also by some married couples in search of greater "thrills," specifically oral and anal copulation. When writing of conditions in his day, the inspired apostle Paul said that homosexuals 'dishonored their bodies among themselves by disgraceful sexual appetites, changing the natural use of themselves into one contrary to nature, working what is obscene and receiving the full recompense for their wrongdoing.' (Rom. 1:24-27) When married couples adopt homosexual methods they surely bring no honor to the marriage union but, rather, degrade it, exalting selfish passion instead, and the marriage bed loses its cleanness.*

17 Aside from actions that are clearly and obviously gross and obscene, such as the aforementioned practices, the Christian must be guided by his or her conscience as to what 'love play' leading up to intercourse involves. Still, it is certainly the course of wisdom to avoid coming so close to the obscene practices earlier mentioned that one might easily slip into them due to loss of control.—Jas. 1:14, 15.

18 Acting in accord with the lofty principles of God's Word does not detract in the slightest from the joys and happiness that marriage can bring. To the contrary, the wholesome effect of this enhances those joys, makes them more satisfying and enriching as the marriage partners grow in genuine affection, tenderness and unselfish devotion. Yes, "the orders from Jehovah are upright, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine . . . They are more to be desired than gold, . . . sweeter than honey and the flowing honey of the combs."—Ps. 19:8, 10.

15. What is the Scriptural view of marital dues?
16. What conduct in intimate marriage relationships must be avoided if the union is to continue to be honorable?

* See also the *Watchtower* issues of December 1, 197[illegible] pages 734-736; July 15, 1974, page 424; January 1[illegible] 1975, page 48.

17. What should guide a married couple in their intimacies?
18. What benefits come from conducting marital affairs in harmony with God's Word?

IN COMING ISSUES

- How Can You Find Real Security?
- A Global Time of Trouble —Why, and When?
- Isaac Newton's Search for God.

Maintaining Marriage IN HONOR Before God And Men

"Recommending ourselves to every human conscience in the sight of God."
—2 Cor. 4:2.

FOR God's congregated people to stay within his favor, it is vital that marriage be held in honor among them. (Heb. 13:4) Each individual married Christian should show serious concern that his or her marriage is honorable in the sight of both God and men. In this connection the question arises, To what extent do human authorities, including political governments and civil authorities, enter the picture? Does the validity of a marriage depend entirely upon its recognition by civil authorities and does their validation determine how Jehovah God, the Author of marriage, views the union?

[2] In the preceding article we have seen that marriage among people of Hebrew Scripture times was at first a family or tribal affair. When the nation of Israel was formed, God gave them his law, which contained numerous provisions concerning marriage, including prohibitions of incestuous relationships, regulations governing marital duties and similar provisions. (Leviticus, chaps. 18 and 20) There was, however, no requirement that a document or license be obtained from the priesthood in order for a couple to marry, nor that a priestly representative be present at the marriage to validate it. Nor was such the case as regards representatives of the Israelite government. Rather, as long as God's law was adhered to, the marriage was accepted as valid and honorable within the particular community where the wedded ones lived.

[3] In course of time, the nation of Israel came under the domination of foreign powers—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. To what extent did this affect the marriage arrangements among the Israelites? From what information history provides, it appears that they continued much as before, this being permitted by the nations dominating them. Though a subject people, it appears that questions or even disputes, such as those involving divorce actions, were handled chiefly by the Jewish elders and their judicial courts. Obviously, however, if an Israelite took a marriage case to the courts of the dominant nation he could expect them to judge

1. (a) As respects his marriage, what should be a Christian's concern? (b) What questions might arise as to the regulations of the civil authorities regarding marriage? (Mark 12:17)
2. What legal formalities regarding marriage did God's law to Israel not require?
3. Did Israel's coming under the domination of foreign powers affect the way in which marriage and divorce were handled?

the case on the basis of their own laws relative to marriage.

[4] It is thought that in later Bible times marriages came to be registered, though there seems to be no clear evidence of this. At any rate, it appears that any registering of the marriage came into the picture only *after* the marriage had been effected. The civil government thus acted as a record-keeper of the *fact* of the marriage rather than as a judge of the *morality* of the marriage.

[5] What was the situation in the early centuries of the Christian congregation? As in Israel, it seems to have continued largely as a family affair. And, as back in Eden and as among the Israelites (and, in fact, most peoples of that time), there was no requirement that some religious or civil authority license the marriage or be present to make it a valid and honorable one.* Civil authorities do not seem to have concerned themselves with marriage or marital relationships until such time as one or both of the parties might come to them for legal solution of problems or disputes. They would at such time either acknowledge or deny the validity of the marriage, depending upon its conformity to their laws. (Roman law, for example, did not recognize marriages between brothers and sisters.)

[6] Conformity to God's law, nevertheless, was necessary if the marriage was to be viewed as honorable within the Christian congregation. Thus, when the apostle Paul heard from the Corinthian congregation that "a wife a certain man has of his father," he did not hesitate to condemn this as "fornication." He also showed that the congregation was to be concerned about the standards of the community where they lived, for he pointed out that "even among the nations" such a thing was not being done.—1 Cor. 5:1, 2.

[7] The Christian congregation viewed itself as an 'association of brothers' made up of fellow members of "God's household," the term "household" here having the sense of a family household, as a comparison of such texts as Matthew 10:12, 35, 36; Acts 16:30-34; 1 Timothy 3:4, 5; 5:4, 8 indicates. So, like a family the congregation would rightly take an interest in marriages contracted by its members.

[8] Commenting on the viewpoint of early Christians, Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (Vol. VIII, page 435) states: "Marriage is, in the first place, an affair of the family. In the earliest period the Christian congregation regarded itself as a spiritual family, and the life and concerns of every member of the congregation were of intimate interest to the whole body. . . . The testimony of the [church] Fathers, from the middle of the 3rd century onwards, shows that what we should now describe as civil marriages were not unknown, perhaps were not uncommon, but at the same time were strongly discountenanced by the Church."

[9] Thus, what evidence is available in the Scriptures and in history indicates that in early times civil marriage or civil validation of marriage did not play a very prominent part. It does not seem to have been

* In Roman law, the "sole necessary condition for marriage" was "the consent of the parties" with no preliminary license, ceremony or other validation required. (*The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia*, Vol. VII, pp. 198, 199) Thus, if a man proposed marriage to a woman and she consented, this was all that was legally required to make a marriage effective.

4. When registration of marriages was first introduced, what purpose did it serve?

5. (a) What was the situation about licensing marriages in the early centuries of the Christian congregation? (b) When did the civil authorities begin to concern themselves with marriage and marital relationships?

6. (a) What primarily governed marriage relationships in the Christian congregation? (b) Should the views of the community in which Christians live ever have a bearing on what they do about their marriages?

7, 8. (a) Why does the Christian congregation rightly take an interest in the marriages contracted by its members? (b) What does history reveal in this regard about early Christians?

9. (a) What conclusion can we draw from the Scriptures and history about civil validation of marriage? (b) Upon what did the honorableness of marriage depend?

a great issue as regards the honorableness of a marriage from the Christian point of view. Apparently the honorableness of a marriage depended most directly upon its acceptance by the Christian congregation as conforming to divine standards, with consideration also being given to attitudes and standards of people in the community where the Christians lived. Like the apostle Paul, Christians would seek to be "recommending [themselves] to every human conscience in the sight of God," and try to "keep from becoming causes for stumbling to Jews as well as Greeks and to the congregation of God" by 'doing all things for God's glory.' —2 Cor. 4:2; 1 Cor. 10:31, 32.

[10] However, it is a fact that, in more recent times and in many parts of the earth, the relationship of the civil authorities to marriage and its validation has taken on greater prominence. Rightly, Christians must take this fact into account in seeking to keep their marriages "honorable among all." (Heb. 13:4) In weighing the matter, it is of value to consider how this changed attitude has come about. The *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* says (page 437; italics ours): "From the civil side marriage is regarded as a *legal contract* which must be regulated for *practical purposes* by the State. From the Christian point of view, marriage is a holy estate which the Church may claim to regulate in the highest interests of *religion* and *morality*. Experience shows that there must ever be a possibility of conflict between the two jurisdictions, and that, consequently, difficulties in practice may often result. . . . It is in the modern period, since the [Protestant] Reformation, that the question of the two jurisdictions and the proper relations of the one to the other has come into prominence. . . . "*

[11] It therefore appears that the validation of marriage by civil authorities has become more of an issue in modern times than was true at any past time in history. At least in strongly Protestant lands the trend has been more and more to view the validity of marriage (and consequently of divorce) as resting almost entirely with the decision of civil authorities. The role of the congregation with regard to the validity of marriage (and divorce) has consequently waned in the eyes of many.

DETERMINING THE VALIDITY OF MARRIAGE

[12] Faced with such circumstances, what should the Christian do? He certainly cannot ignore the existing state of affairs if he desires his marriage to be honorable "among all." He cannot 'turn back the clock' to the days when civil authorities were not viewed as an important factor in the validation of marriage. However, these questions arise: Is the decision of civil authorities to be viewed as absolute in determining whether a marriage is valid—either at its beginning or when it perhaps ends through divorce? To what extent is God affected by their decision?

[13] In effect, do the civil authorities have the final word as to whether God accepts or rejects the validity of a marriage (or of a divorce)? We can see that if this were

* As reference works show, the Roman Catholic Church eventually claimed for itself the exclusive right to legislate regarding marriage, bringing forth its own regulations and restrictions and holding that civil authorities must be bound by these. The Protestant Reformers swung very much in the other direction and placed marriage almost entirely in the hands of the civil authorities. In England, Scotland and Ireland the civil ceremony was introduced in 1653 to free the Church from secular affairs. A French law of 1792 made the civil ceremony obligatory upon all citizens on the principle that "the citizen belongs to the State, irrespective of religion." (*The New Schaff-Herzog Religious Encyclopedia,* Vol. VII, pp. 199, 200)

10, 11. (a) How is it that the civil authorities eventually became involved with marriage and its validation? (b) What view regarding the validity of marriage prevails in strongly Protestant lands?

12. Since the civil authority has become involved with marriage and its validation, what questions does this raise for the servant of God?

13. Why cannot the view of the civil authority regarding marriage be regarded as absolute? (Acts 5:29)

so there could be considerable inconsistency as to what is required to gain God's blessing in marriage. Why? Because the views of civil authorities differ widely from place to place, often being at complete odds with one another and, more importantly, at times being in contradiction of the standards contained in the Bible.

[14] In some lands, for example, polygamy is legally approved and each wife of a polygamist is viewed as legal and as having the same standing as any other of his wives. Christ Jesus and the inspired apostle Paul, however, showed that God's standard is for a man to have only one wife.—Matt. 19:4, 5; 1 Cor. 7:2; 1 Tim. 3:2.

[15] Also, some countries allow a person to divorce his mate on any number of grounds, at times for the slightest of reasons. Others, by contrast, do not recognize a person's right to divorce his or her mate even on grounds of sexual infidelity and thus be free to remarry. The Bible, on the other hand, says that there is only one valid ground for divorce, namely, fornication, and it shows that those divorcing for such reason do become free to remarry. (Matt. 5:32; 19:3-9) Thus in some cases what the State approves, God disapproves, and in others what the State disallows, God allows.

[16] The evidence, then, points to the fact that the civil state's position in determining the validity of marriage (or divorce) is only relative, while that of God is absolute. To obtain a balanced view of the relative authority of the State (designated as "Caesar" in the Bible) in this matter, it is of benefit to consider just what interest civil governments have in the field of marriage, what they are particularly concerned with, and in what way the Christian can come under obligation toward them in this field.

14. What is the Biblical view of polygamy despite any legal recognition that it may be given in some lands?
15. How do man's laws about divorce in some lands differ from God's law?
16. How should the State's authority in determining the validity of marriage be viewed? (Rom. 13:1; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14)

CAESAR'S INTEREST IN MARRIAGE

[17] Are civil governments chiefly concerned with moral and religious issues regarding marriage or is their concern related principally to another aspect? We may recall that the earlier-quoted encyclopedia stated that, from the civil side, "marriage is regarded as a legal contract which must be regulated for practical purposes by the State." This is borne out by the history of governmental legislation relative to marriage and divorce. That history shows that the concern of civil governments has been motivated by their involvement in such matters as inheritance and property rights, particularly when a dissolution of the marriage "contract" (by divorce or death) brings these rights into question. Confirming this as true today, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Macropædia, 1976, Vol. 7, pages 166, 167) says:

> "The law . . . is concerned mainly with the rights and duties of husband and wife and parent and child, particularly in questions of financial support." "In most countries today . . . the legal documentation of a marriage is mainly a registration of the event. So basically, in the legal sense, a marriage is the implied creation of certain rights or obligations such as maintenance, marital property and succession rights, and the custody of legitimate minor children."

[18] "Caesar" (the political state) has therefore concerned himself with marriage primarily because such legal issues have been brought to his courts for judicial settlement, not because of concern over the religious or moral aspects of marriage. He has also shown concern over the prevention of the spread of disease, particularly venereal disease, and of weakening genetic effects (as among children born to

17, 18. When it comes to marriage, what has been the chief concern of the civil authorities, and why?

close blood relatives), this again being for "practical purposes." That is why we find that even antireligious, atheistic governments have legal requirements for granting recognition of a marriage as valid.

[19] What, then, of Jesus' instructions to 'pay back Caesar's things to Caesar'? In seeking to be obedient to this command, is the Christian congregation called upon to take Caesar's view of a marriage union or a divorce as the final, decisive, binding factor as to its validity and morality? —Matt. 22:21.

[20] First, it should be noted that the issue provoking Jesus' words was regarding taxation. Caesar provides many services and deserves to be 'paid back' for these. (Matt. 22:17-21) Caesar, however, is not the source of the *right to marry*. This actually comes from God, the Originator of marriage. (Gen. 1:27, 28; 2:18, 22-24; 9:1; compare 1 Timothy 4:1-3.) Hence, Caesar's position in this field is not as the final arbiter as to what is morally right and wrong in marriage (or divorce). What Caesar *can* provide is *legal recognition and accompanying protection* of marital rights in his court systems. The Christian who wants his marriage to be "honorable among all" rightly desires such provisions to protect the rights and interests of his family. To obtain such recognition and rights he should properly 'pay back to Caesar' for these by complying with Caesar's regulations for receiving them. This may include such things as license fees, the conforming to certain medical examinations, or similar requirements.

[21] Such repayment to Caesar for the advantages his legal recognition provides does not mean, however, that the Christian loses sight of the fact that Caesar's authority in marriage is only relative. God is not bound by Caesar's decisions and may disapprove where Caesar approves, or accept where Caesar rejects. The Christian should rightly give conscientious consideration to Caesar's marriage and divorce provisions but will always give greatest consideration to the Supreme Authority, Jehovah God. (Acts 4:19; Rom. 13:1, 5) This will assure God's approval and blessing.

[22] Thus the Christian appreciates that, even though Caesar's rulings of themselves are not what finally determines the validity of his marriage in God's eyes, this does not thereby exempt him from the Scriptural injunction: "Let marriage be honorable among all." (Heb. 13:4) He is obligated to do conscientiously whatever is within his power to see that his marriage is accorded such honor by all. True, in some lands where a certain race or religion predominates, marriage to anyone not of the predominant race or religion might never be viewed with popular approval. Nevertheless, the Christian should seek whatever legal recognition is possible for him so as to avoid exposing his marriage to adverse criticism or a lowering of it in the estimation of others. (2 Cor. 6:3; 1 Pet. 2:12, 15, 16; 3:16) He wants his marriage to bring honor to the Author of marriage.

[23] Those who wish to become baptized members of the Christian congregation, and who do not have legal recognition of their marital union, should properly be expected to do all that they can to obtain such recognition and registration of their marriage. This will serve to remove any possible doubts as to the honorableness of their union in the eyes of people generally. But is this possible in all cases and, if not, what can be done about it?

19. In view of Jesus' counsel to 'pay back Caesar's things to Caesar,' what question might be raised about marriage and divorce?

20. (a) What prompted Jesus' statement about 'paying back Caesar's things to Caesar'? (b) To what extent does this principle have a bearing on a Christian's marriage?

21. How should Caesar's authority in marriage affect a Christian, and why?

22, 23. Why should a Christian seek legal recognition for his marriage?

WHERE CAESAR'S RECOGNITION IS UNAVAILABLE

[24] Understanding the relative nature of Caesar's authority regarding marriage is here helpful. Take, for example, those areas where, either because of the dominance of some religion or for other reasons, the law does not allow for any divorce, not even on the Scriptural grounds of "fornication" (*por·nei'a*). A man whose wife proved unfaithful to him might have left her and thereafter formed a union with another mate, by whom he may even have a family. He may then learn the truth of God's Word and, in obedience to that Word, desire to be baptized as a disciple of God's Son. Because the national law does not agree with God's law regarding divorce and remarriage, he cannot obtain a divorce and legalize his present union. What can he do?

[25] If his circumstances permit, he might go to a neighboring land that does grant divorce and obtain such there and then remarry under the laws of that land. This might serve to add some honor to his union, although upon returning to his homeland the marriage might not be recognized by the "Caesar" ruling there. If he cannot reasonably do this, he should get a legal separation from his estranged, legal mate, or whatever the local law makes possible. Thereafter he should make a written statement to the local congregation pledging faithfulness to his present mate and declaring his agreement to obtain a legal marriage certificate if the estranged legal wife should die or if other circumstances should make possible the obtaining of such registration. If his present mate likewise seeks baptism, she would also make such a signed statement.

[26] In one South American country, although the law provides for annulment of marriage in cases of bigamy, applications for such annulment are often simply ignored by "Caesar." Consider, then, a man who, while already having a legal living wife, separates from her and marries another woman and falsely obtains a legal certification, thereby becoming bigamous. If, upon learning Bible truth, he seeks baptism, he may find that his efforts to straighten out the legal situation regarding his current marriage are frustrated by the lack of interest on the part of the civil authorities. If unable to do anything to elevate in honor his present union through Caesar's courts or authorities, how could he proceed? He could sign a similar declaration pledging faithfulness and file this with the congregation. Then he could be accepted for baptism, as could his mate by doing the same.

[27] In a certain west African country, it may take up to ten years to obtain a divorce. Would a person desirous of being baptized, but needing a divorce so as to establish legally his or her present marital union, be obliged to postpone baptism for such a period of years? It does not seem proper that the lack of Caesar's legal recognition should block him from showing his faith in the sin-atoning power of Christ's sacrifice by taking the vital step of baptism and thus gaining the privilege of an approved relationship with God. (Compare the apostle's statement at Acts 11:17 as to humans' inability to "hinder" God in his approving of persons.) Bible examples indicate that unnecessary delay

24. What problem might confront a man in a land that makes no allowance for divorce?

25. How might a man who is divorced in God's eyes but who cannot get legal recognition for this in his own land establish that he is not living in adultery?

26. What can a person do if lack of interest on the part of the civil authorities makes it impossible for him to get legal recognition for his marriage?

27. Does baptism have to be postponed by one whose marital status could not be given any legal recognition until the passing of up to ten years? Why, or, why not?

in taking the step of baptism is not advisable. (Acts 2:37-41; 8:34-38; 16:30-34; 22:16) Having initiated the legal process of divorce, such person would then provide the congregation with a statement pledging faithfulness, thereby establishing his determination to maintain his current union in honor while he continues to follow through on his efforts to gain as well the legal recognition that Caesar provides.

[28] Persons may move to another country and while there they may learn the truth and wish to be baptized. In order to obtain legal recognition of their existing marital relationship, they may need first to obtain a divorce from a previous mate. It may be that the country to which they have moved has provisions for divorce but such provisions may not be available to them as foreigners. For example, many persons from other European countries have moved into Germany seeking employment. While Germany has provisions for divorce, these provisions do not embrace most noncitizens. In such cases, also, the individuals desiring to be baptized and seeking to establish the honorableness and permanence of their existing marital relationship would sign a declaration pledging faithfulness.

[29] These same principles would apply for a *baptized* Christian who finds that "Caesar's" laws would not grant him legal recognition in his exercise of God-given rights regarding divorce and remarriage. For example, in countries that do not recognize the God-given right to divorce an adulterous mate and remarry, an individual whose mate proves unfaithful (and from whom he therefore chooses to separate, not forgiving her) should submit the clear evidence of this infidelity to the elders of the congregation. Then, if at some future time he (or she) were to decide to take another mate, this could be done in an honorable way, the parties to the marriage signing statements pledging faithfulness and the determination to gain legal recognition whenever such should become feasible.

[30] The signing of such a written statement pledging faithfulness is viewed by the congregation as a putting of oneself on record before God and man that the signer will be just as faithful to his or her existing marital relationship as he or she would be if the union were one validated by civil authorities. Such declaration is viewed as no less binding than one made before a marriage officer representing a "Caesar" government of the world. In reality, it is not the particular kind of document made but the fact that the individual makes the declaration before God that gives it its greatest weight and solemnity.

[31] How might such a declaration be worded? It could contain a statement such as the following:

> "I, ..., do here declare that I have accepted ..... as my mate in marital relationship; that I have done all within my ability to obtain legal recognition of this relationship by the proper public authorities and that it is because of having been unable to do so that I therefore make this declaration pledging faithfulness in this marital relationship. I recognize this relationship as a binding tie before Jehovah God and before all persons, to be held to and honored in full accord with the principles of God's Word. I will continue to seek the means to obtain legal recognition of this relationship by the civil authorities and if at any future time a change in cir-

28. When legal recognition for an existing marital relationship depends upon getting a divorce that cannot be obtained in the country of one's residence, does this mean that the couple would have to separate if they desire to be baptized?

29. How might a Christian establish his Scriptural freedom to remarry in lands that make no provision for divorce?

30. How should the congregation view a declaration of faithfulness in lands where a Scriptural union, under certain circumstances, will not be given legal recognition?

31, 32. What are some basic points that a declaration of faithfulness might include, and what should be done with it?

cumstances makes this possible I promise to legalize this union.

"Signed this ..... day of ....., 19.....
Witnesses to my signing: .....
....."

[32] As indicated above, this declaration should be signed by the one making the declaration and also by two others as witnesses, and the date should be noted thereon. It is advisable for copies of the statement pledging faithfulness to be kept by each of the persons involved and by the congregation with which they are associated, and one copy should be sent to the Branch office of the Watch Tower Society in that area. It would also be beneficial for an announcement to be made to the congregation that such a declaration has been made so that all will be aware of the conscientious steps that are being taken to uphold the honorableness of the marriage relationship.

[33] Where the person is unable to gain "Caesar's" recognition but takes the proper steps to establish his marriage with the congregation, he must realize that whatever consequences result to him as far as the world outside is concerned are his sole responsibility and must be faced by him. For example, if some legal issue, involving property or inheritance rights, arises due to an earlier marriage union, the individual cannot claim "Caesar's" judicial protection as regards his new, unrecognized union.

KEEPING BASIC PRINCIPLES CLEAR

[34] From country to country, marriage and divorce legislation presents a multitude of different angles and aspects. Rather than becoming entangled in a confusion of technicalities, the Christian, or the one desiring to become a disciple of God's Son, can be guided by basic Scriptural principles that hold true in all cases.

33. What responsibility must the individual bear personally in connection with a declaration of faithfulness?
34. Regarding marriage and divorce, what is the final written authority for the Christian?

[35] God's view is of first concern. So, first of all the person must consider whether that one's present relationship, or the relationship into which he or she contemplates entering, is one that could meet with God's approval or whether, in itself, it violates the standards of God's Word. Take, for example, the situation where a man lives with a wife but also spends time living with another woman as a concubine. As long as such a state of concubinage prevails, the relationship of the second woman can never be harmonized with Christian principles, nor could any declaration on the part of the woman or the man make it do so. The only right course is cessation of the relationship. Similarly with an incestuous relationship with a member of one's immediate family, or a homosexual relationship or other such situation condemned by God's Word. (Matt. 19:5, 6; 1 Tim. 3:2; 1 Cor. 5:1) It is not the lack of any legal validation that makes such relationships unacceptable; they are in themselves unscriptural and, hence, immoral. Hence, a person involved in such a situation could not make any kind of 'declaration of faithfulness,' since it would have no merit in God's eyes.

[36] If the relationship is such that it can have God's approval, then a second principle to consider is that one should do all one can to establish the honorableness of one's marital union in the eyes of all. (Heb. 13:4) A person seeking baptism may be one who, in the past, separated from a legal mate and, without having obtained a divorce, entered into a marital relationship with another person. Considerable time may have passed, and perhaps children have resulted. So, upon learning the truth the person cannot reasonably be expected to go back to his first mate and

35. What is the Scriptural view of concubinage and incest?
36. What is required of a person who, before learning the truth, did not show proper regard for the marriage arrangement?

thus try to refashion his life according to his previous circumstances. But now, in 'desisting from sins,' he must determine that his life henceforth will be lived according to God's will.—1 Pet. 4:1-3; compare 1 Corinthians 7:17-24.

[37] What then? If divorce is possible, then such step should now be taken so that, having obtained the divorce (on whatever legal grounds may be available), the present union can receive civil validation as a recognized marriage. These same things would be true of the person who, before learning the truth, has become guilty of bigamy. He should take the necessary steps to have the matter resolved legally (as by annulment and/or divorce) so that he or she may now be recognized as the legal mate of only one person.

[38] Finally, if the marital relationship is not one out of harmony with the principles of God's Word, and if one has done all that can reasonably be done to have it recognized by civil authorities and has been blocked in doing so, then a declaration pledging faithfulness can be signed. In some cases, as has been noted, the extreme slowness of official action may make the accomplishing of legal steps a matter of many, many years of effort. Or it may be that the costs represent a crushingly heavy burden that the individual would need years to be able to meet. In such cases the declaration pledging faithfulness will provide the congregation with the basis for viewing the existing marriage as honorable, while the individual continues conscientiously to work out the legal aspects to the best of his ability. A fact worth noting is that in many communities, and even in entire countries, the people themselves give little importance to the legal factors involved in marriage and are far more affected by what they actually see as evidence of a faithful marriage union. Nevertheless, even here the Christian should sincerely endeavor to take whatever steps are available, or that open up for him, to establish the honorableness of his union beyond question.

[39] By keeping in mind the basic principles presented, the Christian should be able to approach the matter in a balanced way, neither underestimating nor overestimating the validation offered by the political state. He (or she) should always give primary concern to God's view of the union. Along with this, every effort should be made to set a fine example of faithfulness and devotion to one's mate, thus keeping the marriage "honorable among all." Such course will bring God's blessing and result to the honor and praise of the Author of marriage, Jehovah God. —1 Cor. 10:31-33.

37. What steps may a person have to take to get legal recognition for an existing marital arrangement?

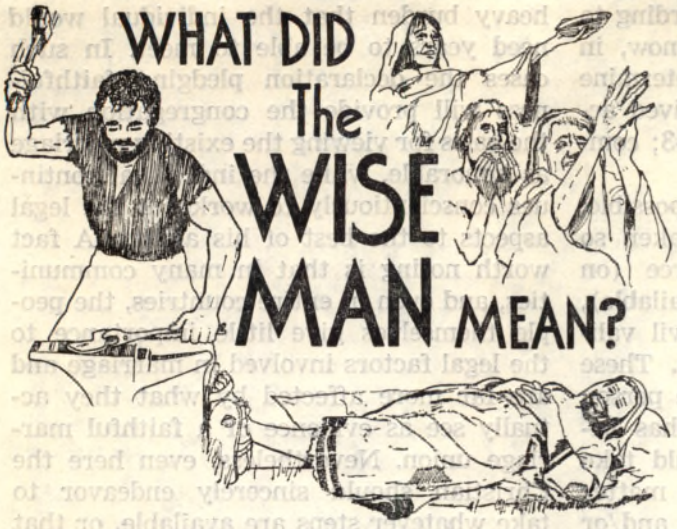
38. How can a person show that he desires an honorable marriage even though he is not in a position to get legal recognition for a union that is acceptable in the sight of God?

39. What confidence may Christians have when they seek to keep marriage honorable?

"The Breezy Part of the Day"

◈ It was in "the breezy part [literally, the spirit or wind] of the day" that Jehovah pronounced judgment upon the disobedient Adam and Eve in Eden. (Gen. 3:8-19) This may well have been during the time before sunset when refreshing cool breezes spring up in the region where the Garden of Eden is thought to have been located. The traditional site is in eastern Turkey, about 140 miles (225 kilometers) southwest of Mount Ararat and a few miles south of Lake Van.

WHAT DID The WISE MAN MEAN?



Be Balanced in Work

A person's being willing to work hard, doing so with skill, is certainly commendable. But hard work and proficiency do not necessarily bring satisfaction. Wise King Solomon wrote: "I myself have seen all the hard work and all the proficiency in work, that it means the rivalry of one toward another; this also is vanity and a striving after the wind."—Eccl. 4:4.

A person may work hard and skillfully, not merely to accomplish something worth while, but to surpass others in proficiency and productivity. When people working side by side are spurred on by a desire to prove themselves better than their fellow workers, competition and rivalry replace friendly cooperation. Feelings of ill will and envy may develop. Improper judgments may be made that totally ignore others' limitations. Thus all working with a view to outshining others is a 'striving after wind,' after emptiness. The end result is most undesirable. The wise person avoids this.

Yet another extreme to be shunned is outright laziness. "The stupid one," said Solomon, "is folding his hands and is eating his own flesh." (Eccl. 4:5) Instead of making use of his hands in productive work, the lazy person folds his hands, doing as little as possible. He is stupid in that his inactivity brings him into want. Deprived of proper food and other necessities due to his indolence, he endangers his health and may, therefore, die prematurely. In thus injuring himself he 'feeds on his own flesh.'

Since both competitive toiling and laziness are undesirable, what is the balanced view of work? Solomon stated: "Better is a handful of rest than a double handful of hard work and striving after the wind."—Eccl. 4:6.

The wise course is to avoid getting so wrapped up in toil that there is no time for enjoying the fruit of one's labor. This means being content with what one has. The person who is never satisfied simply has no rest. His life is filled with cares and anxieties about his material attainments and how he might get still more.

Far better off is the person who is content with less. He is not afraid to make use of his resources in enjoying food and drink as well as wholesome recreation. He is also concerned about others and is glad to help those in real need. This is in harmony with the Scriptural counsel: "Let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need." (Eph. 4:28) Are you among those who are enjoying "a handful of rest" as a result of this balanced view of work?

Man's Inhumanity to Man

The human family has long experienced terrible oppression and injustice. Based on his observations made nearly 3,000 years ago, King Solomon wrote: "I myself returned that I might see all the acts of oppression that are being done under the

sun, and, look! the tears of those being oppressed, but they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, so that they had no comforter. And I congratulated the dead who had already died rather than the living who were still alive. So better than both of them is the one who has not yet come to be, who has not seen the calamitous work that is being done under the sun."—Eccl. 4:1-3.

Evidently Solomon had, at first, given only passing notice to man's inhumanity to man. However, 'upon returning,' that is, reconsidering the matter, he was appalled at how great the oppression really was. Because the oppressors had the power or authority, the oppressed were forced to bear their sorrowful plight without anyone's offering sympathy or comfort. So distressing was the situation that Solomon concluded that the dead were better off, as they no longer had to undergo the hurtful effects of injustice. Viewed from this standpoint, the one who has not been born is still better off in that he does not have to see or experience this terrible calamity at all.

How forcefully this illustrates man's inability to eradicate injustice and tyranny! Even King Solomon, with all his wisdom and authority, could not straighten out the misery stemming from human imperfection. Only Jehovah God, through Jesus Christ, can do this. It is good news indeed that he has promised to bring about liberation from distress at the most appropriate time for all concerned.—Rev. 21:3, 4.

Blessings from Not Retaliating

● Of Jesus the Bible tells us: "When he was being reviled, he did not go reviling in return. When he was suffering, he did not go threatening." (1 Pet. 2:23) Those who imitate Jesus in not retaliating in kind have experienced rich blessings.

This is what happened to a young woman in Nigeria who for the first time shared with Jehovah's Witnesses in public preaching. Informed that the occupant of one particular house was bitterly opposed, she still wanted to speak to him. What happened?

The householder grabbed a container of palm oil and threw the oil on her. It spattered on her face, clothes and bag. Without saying a word, she began to wipe the oil off her face. A few minutes passed. Observing the young woman's peaceful attitude, the man felt a little ashamed. He asked her to tell him just why she called at his home. This time he listened.

Not long thereafter a Bible study was started with him. Today he, too, shares in public preaching activity as a baptized witness of Jehovah.

In the same country, one of Jehovah's Witnesses was offering Bible literature to persons when one who claimed to be a "Christian prophet" approached him. This man grabbed literature from him, tearing it to pieces. The Witness said nothing but bent down and picked up the pieces and then dropped these into his bag. A man who had observed all of this then approached the Witness, saying: "I was in the street watching what our prophet did to you, but without even a single word of abuse from you." After commending the Witness, he continued: "I am ready to become one of you from today on." He proved true to his word and is today sharing Bible truth with his neighbors.

Truly, imitating Jesus' example in not retaliating has a good effect on honest-hearted persons.

transmitting THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES to you

LIKELY you possess a copy in your own language of the Hebrew Scriptures, commonly called the "Old Testament." This Hebrew portion of the Holy Bible has a few chapters and isolated verses written in Aramaic. The writing of the Hebrew Scriptures was completed more than 2,400 years ago.

Can you be confident that your copy of the Hebrew Scriptures represents what was originally written? Some feel that thousands of years of copying and recopying would surely obscure the original-language text beyond recognition. But has this really happened? It is interesting to consider some basic information as to how these writings have come down through the centuries.

Right from the start of Bible writing efforts were made to preserve the Word of God. The Scriptures state that Moses commanded the Levites to preserve "this book of the law" for the benefit of succeeding generations. (Deut. 31:25, 26) Kings of Israel were commanded by God to make "a copy of this law" when they took their seat on the throne.—Deut. 17:18.

Later, a special need for copies of the Hebrew Scriptures arose in the time of Ezra, a priest who, along with other Jews, went up from Babylon to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Persian King Artaxerxes (468 B.C.E.). (Ezra 7:1-7) Thousands of Jews had chosen to remain in Babylon and others had been scattered about because of migrations and for business purposes. Local assembly halls known as synagogues sprang up in different places, and for these scribes had to make handwritten copies of Biblical manuscripts. Ezra himself is identified as "a skilled copyist in the law of Moses" and as "a copyist of the words of the commandments of Jehovah and of his regulations toward Israel."—Ezra 7:6, 11.

THE WORK OF "SOPHERIM"

Copyists of the Hebrew Scriptures from Ezra's day onward for some 1,000 years were known as "sopherim." A very ancient rabbinic tradition connects this title with a Hebrew verb (*sa·phar'*), meaning "to count," saying: "The early scholars were called Sof'rim, because they counted all the letters in the Torah," that is, the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Bible. Such painstaking efforts assured a high degree of accuracy in transmission of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Of course, centuries of copying would naturally result in some mistakes finding their way into the Hebrew Bible text. There is evidence that the sopherim even made a few intentional changes. For example, copyists much later in history list 134 places where the sopherim changed the original Hebrew text to read *Adonay* ["Lord"] instead of God's personal name

YHWH ["Jehovah"]. Fortunately, though, these scribes indicated where they had made changes so that subsequent scholars would know what the text originally said.

According to Jewish tradition, before the destruction in 70 C.E. of the temple of God's worship in Jerusalem strenuous efforts were made to get back to what the Hebrew Bible text originally said. Concerning this, Robert Gordis writes in *The Biblical Text in the Making:* "The guardians of the Biblical text found one ancient, meticulously written manuscript and made it the foundation for their work. They established it as the archetype from which all official copies were to be made and by which all manuscripts in private hands could henceforth be corrected."

Rabbinic literature mentions a Hebrew copy of the Pentateuch known as the "Scroll of the Temple precincts" that served as a model for revision of new copies. There is also mention of "correctors of biblical books in Jerusalem" who received their wages from the Temple treasury.

THE "MASORETIC" TEXT

Originally Hebrew Bible manuscripts were written with only consonants. The Hebrew alphabet does not have vowel letters such as our *a, e, i, o, u, y*. But if you look at a printed Hebrew Bible today, you will notice that above, below, or in the middle of each word are dots, dashes and other marks. Why were these added to the text of Hebrew Scriptures? Because Hebrew words written with only consonants can often be pronounced several different ways, with variations of meaning. The vowel points and accents serve to safeguard the traditional pronunciation of each word.

The vowel points and accents are the work of specially skilled copyists who lived during the sixth to the tenth centuries C.E. These scribes came to be known as *baalei ha-masoreth* ("masters of tradition"), or "Masoretes." The vowel-pointed Hebrew text is therefore called the "Masoretic" text.

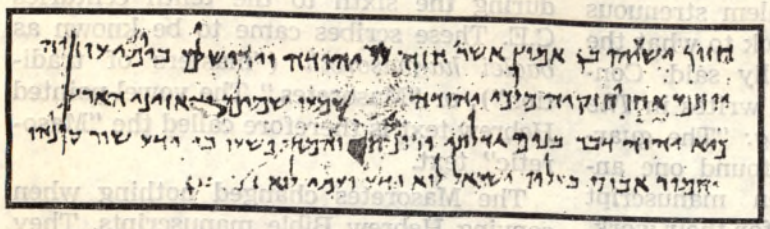
The Masoretes changed nothing when copying Hebrew Bible manuscripts. They examined all unusual word forms, making notes about them in the margins of Masoretic manuscripts. These notes are called "masorah." A highly abbreviated method of notation, known as the "small masorah," appears in the margins beside the Hebrew Bible text. The top and bottom margins contain the "large masorah," which supplements the small masorah. At the end of some Masoretic manuscripts is found a concordance-like "final Masorah."

These notations reveal that the Masoretes had amassed a vast amount of information for faithfully preserving the Biblical text. According to Robert Gordis, they "counted the letters of Scripture, determined the middle letter and the middle verse of the Torah [Pentateuch], established the middle letter of the Bible as a whole, compiled extensive lists of rare and unique Biblical forms, listed the number of occurrences of thousands of Biblical words and usages—all in order to help protect it from tampering and prevent

Masoretic text of Leviticus 10:16. Tiny circle above a Hebrew word (left arrow) points to marginal note (right arrow), saying: "Middle word of Pentateuch"

scribes from introducing changes into the accepted text."

For example, the small masorah notes that the first word of Genesis, *b'reshith'* (often rendered: "In the beginning"), occurs five times in the Bible, three of them at the beginning of a verse. Many words



Beginning of Isaiah from Dead Sea Scroll of 100 B.C.E. (above) and Leningrad Manuscript of 1000 C.E. (left). Though 1,100 years apart, they show almost word-for-word agreement

on nearly every page of Masoretic Bible manuscripts are marked in the margin by the Hebrew letter *lamedh* (ל). This letter (equivalent to our "l") is an abbreviation for the word *leit,* Aramaic for "there is none." It indicates that the expression as it appears in that spot occurs nowhere else. Concerning the masorah, Ernst Würthwein remarks in *The Text of the Old Testament:*

> "Often such Masoretic notes seem to us far-fetched, frivolous and without purpose. But we must remember that they are the result of a passionate desire to protect the text and to prevent wilful or careless mistakes by the scribe, . . . The Masora bears witness to an extremely exact revision of the text, which deserves our respect, even though there is always the danger that in the care for the letter of the text its spirit has been missed."

ACCURACY CONFIRMED BY DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Searches in the area of the Dead Sea have turned up numerous Hebrew scrolls written before the beginning of the Common Era. Many of these contain parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. How do they compare with Masoretic manuscripts produced some one thousand or more years earlier?

In one study, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was examined both in a Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah, copied about 100 B.C.E., and in the Masoretic text. Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix give the results of this study in *A General Introduction to the Bible:*

> "Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen letters in question. Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word 'light,' which is added in verse 11, and does not affect the meaning greatly. . . . Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission —and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage."

Another publication notes that this scroll and an additional copy of parts of Isaiah found near the Dead Sea "proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling."

When reading the Hebrew Scriptures,

therefore, you can be confident that your Bible is based upon a Hebrew text that accurately conveys the thoughts of God's inspired penmen. (2 Tim. 3:16) Thousands of years of painstaking professional copying has assured what God long ago foretold: "The green grass has dried up, the blossom has withered; but as for the word of our God, it will last to time indefinite."—Isa. 40:8.

The "Synagogue of the Freedmen"

■ Among those who disputed with Stephen were men from the "so-called Synagogue of the Freedmen." (Acts 6:9) Who might these men have been? A freedman was an emancipated slave. Hence, those associated with the "Synagogue of the Freedmen" may have been freed slaves who had become Jewish proselytes, or Jews taken captive by the Romans but later set at liberty.

● A man I know is progressing toward Christian baptism, but his visa to be in this country *has* expired. What should I advise him?

You certainly should commend him for desiring to know and follow God's counsel. The Scriptures urge Christians to be law-abiding, to pay to Caesar what is Caesar's. (Matt. 22:21) Hence, it would be good for you to urge this man to do what he can to rectify his status, which may at present be considered that of an illegal alien.

Evidently he is not stealing, lying, living in immorality or otherwise violating God's moral laws plainly stated in the Bible. We mention this because a person who is breaking God's laws must repent and turn around before he will qualify for Christian baptism. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Acts 26:20; 2:38) But, this man wants to know, What about complying with the laws of the land, such as in his case?

The Bible advises Christians to obey the laws of the land in all matters where there is no conflict with God's law. (Rom. 13:1; Acts 5:29) The apostle explained that by doing this we will not need to fear punishment from the authorities who punish lawbreakers. Also, we can thus have a clear conscience.—Rom. 13:3-5.

Still, God's Word does not charge the Christian congregation, through its overseers, with the obligation to become acquainted with all the details of civil and criminal law so as to enforce these. We can see this in how Paul handled the case of Onesimus.

Onesimus was a slave of a Colossian Christian named Philemon. For some selfish reason Onesimus fled to Rome so he could lose himself in the masses of people there; he may even have robbed his master before fleeing. In Rome as a runaway slave (Latin, *fugitivus*) Onesimus came in contact with Paul, became a Christian and ministered to Paul. In time the apostle urged Onesimus to return to his legal master, Paul even encouraging Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother and to treat him kindly. —Philem. 8-22.

Take note that while Onesimus was in Rome the apostle Paul did not hand him over to the Roman authorities for punishment as a fugitive slave and possibly a thief. We know from his writings that Paul believed that a Christian should obey the law of the land, but plainly he did not consider it the congregation's duty to serve as an arm of the government in policing individuals' lives. Also, we can observe that Onesimus' situation was not treated as a barrier to his getting baptized. Eventually Onesimus, likely motivated by counsel such as had been written earlier in Romans 13:1-5 and by Paul's personal urgings, chose to return to his legal master.

The Christian congregation today follows a course harmonious with this Biblical pattern.

It does not, before allowing a person to get baptized or continue in the congregation, check to see if someone's home meets every detail of the building code, whether he has satisfied every detail as to his legal status in the country, and so forth.

This by no means suggests that God's people care little about Caesar's laws. On the contrary, we are well known as a people who strive to be law-abiding; many governmental officials have praised Jehovah's Witnesses for this. It is even as Paul wrote about obeying the government, "Keep doing good, and you will have praise from it."—Rom. 13:3.

In particular should men who take the lead in the congregation be exemplary in this respect. The Bible says about elders and ministerial servants that they should be "irreprehensible," 'having a fine testimony from people on the outside' and being "free from accusation." (1 Tim. 3:2, 7, 10) Thus a Christian who chooses to ignore well-known legal requirements of "Caesar" would hardly be in position to be recommended for such offices in the congregation. Men recommended for such privileges should be ones "holding firmly to the faithful word," not only in what they say, but also in how they choose to live, including their applying the counsel to pay "Caesar's things to Caesar."—Titus 1:7-9.

True, each individual, Christian or not, is personally responsible as to whether he complies with civil laws. Yet, it will be kind on your part to share with your acquaintance these Scriptural thoughts. Indeed, the Bible's counsel to be obedient to governmental laws is wise and for our good. By applying it Christians can avoid troublesome problems and enjoy a clear conscience in serving God.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

April 17: Marriage—An Arrangement Honored in God's Word. Page 172. Songs to Be Used: 12, 86.

April 24: Maintaining Marriage in Honor Before God and Men, ¶1-23. Page 177. Songs to Be Used: 9, 79.

May 1: Maintaining Marriage in Honor Before God and Men, ¶24-39. Page 182. Songs to Be Used: 5, 31.