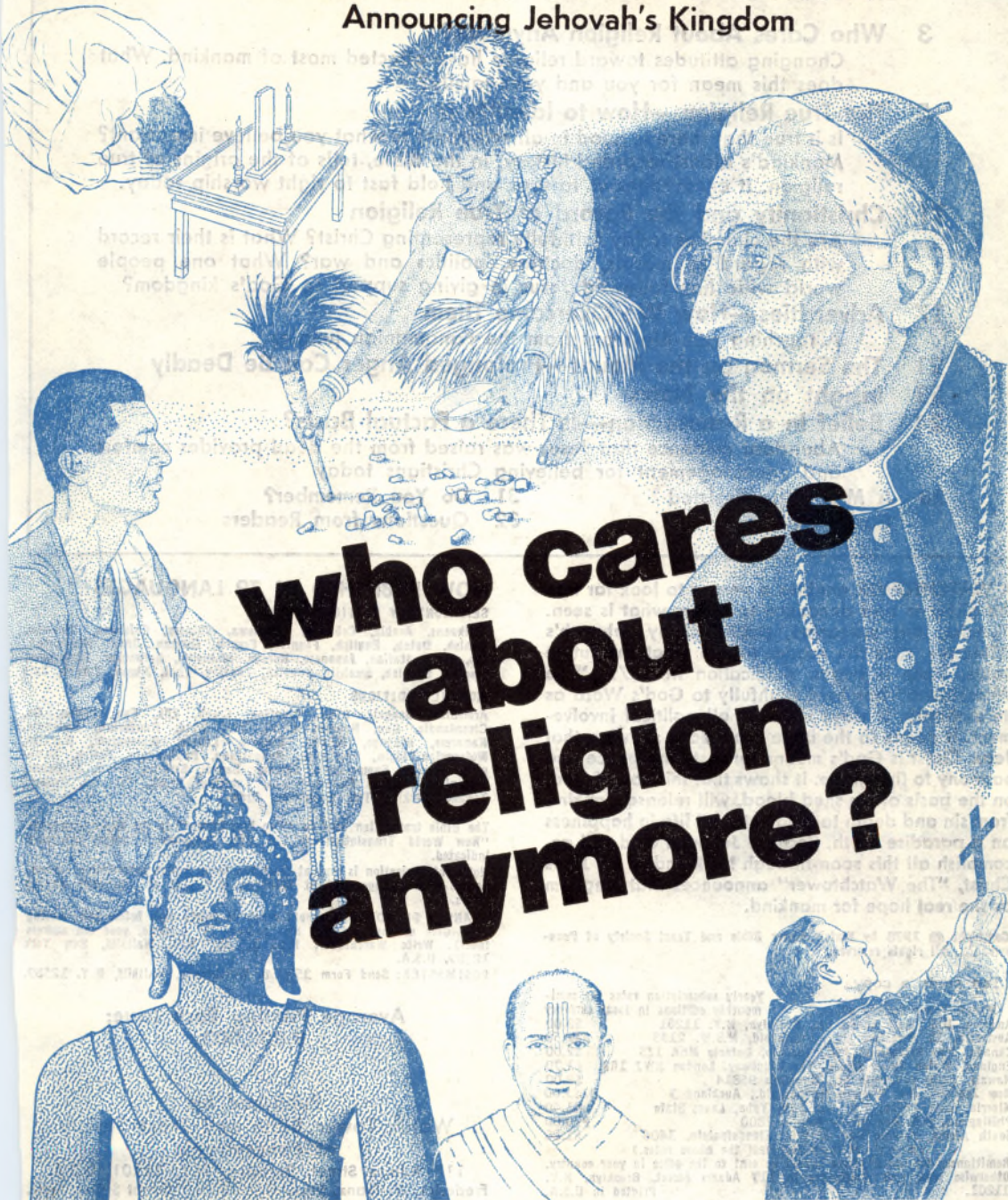


APRIL 15, 1978

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

**who cares
about
religion
anymore?**



IN THIS ISSUE

- 3 Who Cares About Religion Anymore?**
Changing attitudes toward religion have affected most of mankind. What does this mean for you and your family?
- 5 The True Religion—How to Identify It**
Is it true that there is good in all religions? Is what you believe important? Mankind's oldest recorded history, in the Bible, tells of the origins of true religion. It encourages us to seek and hold fast to right worship today.
- 11 Christianity and the Record of True Religion**
Are the churches today faithfully representing Christ? What is their record with regard to morals, doctrine, politics and war? What one people world wide has followed Jesus in giving support to God's kingdom?
- 17 Adversities—How We Overcame Them**
A touching real-life story from the Panamanian jungles
- 21 The Sermon on the Mount—Prolonged Anger Can Be Deadly**
- 23 Insight on the News**
- 24 Belief in a Resurrection—Is There a Factual Basis?**
Abundant evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead provides comfort and encouragement for believing Christians today
- 28 A Man Who Resisted God's Will**
- 31 Do You Remember?**
- 32 Questions from Readers**

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Do you have a religion? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you really care about religion? ☐ Yes ☐ No

There is a good likelihood that you checked "Yes" after the first question. Most persons would, for over 2½ billion persons are members of the principal religions of the world. Millions more are associated with other religions or hold religious beliefs.

What, though, about that second matter: Do you really care about religion? Is it an important and influential part of your life so that you feel concerned about religion that is right?

Many people today express little interest in religion. They neither talk much about religion nor do they particularly let it affect their lives. What about yourself? What if we polled your neighbors, workmates or schoolmates, asking them whether they thought you cared about religion, what do you think most would answer?

DO MOST CARE?

By considering a number of points, you may better appreciate why it is difficult to answer the question 'Who cares about religion anymore?'

On the one hand, there is some evidence of considerable interest in religion today. Have you noticed, for example, how many books and newspaper articles there are on religious subjects? One writer made this comment about the market for books on religion:

"Dealers used to sell religious books to religious people and would not stock a book that spoke disparagingly of religion unless it was the religion of the 'heathen,' which everyone knew was not real religion but idolatry and paganism. Now, however, dealers also sell, and in increasing volume,

who cares about religion anymore?

books about religion to non-churchgoing people who wonder how conventionally religious people 'get that way,' and wonder, too, if they themselves would be happier if they got that way also."

Additionally, you cannot help but have noticed another apparent evidence of an intense interest in religion: People are fighting, yes, even killing one another because of religion. True, you may not have thought about it in exactly those terms, but that is what is happening.

For example, what about the bitter fighting between the religious factions in the Philippines or in Lebanon? Do you recall the Buddhist-Catholic conflict that boiled up in Vietnam? Nor can we ignore the brutality in Ireland between Catholics and Protestants—where persons are being shot down or blown apart because of their religion. A recent Associated Press dispatch began:

"The world's religions teach peace, justice and love, yet they also evoke commitment, loyalties, passions and, paradoxically, sometimes war. . . . 'Bloody and vicious wars are still being fought in the name of God.'"

The fighting in the name of religion might suggest that many people do care intensely about religion. However, do you

really think that is so of your business associates, schoolmates or most people in your community? Could they even tell you accurately what their religion teaches, and why?

For example, in 1977 professor of philosophy Walter Kaufmann wrote about religious beliefs in one land. In presenting his statement to you, we will omit the name of the country and the identity of the sacred writings that he mentioned. See if what he says would prove true if you filled in the name of the country where you live and the religious writings widely accepted there:

"Most people in [your country] do not know exactly what they believe, never having given much thought to the matter. When suddenly asked about what they believe, they give responses that go back to the time when they last talked about such questions, many years ago. People who say that they believe in the literal interpretation of [their sacred writings] do not know, in most cases, what is in [these writings] and would be rather surprised if anyone told them."

Yes, on one hand religion seems to "evoke commitment, loyalties, passions and, paradoxically, sometimes war" and, on the other hand, people in general just do not know what their religion teaches, nor do they care to find out.—Compare Romans 10:2.

Note this newspaper headline:

RELIGIOUS REVIVAL TREND MOCKED BY LAX MORALITY

Would you say that this fairly well describes the situation you see around you? As one nationwide poll in the United States showed: "Religion is increasing its influence on society, but morality is losing its influence. The secular world would seem to offer abundant evidence that religion is not greatly affecting our lives."

Nor will you find this confined to any one land. In country after country people admit to being basically religious but their lives prove that religion is affecting them less and less.

A report from Canada gives insight into one of the reasons. It spoke of the people having a basic spiritual hunger, but said that instead of meeting this hunger, the major religions are causing "severe, widespread, religious indigestion." An observer at a Canadian conference of Catholic bishops complained that a typical response from people in general is:

"Today each person has deep questions inside. You don't find the answers in religion, in the church. Although I have faith, there's something missing in the church."

Or have you heard remarks such as these made by one man who preferred to be out riding his bicycle instead of going to religious services: "A lot of preachers are in it for the buck. Preaching's gotten to be big business nowadays."

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

What does all of this mean for you and your family?

There is no denying that religious passions today still can move people to hatred, killing and war. Yet alongside this there is evidence of increasing dissatisfaction with religion. Many have a spiritual hunger or a desire to worship but are confused and uncertain about religion. They may be embarrassed to appear religious or they may feel that religion is too confusing for them. Is that how you feel?

Or, perhaps you do consider yourself quite religious. You may care about your religion, being convinced that it is correct. In any case, there is good reason for you to accept an invitation to give some thought to the matter of right religion. The book *The Great Religious Leaders* made this observation: "When we actually know what religion does for and

to the individual, and how a person's powers are increased by an intelligent understanding and appropriation of religion, *life ought to be infinitely more worth living.*"

Not only should true religion make 'life more worth living,' but we can assure you

that the facts prove that *it does!* But before you agree or disagree with that statement, we invite you to think further about the matter of true religion. Is there just one true religion? If so, how could you identify it? And what can it mean for you?

the true religion

—how to identify it

"Be filled with the accurate knowledge of his will . . . to the end of fully pleasing him."—Col. 1:9, 10.

IF TWO persons were arguing over which is the true religion, and asked you to sit as 'judge' to determine who was right, would you want to do so?

² Few subjects are as controversial as religion. History provides a noteworthy example involving one of the early leaders of Christianity, the apostle Paul. After a near riot that arose because of different religious views, Paul was arrested. His case was heard by Festus, governor of the Roman province of Judea. Paul's accusers were Jewish religious leaders, including high priest Ananias. Festus later reported to King Herod Agrippa II on what occurred:

³ "When confronted with [Paul], his accusers did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected; but they had some

argument or other with him about their own religion."—Acts 25:18, 19, *Jerusalem Bible.*

⁴ As you can well appreciate, Governor Festus was reluctant to get involved in a religious dispute. Many people feel that it would be unwise either to claim to have the true religion or to try to decide whether any religion is true. You must have heard the seemingly wise and liberal view, 'Let each man believe as he wants. There is good in all religions.'

⁵ Nonetheless, all of us are definitely involved—this is not a subject that we personally can avoid. Despite the increasing emphasis on being scientific, and on atheism in the Communistic world, religion is part of our inner makeup. As one encyclopedia expressed it:

5. Why can it be said that every individual is involved in the matter of religion?

1-4. (a) How do many people feel about judging religious matters? (Acts 18:12-17) (b) Why might you or others feel that way?

“Of the whole family of man, existing in all ages, and scattered over every quarter of the globe, there is not one well-authenticated exception to the fact that, moved by an inward impulse, and guided by revelation or tradition, man worships something which he believes to be endowed with the attributes of a superior being.”

⁶ The volume *Religion and Philosophy* says about religion in the distant past: “The origin of the world and man’s place in it were as puzzling as death. Explanations of these questions vary enormously, but they are still basic to modern religion. Although science can explain most phenomena of the here and now, men everywhere still seek hope beyond the few decades of individual existence.”

⁷ Certainly, with regard to answers to these fundamental questions and to hope for the future, we do not want to rely on a delusion or a myth. That being so, we have ample reason for investigating this matter of identifying the true religion.

⁸ The view of the atheist is that there is no God, while the agnostic says that no one really knows about this—that we are just here. But do these views really satisfy or harmonize with the facts? Some share the thoughts expressed by philosopher-historian Will Durant, who was reported as saying:

“I feel the creator’s urge in all living things and I suspect there is something corresponding to that even in the atom, in all its exploding electrons. An atom is not a dead thing. It’s a thing throbbing . . . with life. And consequently I can’t think of the universe as a machine. A machine does not throb with life. It stands perfectly still unless something throbbing with life gets hold of it.”

Many persons, even some agnostics, have grappled with such thoughts in seeking the answer to life and have reasoned that this higher intelligence, this Creator, logi-

cally would provide answers or information for his creation, even as we humans do for our own children.

SEARCHING FOR TRUE RELIGION

⁹ Those who are sincerely searching for truth generally recognize that there must be a God and that he reasonably would reveal his will and offer answers about why we are here, what life means and what the future holds for us. Consider the case of a Persian man in West Berlin. Years ago his father was an influential politician, but after a political reverse he took the family to Russia, where the son studied and became an engineer. In time the young man moved to East Berlin and later sought asylum in West Berlin. He explains:

“Although I belonged to an Eastern religion, I had not been active religiously. Still, since childhood I believed in God and I often meditated on the purpose of life and why there are so many religions. In the summer of 1975 I met two students of the Bible and talked over matters with them. From their explanations I was able to conclude that the Bible is inspired of God. They visited me at my home and we got involved in discussions regarding the differences in religions. They left with me the book *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?** The explanations in it based on the Bible brought about changes in my entire outlook on life. What I learned, and the changes this brought about in my thinking and actions, have brought me great joy.”

How reasonable it was for this engineer to give consideration to the Bible! The Bible includes the oldest and most widely circulated of all sacred writings. It alone comes to grips with questions that we need answered—Why are we here? Why do we die? What does the future hold?

¹⁰ When we mention the Bible, is your

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9. Why was the course of a certain Persian man, in looking into the Bible, a reasonable one? (Job 35:9-11)

10. What may be observed as to whether all religions using the Bible teach, basically, the same thing?

6, 7. What reasons does everyone have for investigating true religion?

8. What thoughts might pass through a person’s mind as he contemplates the universe?

reaction, 'Well, most all persons who accept the Bible believe, fundamentally, the same thing'? Many feel that way. However, that is definitely not the case. As with the engineer in West Berlin, millions of sincere, intelligent persons who have examined this vital issue of true worship know that there are vast differences between the teachings and the practices of various religions claiming to be based on the Bible. And, frankly, there are also vast differences between most of these religions and the Bible itself. These differences can involve your entire approach to life and religion. As we examine a few basic and vital points, analyze your own religion or beliefs. Ask yourself, 'Am I *personally* seeking true worship?' And if you see that in some ways your beliefs or practices are at variance with true religion, think seriously about what you will do.

¹¹ The possible need to adjust our beliefs or conduct should not surprise anyone familiar with the Bible. For instance, Jesus Christ said, regarding some very religious persons of his day, 'the worship they offer is worthless; the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.' (Matt. 15:9, *JB*) Nor is it just a matter of doctrine. Jesus' half brother James wrote: "Faith is dead if it is separated from good deeds" and "Nobody must imagine that he is religious while he still goes on deceiving himself and not keeping control over his tongue; anyone who does this has the wrong idea of religion."—Jas. 2:26; 1:26, *JB*.

A KEY ACCOUNT

¹² In considering the matter of true religion, many persons might first think of what Jesus taught and did. But before we

examine that, let us give some attention to the first book of the Bible, Genesis. Persons earth wide are familiar with what it says about Adam and Eve. Simple as that account may seem, it is a key place to look in searching for identifying marks of true religion.

¹³ Briefly, Genesis reports that God created man directly, forming him out of the elements of the earth and then proceeded "to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul." (Gen. 2:7) The Creator designated one of the trees of the garden where Adam lived as representing the knowledge of good and bad and commanded: "From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die." (Gen. 2:16, 17) God thus indicated his right to determine what is good and what is bad. Adam was not left to work out by painful trial and error what was good and what was bad or what was the right or the wrong religion. The Creator also made a woman, Eve, and presented her to Adam as a permanent mate. We read: "That is why a man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24) Now, in our seeking to identify true religion we can learn much from this well-known account.

¹⁴ First, the Bible says plainly that man was created directly by God. (Gen. 2:7) It does not say that over millions of years he evolved from some form of animal life. How do we know? Because the record unequivocally states that the animals were to reproduce "according to their kinds." (Gen. 1:21, 24) True there is latitude for *variety within* the animal *kinds*, such as the many types and sizes in the cat family.

11. Why should all of us be willing to consider making adjustments in our beliefs and conduct?

12, 13. The account of Adam and Eve contains what details that might aid a person seeking to identify true religion?

14. How could you reason with someone *as to what* Genesis says and the theory of evolution?

The Bible says plainly that man was created by God and that the man himself was made "a living soul"—not that he has an immortal soul



But God's law prescribed a boundary, so that the animals could not evolve from one *kind* to another animal *kind*, nor into humans, the highest of created kinds on earth. Furthermore, no intermediate life forms have ever been found. Does your religion accept the Bible account, or does it go along with the popular but unproven theory of evolution?

¹⁵ Next, we can note that Adam was created with the prospect of endless life here on earth. God said that if he disobeyed, he would die. The converse is clear. If he obeyed God, he would not die. He would continue alive on earth. As what? As a human soul. Did we not read, "the man *came to be* a living soul"?—Gen. 2:7.

¹⁶ These facts are significant because so many religions maintain that each human has within him an immortal soul. That was a prominent teaching in ancient Egypt and Babylon, and it is still found in many religions. But does it agree with what Genesis says about Adam? Not at all. Adam

15. What does Genesis tell us about Adam and Eve's life and prospects? (Gen. 1:28)

16-18. In reasoning with someone about identifying the true religion, how could you use what Genesis says about the human soul, death and the possibility of life after death?

did not have an immortal soul within him—he *was* a soul. And what would happen at death? Would he receive immortal life as a spirit? No! God said that he would return to the ground, "for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Gen. 3:19) Adam's death was to be a punishment for breaking God's law, not a step toward immortal life somewhere else.

¹⁷ Ask yourself, 'Is that what my religion has taught me?' The Bible nowhere teaches that humans have immortal souls that survive the death of the body. It gives a better hope, namely, that God is able to bring a person back to life as a soul, resurrecting him to live on earth or in the spirit realm.—Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:35-38.

¹⁸ In view of what we read in Genesis, does your religion hold that God's purpose was for humans to live endlessly on earth? Many of the major religions focus attention on afterlife in heaven, nirvana or something of the sort. One mark of the true religion is acceptance of the Bible's teaching that the earth is man's home, where God purposes for humans to live perpetually.—Isa. 45:18.

CONDUCT ALSO INVOLVED

¹⁹ We should observe, too, that true religion as revealed in Genesis involves conduct, not merely certain doctrines or beliefs.

²⁰ When Adam and Eve broke God's law about the fruit of that tree, the most serious aspect of the sin was their disobedience. But did you ever consider the fact that at the same time they were taking something that did not belong to them? In a sense, that might be termed stealing. For their disobedience, their sin that included stealing, they were expelled from the garden of true worship. As you probably know, most religions speak against stealing, do they not? But, in practice, what do they do in the case of an unrepentant thief, whether a shoplifter or white-collar criminal who defrauds the public or embezzles from a business? Do they expel persistent thieves from 'the fold' as God expelled Adam? Think about it.

²¹ Also, consider the matter of marriage. Though to this point in our discussion we have considered only the account of Adam and Eve, in view of what is said about their sticking together we can well ask ourselves, What is the attitude of my religion toward marriage and divorce? Are husband and wife expected to stick together, or is divorce a common and casual thing? God is described as 'hating a

19, 20. How could you use what Genesis says about the tree of the knowledge of good and bad in order to aid a person to examine the practices in his religion? (Ex. 20:15; Josh. 7:20-25)

21. How is what Genesis chapter 2 says about marriage in contrast to what is common of many religions? (Gen. 20:1-9)

divorce.' (Mal. 2:16) Is that the prevailing view in the religions you know of, perhaps even the religion of which you are a member?

NOAH'S EXPERIENCE IN TRUE RELIGION

²² Now let us move on to another Biblical account for help in identifying true religion. It involves Noah, whom we are told "walked with the true God." At a time when "the badness of man was abundant in the earth and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only bad all the time," Noah did not keep true religion to himself. He did not view it as a personal and private matter. He was "a preacher of righteousness." The Bible tells us that God brought a global flood to destroy the wicked, but he preserved Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives.—Gen. 6:5-8:2; 2 Pet. 2:5.

²³ Some may respond that the account of Noah and the flood is but a fable or an allegory. How does your religion stand on this? If you asked one of its leaders,

22, 23. How could you reason with others as to Noah's action and the flood account in helping them to distinguish true religion? (Ezek. 14:14; Heb. 11:7)



What is the attitude of your religion toward marriage and divorce? Are husband and wife expected to stick together, as the Bible teaches?

would he say that the Bible account of Noah and the flood is interesting but should not be taken literally? If so, that would be significant, for it would put him in opposition to Jesus Christ, the Founder of Christianity. Jesus accepted the Biblical account of Noah and the global deluge as historical fact, and so did his apostles. —Luke 17:26, 27; 1 Pet. 3:20.

²⁴ According to the record in Genesis chapter 9, when Noah and his family emerged from the ark in which they had survived the flood, God stated some clear commands that are helpful to us in identifying true religion today. We read:

“Every moving animal that is alive may serve as food for you. As in the case of green vegetation, I do give it all to you. Only flesh with its soul—its blood—you must not eat. And, besides that, your blood of your souls shall I ask back. . . . Anyone shedding man’s blood, by man will his own blood be shed, for in God’s image he made man.”—Gen. 9:3-6.

²⁵ Though God made this statement millenniums ago, it was issued at the

24-26. What commands did God give to Noah, and why are they noteworthy?

outset of a new chapter in human history. This emphasizes that it is important in establishing what is true religion. Noah, through his sons, became the forefather of all mankind. Therefore, what God commanded Noah logically applies to all humans on earth today.

²⁶ What did those commands mean for Noah and his family? For one thing, they were not to eat meat with the blood still in it. Consuming blood, which represented an animal’s life as a soul, was forbidden. Also, Noah was told not to murder humans. Thus all of mankind, as descendants of Noah, are required to show due respect for blood and for life, if they are to have God’s approval.

²⁷ Though we have so far considered just two early accounts in the Bible, we have been able to isolate some identifying marks of true religion. Since all of us

27. In seeking to identify true religion, what further examination is in order, and why should we be looking for consistency?

The Bible presents the account of Noah and the flood as a historical reality—is that what you have been taught?



have an inner desire to worship, what we have examined up to this point should be most useful to us. But we can be aided further in identifying true religion by next considering some aspects of the teachings

christianity and the record of true religion

The Detroit *Free Press* for December 24, 1976, asked:

WOULD TODAY'S CHRISTIANS LEAD SECOND CRUCIFIXION?

In the article that followed, columnist Sydney J. Harris wrote:

"If there should be, on Christmas Day, a second coming, would there not soon be a second crucifixion? And this time, not by the Romans or the Jews, but by those who proudly call themselves Christians?

"I wonder how we today would regard and treat this man with his strange and frightening and 'impractical' doctrines of human behavior and social relationships....

"Would not the militarists among us assail him as a cowardly pacifist because he urges us not to resist evil but to return good for evil?

"Would not the nationalists among us attack him as a dangerous subversive because he tells us we are all of one flesh?

... Would not the sentimentalists among us reject him as a cynic because he warns us that the way to salvation is narrow and difficult? ...

"I wonder. I wonder if the Christian Era has yet begun."

² This article dramatically emphasizes

of Jesus Christ and his apostles at the beginning of Christianity. In doing so, we will see the consistency between the beginning of the Bible and its later portions as to identifying marks of true religion.

some of the major differences between the teachings of Jesus Christ and the viewpoint of many people today who claim to believe in the true religion as set forth in the Bible.

JESUS AND TRUE RELIGION

³ Now, we have seen that the Bible book of Genesis teaches that Jehovah God created the first humans, Adam and Eve. Though many clergymen and churchgoers who prefer the theory of evolution consider the Genesis account as myth, what about Jesus, the Founder of Christianity?

"It is undeniable that Jesus was sure that God created Adam and Eve, the parents of the human race. His disciples also believed this. (Gen. 2:21-24; 1 Cor. 6:16; 15:45; Eph. 5:31; Luke 3:23-38) Once, in answering a question about divorce, Jesus said:

"Did you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, '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'? So that they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God

3, 4. How does a common view of Adam and Eve compare with what was believed (a) by Jesus? (Gen. 1:26) (b) by his disciples?

1, 2. How does what is generally called "Christianity" compare with the religion of Jesus Christ?

has yoked together let no man put apart. . . . I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery."
—Matt. 19:4-9.

⁵ We can be assured by this statement of Jesus that he and his followers accepted the Bible as inspired and reliable. Such acceptance is an important distinguishing mark of true religion. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) Each of us may ask, then, 'Does my religion accept the Bible as inspired and accurate, including what it says about creation? Do I personally believe as did Jesus and the apostles?'

⁶ What Jesus said in Matthew 19:4-9 also illustrates the consistency of true religion with regard to right conduct. Jesus agreed that marriage is sacred and that the marriage covenant is binding; divorce and remarriage are to be permitted by the Scriptures only if one's mate is guilty of gross immorality. By holding to this godly standard, true religion motivates married persons to work at making a success of their union. They should not view marriage as a temporary social contract easily terminated by the State. Accordingly, in practicing true religion the early Christians avoided promiscuity, holding to the Creator's view of marriage as a sacred, binding union. Thus, Dr. C. J. Cadoux wrote regarding Christians in the second century C.E.:

"All sexual intercourse outside the limits of marriage was sternly prohibited. The Christians frequently inveighed against the excesses prevalent in the pagan world around them."—*The Early Church and the World*, p. 283.

⁷ Do you find that the majority of

churches vigorously hold to the Bible's moral standard? Or, is it common for persons claiming to be Christian to get a divorce and remarry though having no Scriptural basis for such? Also, do not many religions retain as members even persons who live together immorally and individuals practicing polygamy?

⁸ Of course, many would say that while the Bible's high morality is admirable, basically it is not possible to hold to it in our time. But it definitely is possible for a religious people to hold to high moral standards despite 'the excesses prevalent in the world around us.' (Heb. 13:4) Note this report from the London *Daily Telegraph* regarding hundreds of thousands of persons on the African continent:

"Jehovah's Witnesses have shown themselves, through Africa, to be decent, orderly citizens living up to a high moral code. . . . The promiscuity and polygamy characteristic of African society is simply inconceivable among Witnesses. The sect inculcates habits of thrift, punctuality, honesty and obedience."—October 26, 1972.

⁹ So, from the beginning, we find as hallmarks of true worship insistence on sexual morality and respect for marriage. This is even involved in the Bible's concern for property rights and condemnation of stealing. That would include stealing another's mate or the moral purity of another person. (Gen. 2:24; Eph. 4:28) Furthermore, the Bible plainly states that persons professing true religion but who unrepentantly continue to be 'fornicators, adulterers, thieves or greedy persons,' *must* be expelled from the Christian congregation in accord with God's requirement: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves." (1 Cor. 5:11-13; 6:9, 10) Firm adherence to such divine morality has consistently identified true religion. We can

5. What attitude toward the Bible helps us to identify true religion?

6. (a) How did Jesus feel about marriage and divorce, and how does true religion compare with the Genesis information on these subjects? (b) What course did the early Christians follow as to sex and marriage? (Heb. 13:4)

7, 8. In your experience, do you find that most churchgoers hold to the Bible's moral standard? Or, is it impossible to do so today?

9. (a) Why is what the Bible says about sexual morality and stealing related? (Deut. 5:19, 21; 1 Thess. 4:4-6) (b) True religion is marked by what action toward someone who becomes an unrepentant, persistent wrongdoer?

ask, How does our worship of God compare with that?

JESUS AND SOUL

¹⁰ Recall that in our previous discussion of Adam we noted that the Bible did not say that Adam possessed an immortal soul, but that he *was* a soul. Is that the same understanding found in the Christian Scriptures or "New Testament"? Indeed it is. The apostle Paul even quoted the Genesis record in discussing the matter of resurrection, saying: "It is even so written: 'The first man Adam became a living soul.' The last Adam [Jesus Christ] became a life-giving spirit." (1 Cor. 15:45) So in this matter, too, there is consistency as to the beliefs of true religion.

¹¹ Christ's early followers could be sure of that understanding because of what occurred with Jesus himself. He, a human soul, was put to death. He remained dead for three days, during which period he was not alive elsewhere. (Acts 2:22-27; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4) He was in the grave until God resurrected him with a spirit body on the third day, later to ascend back to heaven. (1 Pet. 3:18) Earlier, after likening death to the unconsciousness of sleep, Jesus told believers: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life." (John 11:11-14, 25; 5:28, 29) His disciples, then, had no reason to believe any Greek philosophy about man's having an immortal soul.

¹² In this light, each of us can consider just what our religion teaches. Has our religious thinking been molded in line with what true religion has consistently held, that man is a soul and that any future

life must await a resurrection? It is not a matter to be taken lightly; our hope is at issue.

CHRISTIANS AND THE COMMANDS TO NOAH

¹³ We might reasonably expect that just as Jesus' teachings agreed with the Genesis account about Adam, they would agree with what we note in the Bible about Noah. And they do. You will recall that in Genesis 9:3-6 the Creator gave instructions that were commands for all mankind. God there spoke against eating meat with blood left in it and against robbing the lives of other humans.

¹⁴ From that time forward, true religion included respect for blood, which God himself said was to represent life that came from and belonged to Him. (Lev. 17:13, 14; Ps. 36:9) In harmony with this, it was Jesus' lifeblood that was poured out in sacrifice for all mankind. (Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:19) But are Christians also required to abstain from eating blood or meat not drained of its blood? Looking in the Christian Scriptures, we find that Acts chapter 15 contains a binding decision of the apostles and older men of Jerusalem who formed the central or governing body of Christian elders. The Bible tells us that they, aided by God's holy spirit, confirmed that Christians must abstain from blood, just as was commanded through Noah.—Acts 15:28, 29; 21:25.

¹⁵ Early Christians firmly held to this law of God. According to Latin writer Tertullian, second- and third-century Christians did not 'have even the blood of animals at their meals of simple and natural food; they abstained from things strangled and that died a natural death.' Even persecutors realized that those holding to

10. How do the Christian Scriptures and Genesis compare on the matter of "soul"?

11. What hope did Jesus' disciples have, and how could they be sure it was real, not just wishful thinking? (1 Pet. 1:3, 4; Acts 10:39, 40; 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:3-8)

12. Why is belief about the "soul" of significance regarding religion?

13, 14. Why is the matter of blood important as to true worship?

15, 16. How does the conduct of the early Christians and the conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses compare as respects lifeblood?



Rather than involve themselves in war and strife, true Christians have found global unity—founded on their common hope in God's kingdom



the true Christian religion would not eat meat that had the blood left in it. So they 'tempted Christians with blood sausage, just because they were perfectly aware that the thing by which they thus tried to get them to transgress, Christians held to be unlawful.'—Tertullian's *The Apology*, Part I, Chapter 9.

¹⁰ Has this distinguishing feature of true

religion since been abandoned? Though most churches disregard or do not teach what the Bible says in this connection, it is still an identifying mark of genuine Christianity. A 1976 report out of one African nation told of a group of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been imprisoned because of their maintaining political neutrality, as did the early Christians. Their

prison guards put their faith to the test by trying to force them 'to write a letter of denial about their beliefs, change their religion, accept the principle of polygamy or eat meat not drained of its blood.' We are happy to relate that those Christians responded as did the apostles: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:29.

¹⁷ An additional evidence of true religion to consider also relates to what God told Noah. At that time, when the entire human family was just eight souls, God made it clear that they should not fight against and kill one another. (Gen. 9:5, 6) This feeling of brotherhood toward mankind and respect for human life is one of the strongest identifying marks of true religion.—Ex. 20:13.

¹⁸ Shortly before his death, Jesus said: "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:34, 35) Consequently, early Christians declined joining the Roman army or fighting in the armies of any of the other ancient nations. In his essay "An Inquiry into the Accordancy of War with the Principles of Christianity," Jonathan Dymond reported on his investigation into the matter:

"The Christians who lived nearest to the time of our Saviour, believed, with undoubting confidence, that he had unequivocally forbidden war—that they openly avowed this belief, and that, in support of it, they were willing to sacrifice, and did sacrifice, their fortunes and their lives.

"Christians, however, afterwards became soldiers.—And when? When their general fidelity to Christianity became relaxed;—when, in other respects, they violated its principles; . . . In a word, they became

soldiers, when they had ceased to be Christians."—Pp. 60, 61.

¹⁹ The apostle John focused strong attention on love as an essential quality of true religion, when he wrote: "For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should have love for one another; not like Cain, who originated with the wicked one and slaughtered his brother. . . . Little children, let us love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth."—1 John 3:11, 12, 18.

UNITED SUPPORTERS OF THE KINGDOM

²⁰ Another reason for the global unity of the Christian brotherhood is found in the central theme of Jesus' preaching: the kingdom of the heavens. True Christians give their support and lives to this kingdom's authority wherever they live on the face of the earth. Though millions of churchgoers today repeat the "model prayer" that Jesus gave, praying "Thy kingdom come," do they appreciate that the Kingdom is a real *government* that will actually rule this earth for the benefit of earth's inhabitants, bringing justice, peace, health and life to mankind? (Rev. 21:3, 4; 2 Pet. 3:11-13) Jesus said about that kingdom when before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate:

"My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this source."—John 18:36.

²¹ This kingdom is from a heavenly source. Therefore Christians, though they respect human efforts to bring peace, devote all their strength and resources to proclaiming that kingdom and the hope that it holds out to all mankind. (Matt.

7. What other evidence of true religion can Christians note in what God told Noah?

8. (a) What did Jesus himself say would identify his disciples? (b) Because of Jesus' words, what position did the early Christians take as to warfare? (Matt. :43-45; 26:52)

19. What distinguishing feature of true religion did the Bible writer John highlight?

20. In helping someone to identify true worship, what could we point out about the Kingdom?

21. To what do genuine Christians direct their loyalty and efforts?

24:14; 28:18-20) Accordingly, belief in and loyalty to the Kingdom are the most important things in the lives of Christ's true followers.

²² In the postapostolic period the early Christians demonstrated this belief in Christ's words. They paid their taxes, obeyed the laws of the land and in all normal respects were exemplary citizens of the lands in which they lived. (Matt. 22:17-21; Rom. 13:1-7) But they took a position of neutrality in the midst of political factions and strifes of their day. History records:

"The Christians were strangers and pilgrims in the world around them; their citizenship was in heaven; the kingdom to which they looked was not of this world. The consequent want of interest in public affairs came thus from the outset to be a noticeable feature in Christianity."—*Christianity and the Roman Government*, by E. G. Hardy, p. 39.

²³ Consistently, in identifying the practitioners of true religion today, we should look for those who maintain neutrality in the affairs of human governments, not for any personal reasons, but because they are awaiting action by God's kingdom to correct the injustices and suffering of our time. Can there be such Christians today? A recent book on Christianity made this observation:

"The withdrawal of Jehovah's Witnesses from political, military and social involvement has been interpreted by their enemies as misanthropy, and has been the chief cause of the outrageous persecution which has often been inflicted upon them."—*American Christianity, An Historical Interpretation*.

Also, *From State Church to Pluralism* (1971), by F. H. Littell, says:

"However incredible and literal-minded the J[ehovah's] W[itnesses]'s peculiar doc-

²² The early Christians took what position as regards secular governments? (Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:17)

²³ Why is the neutral position of Jehovah's Witnesses of interest in thinking about right religion? (John 15:19)

trine of the Kingdom may seem, we should not forget that in biblical religion the advent of the Kingdom is a moment of dramatic penetration and reversal of the normal course of human expectation."—P. 212.

The Bible doctrine of the Kingdom is indeed different from the world's point of view, just as it was when Jesus was on judgment before Pontius Pilate. But Jesus also said: "Wisdom is proved righteous by its works." It is worth while to examine the works of those following the Bible view if we are concerned with what is true religion.—Matt. 11:19.

WHAT IS THE MEANING?

²⁴ The points that we have considered here are not by any means all the identifying marks of true religion. However, they do provide us with an ample basis on which to weigh the beliefs and practices of our religion, and of ourselves personally. In agreement with what we have found in the Bible and in the lives of the early Christians, we will easily recognize true religion to include the following: That God directly created man to live on earth; that humans possess no immortal soul, but that the dead receive a future resurrection; that we must be firm in avoiding immorality and in upholding the sacredness of the marriage arrangement; that it is important to abide by God's law on blood and to exercise love toward fellow humans, which makes life so much more pleasant; and that Christians need to proclaim God's kingdom with a view to helping others to possess the marvelous hope that God provides.

²⁵ Some may find that their religion or personal beliefs and practices are different from what the Bible identifies as true religion. If you find in your case that some

²⁴ In summary, what are some important identifying marks of the true religion?

²⁵ 26. Why do each of us personally need to be concerned about these features of true worship? With what result?

adjustment is needed, do not delay in making it. Follow the inspired counsel in 1 Peter 3:10-12: "For, 'he that would love life and see good days, let him . . . turn away from what is bad and do what is good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous ones.'"

²⁶ How may we pursue what is right? Not just by abandoning what is out of harmony with true religion, but also by taking positive steps to live in accord with the will of our God. Recall that Noah was not merely a believer. The Bible tells us

that Noah *walked* with the true God and was "a preacher of righteousness." Similarly, Jesus and his apostles both believed and *lived* in accord with right religion. This included their sharing with others the good news concerning the kingdom of God and the new order of peace on earth that God promises. (Matt. 4:17; 10:7; 28:19, 20) Our wholeheartedly doing the same will give us great enjoyment and bring to other persons hope, purpose in living and real happiness. Rich blessings will be their portion, because of their identifying and practicing true religion.



As told by
Marcelino Pitti

ADVERSITIES —how we overcame them

AT THE age of 22 I suffered a terrible accident. While I was fishing with my companions, using chlorate bombs, one exploded in my hands. My companions tried to stop the bleeding by tying tourniquets above my elbows. They took me to the nearest hospital, which is in the town of David.

David is the capital of Chiriquí Province in the Republic of Panama. To get there involved a four-hour horseback ride, then a long ride in a car. Eleven hours

after the accident I arrived at the hospital, unconscious from loss of blood. I survived, but without both hands.

My family and friends tried to collect money to send me to the United States so that I could get mechanical hands. However, I argued that if it was God's will for me to lose my hands—and that was the accepted way of thinking among our people—I was going to remain in this condition. I blamed God for what happened. If you knew a little about my background,

it would help you to understand why I felt this way.

MY EARLY LIFE

I was the sixth of 12 children. We lived in the small town of Bugaba near the Costa Rican border. Although some Adventists lived in the area, anything other than the Catholic religion was considered "not for us." Rumor had it that one could go crazy by reading the Bible, so Catholics simply did not read it.

When I was a child my father had much cattle, and we had a nice farm. But then he lost everything. So, when I was about 10 years of age, it was necessary for me to help out by working on small farms.

Later, we moved farther north along the Costa Rican border. Here the cooler highlands are excellent for farming, being especially suited for coffeegrowing. But, oh, how isolated! Since there were few roads, it was very difficult to get our produce to the markets. Life was hard, but by being content with the necessities, we were eventually able to recover what we had lost materially.

At the age of 19, I left home to work for another man. His wife was a subscriber to *The Watchtower*. We hired men slept in a room under our employer's house, where we could hear every word said upstairs. As we would lie there in the still darkness of the jungle nights, I would listen intently while the lady would read *The Watchtower* to her husband for an hour or two almost every night. This went on for about a year and a half.

Although I listened closely, I really didn't understand very much. I had no knowledge of the Bible. So the most I could figure out from listening was that something better was coming, and that there was a God whom we should serve in order to enjoy it. At the time I had no idea what magazine she was reading, or what its purpose was.

MORE ADVERSITIES

The accident in which I lost my two hands occurred not long after this. Up until then my conduct had been nothing to brag about. Afterward, though, I really began a life of loose living. I drank heavily, gambled and was sexually immoral.

About two years after the accident, I started living with Eladia. She is a woman several years older than myself, who already had 10 children. She had a Bible, and I started to read it. I could see that practically everything I was doing was out of harmony with God's will. My conscience started to bother me, but not enough to cause me to abandon my dissolute way of life.

I was happy when Eladia gave birth to my first son. But then another tragedy cut short any happiness. While I was helping a friend to transport some corn, a venomous snake bit me. Blood began oozing from my pores, and I started to excrete blood from the kidneys, rectum, stomach and nose. After three days I became delirious. When I lost consciousness, my friends and family decided to carry me in a hammock to where I could get transportation to the hospital in David. Later they told me that, while being carried along, I would regain semiconsciousness and pray to God not to let me die in my sinful condition without learning more about his purposes.

I was unconscious for 18 days. But finally it became apparent that I would live. When I left the hospital I was so weak I couldn't walk. The future looked bleak indeed. I had a woman, most of her 10 children, and a small baby eight months old to take care of. But I couldn't even care for myself! For four months I was too weak to walk. But with the constant, devoted care of my companion Eladia, I eventually regained my health. Also, my wonderful family and friends again came to our rescue with monetary help.

SOURCE OF HOPE

In 1957 we had another son, and Eladia's health required that she go for some medical attention. So she found it necessary to go for some medicine. This involved a two-hour walk through heavy jungle across the border into Costa Rica. There she found a Nicaraguan pharmacist named Camilo Alemán. He was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, who held regular Bible studies in his home.

Camilo spoke to Eladia about his Christian hope. So when she came back she had, not only the medicine, but also spiritual help in the form of the Bible study aid *"Let God Be True."* She became so interested that, in spite of never having had a personal Bible study, she would walk with four or five of the children for two hours through the snake-infested jungle to every meeting in the pharmacist's home. Sometimes I would accompany her. However, our farm was quite a distance from our house. So I would spend most of my time there at the farm. Besides, I had not changed my drinking habits, and I was ashamed of what I was doing, now that I was learning what God requires of us.

How I made my dear companion suffer! She had to work to help to support the children, since much of my earnings went for gambling, drinking and other women. Sometimes I came home terribly drunk. From what she was learning, she knew that it was not honorable for us simply to be living together without any actual commitment to marriage. She wanted so much for us to legalize our marriage, but what hope was there?

Eladia would get so disheartened that she would go out into the jungle by herself and weep. She would weep for hours, praying to Jehovah to help her out of her desperate situation. There was no one else to turn to, no Witnesses nearby.

One day I came home from the farm drunk and penniless. As usual, my little

children came running out to greet me, eagerly expecting some little gift. But this time I had nothing for them. It was such a heartbreaking experience for me that I vowed that I would never get drunk again, and I haven't. I decided then and there that I was going to change my life, and serve God together with my faithful companion. Jehovah had heard her prayers.

Without delay we went to the Witness, Camilo Alemán, in Costa Rica to find out what to do. He suggested that we write to the Watch Tower Society in Panama City and ask where there were Witnesses on our side of the border. But we had never written a letter before. We had no idea of how to go about it. So I decided to look for Jehovah's Witnesses myself, asking everyone I knew. Finally, one of my cousins told me that he heard there were Witnesses in Concepción. This is a town that is about six hours away by horseback and then by car. I made three trips there, inquiring of people in the street and in the public park, but I found no Witnesses.

RECEIVING NEEDED HELP

On my fourth trip I was talking to the cousin who had told me about the Witnesses, when he suddenly said: "There goes one of them right now!" Immediately I began to follow her. It must have frightened her when she realized that she was being followed by a handless man. However, when I spoke to her and begged for help, she realized that I was sincere. She was a missionary of Jehovah's Witnesses by the name of Dorell Swaby. She was so kind and helpful. Immediately she wrote to the Watch Tower Society in Panama City, asking that someone be sent to us. The traveling overseer, Dimas Alvarez, was at once advised, and the following month he came. But what he went through to find us! He secured transportation on a pickup truck for part of the journey.

But then, after passing through two heavy downpours and getting soaked to the skin, he finally got to within an hour's walking distance of our house. He spent the rest of that night with the border police. When he finally arrived the next day we were overjoyed to receive his aid and counsel.

We learned that another Panamanian, Nazario Batista, had been studying the Bible with the Witnesses in Costa Rica. He had been baptized a short time before, so he was assigned to conduct meetings in our house. By the end of the very first month, four from our little group were sharing in the preaching work. However, Eladia and I could not be counted among them, because we were not legally married.

How anxious we were now to correct this matter! Three months later, at the circuit assembly in David, we were ready, not only to legalize our marriage, but also to present ourselves for water baptism in symbol of our dedication to Jehovah God to do his will. How happy we were! For the first time since losing my hands I really felt that life had a purpose. I was willing to be used by Jehovah in any way that he could possibly use a handless man.

With practice, I became expert in carrying a Bible under my arm and in turning the pages with my two stubs. I became proficient in teaching people from the Bible in their homes, and from the platform.

OPPOSITION, THEN ACCEPTANCE

My father threatened to beat me, a full-grown man, if I did not abandon this new religion. My brothers also did what they could to discourage me. But I was convinced that I had found the only true religion, and I was determined that nothing was going to discourage me. Our family continued to have Christian meetings in our house. And, in time, we began to see the fruits of our persistence.

One by one our brothers, sisters, children, parents, grandparents, grandchil-

dren and cousins began to study the Bible with us. Soon many of them were sharing our same Christian faith and hope. Three congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses have been formed here near the Panama-Cost Rican border, with members of our families as the basis.

My brother Juan had been interested in the Adventist religion. But as a result of studying the chapters on the Sabbath and the Mosaic law in the book "*Let God Be True*," he soon became a Witness. For a number of years he served as a "special pioneer"—one who arranges to spend at least 140 hours a month in the preaching work. He has been instrumental in forming other congregations. My brother Domingo is a devoted Christian elder, as was also my brother Eduviges. But Eduviges was bitten by a deadly snake not long ago, and died almost immediately. My sister Carmen is a special pioneer along with her daughter.

My father and mother, although advanced in years and having opposed us for so long, finally became convinced that we had found the only true religion. They are now dedicated, baptized Witnesses also.

TRUE PROTECTION AND SATISFACTION

A few years ago there was a political revolution in Panama. Many began fleeing across the border into Costa Rica, and neighbors advised us to do the same. But I told them that we were not involved in politics in any way and so saw no reason to flee. We Witnesses stayed, and did not lose our farms, whereas those who fled lost everything to guerrillas and thieves.

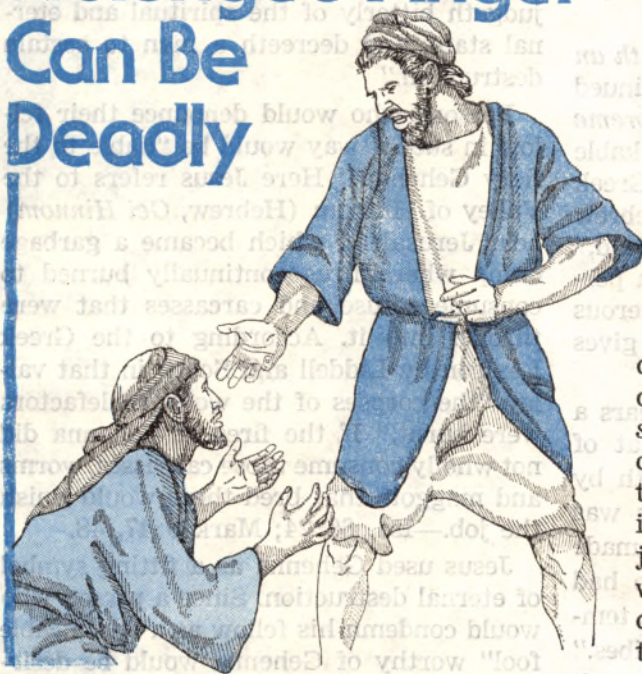
The greatest satisfaction that Eladia and I have is in knowing that we have been able to help so many others to come to a knowledge of Jehovah God and his purposes. Of her family, we know of 31 who are baptized and making known the Kingdom message to others, and there are at least 35 of my family. Besides, there

are many more relatives who are studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and attending Christian meetings.

Of our close relatives, eight are Christian elders, eight are ministerial servants in the congregations, and three are special pioneers. We no longer meet in our

house; instead, we have a fine Kingdom Hall that we have built alongside it. Our regular meeting attendance here is about 75. I'm convinced that the power of God's Word and spirit can help one to overcome any adversities, however great, that one may experience in life.

Prolonged Anger Can Be Deadly



AFTER stating that he had come, not to destroy, but to fulfill God's law, Jesus linked prolonged wrath with murder. He began by saying: "You heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You must not murder; but whoever commits a murder will be accountable to the court of justice.'"—Matt. 5:21.

The phrase "You heard that it was said" can refer both to things stated in the inspired Hebrew Scriptures and to teachings of Jewish tradition. (Matt. 5:21, 27, 33, 38,

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

43; John 12:34)

A law describing murder as a capital offense was indeed known "to

those of ancient times," that is, persons of generations previous to Jesus' day. In fact, such a law can be traced back to the time of Noah.

—Gen. 9:5, 6; Ex. 20:13; 21:12; Lev. 24:17.

Being "accountable to the court of justice" meant being sentenced by one of "the local courts" (Greek, *synedria*, "Lesser Sanhedrins") located throughout the land of Palestine. (Matt. 10:17; Deut. 16:18) Jewish tradition gives the number of judges in these courts as 23 in cities with an adult male population of 120 or more.* Proven murderers suffered the death penalty. In the time of Jesus, however, Jewish courts had to seek authorization for capital punishment from Roman officials.—John 18:31.

Jesus pointed out that God can view someone as deserving capital punishment, even though that one did not actually commit murder. Speaking authoritatively as one directly sent by God, Jesus declared: "However, I say to you that everyone who continues wrathful with his brother will

* Josephus states that the local courts had only seven judges, each judge, however, having two Levites for assistants.—*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book IV, Chapter VIII, section 14.

be accountable to the court of justice."
—Matt. 5:22a.

"Everyone who continues wrathful with his brother," according to Jesus, is as guilty before God as one convicted of murder. This is because allowing wrath to smolder in one's bosom is really hatred of one's fellowman, and "everyone who hates his brother is a manslayer." (1 John 3:15) While individuals may justly become angry or indignant on occasion, prolonged wrath against one's brother or fellowman can be deadly to both.—Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:26; Jas. 1:19, 20.

"Whoever addresses his brother with an unspeakable word of contempt," continued Jesus, "will be accountable to the Supreme Court." (Matt. 5:22b) "An unspeakable word of contempt" translates the Greek word *raca*, which is derived from Hebrew and means "empty-headed," "blockhead," "numskull." What is God's view of a person who, not only nurtures murderous hatred and anger in his heart, but gives vent to it by contemptible speech?

According to Jesus, such a one bears a measure of guilt comparable to that of one convicted and sentenced to death by the Jewish "Supreme Court." That was the main Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, made up of "the chief priests [those who had oversight of priestly functions at the temple] with the older men and the scribes." (Mark 15:1) This legislative body, which reportedly numbered 71 judges, handled only cases of exceptional gravity or complexity and heard appeals from lower courts.*

* The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says concerning the main Sanhedrin in Jerusalem: "At the head of the body, which convened in the *boule* [council chamber] . . . stood the high-priest. He was the leader of the Jewish people; he alone could preside in the Sanhedrin. Around him were the *archiereis* [chief priests], the priestly aristocracy, Sadducean in sympathy. By virtue of their office the chief priests in the temple had a seat and voice in the Sanhedrin and they formed a solid faction. The elders were a second group. It is true that originally all members of the *gerousia* [assembly of older men] were called elders.

Jesus then went a step farther, saying: "Whoever says, 'You despicable fool!' will be liable to the fiery Gehenna." (Matt. 5:22c) The Greek word rendered "you despicable fool" is *mōré*. A similar-sounding Hebrew term (*moreh*) means "rebellious," "mutinous." Whereas *raca* suggests intellectual stupidity, *mōré* designates one as morally worthless, an apostate and rebel against God. In his *Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations*, John Lightfoot points out: "'Raca' denotes indeed 'morosity, and lightness of manners and life:' but 'fool' judgeth bitterly of the spiritual and eternal state, and decreeth a man to certain destruction."

Persons who would denounce their fellow in such a way would be "liable to the fiery Gehenna." Here Jesus refers to the Valley of Hinnom (Hebrew, *Gei Hinnom*) near Jerusalem, which became a garbage dump where fires continually burned to consume refuse and carcasses that were thrown into it. According to the Greek Lexicon by Liddell and Scott, in that valley "the corpses of the worst malefactors were burnt." If the fires of Gehenna did not wholly consume those carcasses, worms and maggots that bred there would finish the job.—Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:47, 48.

Jesus used Gehenna as a fitting symbol of eternal destruction. Since a person who would condemn his fellow as a "despicable fool" worthy of Gehenna would be desiring everlasting destruction for that one, from God's standpoint the one uttering such a condemnation brings that severe sentence upon himself.—Compare Deuteronomy 19:17-19.

Gradually, however, this term acquired a more restricted sense, so that only leaders of the influential lay families in Jerusalem were called *presbyteroi* [elders]. Without exception these patricians, too, were Sadducean in persuasion. The Pharisees managed to get into the High Council in the days of Queen Alexandra [76-67 B.C.E.]. From then on the power and influence of the *grammateis* [scribes] grew steadily in the Sanhedrin. In the Roman period the *archiereis* [chief priests] were still first in rank, but in fact decisions could not be taken or executed without the agreement of the Pharisaic scribes."

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

- For many years scientists have theorized that the universe most probably began with a gigantic, violent "Big Bang" explosion of condensed matter. Now they are not so sure.

"Big Bang" Theory —a Fizzle?

A University of California research team recently used extremely sensitive radio equipment aboard a high-flying U-2 jet to measure cosmic microwave background radiation, the "afterglow" of the supposed "Big Bang." What they found surprised the scientists. "The big bang, the most cataclysmic event we can imagine," said the researchers, "on closer inspection appears finely orchestrated," with tightly controlled, smooth and uniform expansion.

"The new reports only compound the mystery of how, from this seemingly uniform, homogeneous explosion, the present universe evolved with all of its diversity, from galaxies to flowers," marvels Walter Sullivan, science writer for the New York "Times."

However, there is no "mystery" to this "finely orchestrated" event when one admits that it is evidence of a Grand Creator, whose "invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made."—Rom. 1:20.

- In the long run, how successful is psychiatric counseling? A recent follow-up study of

many youths who received such therapy more than 30 years ago in Massachusetts, U.S.A., reveals that, "almost without exception, therapy appeared to have had a negative, or at least a non-positive effect on the youngsters in later life." —"Science News," November 26, 1977, p. 357.

Half of more than 500 "average" and "difficult" children aged five to 13, picked at random, were given one-to-one counseling for about five years. The other half in each category received no counseling. A check of the subjects' criminal records 30 years later revealed that those who received therapy

engaged in more crime than those who did not. Additionally, says "Science News," "the incidence of anti-social and criminal behavior increased (or was not decreased) among boys who received therapy over the longest period of time; had the most frequent contact with counselors; began therapy at an earlier than average age . . ." The Drexel University researcher says that such results indicate "that the most widely held beliefs about therapy may be untenable."

- "The amount of sexual activity of some homosexual males is a major reason for the

'Recompense for Error'

high incidence of sexually transmitted disease in the gay community," according to a report in "The Journal of the American Medical Association." It asserts that "on a national level [in the United States], a homosexual male's chances of getting syphilis are five times that of a heterosexual male."

The report cites a memorandum from the U.S. Center for Disease Control, in which the point is made that, in a New York study, over half of syphilitic males who named their sexual contacts named partners of their own sex. "This information is particularly impressive when one realizes that nationally only one of every ten males is homosexual," observes the report, adding: "This disproportionate incidence of infection is not limited to syphilis. Homosexual males have a higher incidence of other sexually transmitted diseases as well."

While some may be inclined to view this as merely coincidental, others wisely realize that venereal diseases are part of the inescapable consequences when men fail to respect God-given moral standards. "God gave them up to disgraceful sexual appetites," wrote the Christian apostle Paul, "for both their females changed the natural use of themselves into one contrary to nature; and likewise even the males left the natural use of the female and became violently inflamed in their lust toward one another, males with males, working what is obscene and receiving in themselves the full recompense, which was due for their error."—Rom. 1:26, 27.

Belief in a Resurrection —Is There a Factual Basis?

Do you believe that people can be resurrected from the dead, to live again? If so, why? If not, why not?

If you do not believe in a resurrection you may say:

'I never saw anyone rise from the dead.' But just because we ourselves never witnessed a certain event, does this mean that it did not happen? Of course, to believe you must have evidence that such a thing has happened.

(Heb. 11:1) Is such evidence obtainable?

Yes, it is. And it is the kind of proof that you would expect for any historical fact or event—evidence from eyewitnesses and others, and evidence of its impact on history.

A CENTRAL HOPE FOR HUMANKIND

We have evidence in the Bible of cases of resurrection, both before and after Jesus' appearance on earth. (1 Ki. 17:21, 22; 2 Ki. 4:32-35; John 11:43; Mark 5:41, 42) But the most important evidence—that which holds a hope of resurrection to mankind in general—is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Whether we individually have any hope of life after death hinges on Christ's being raised from the dead. It was especially over this teaching that the apostles and other early Christians were brought into much ridicule and suffering. —Acts 4:1-3; 17:32; 23:6, 10; 24:18-21.

Before a crowd of scholars and philosophers in the city of Athens, the apostle Paul said:

"[God] has set a day in which he purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from

the dead." Furthermore, Paul told Christian believers: "If, indeed, there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised up. But if Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and our faith is in vain."—Acts 17:31; 1 Cor. 15:13, 14.

EVIDENCE OF CHRIST'S DEATH

Let us present and examine some of the evidence. First, we have the accounts of those who saw Christ put to death and buried. There is no doubt that he was actually executed by the Romans at the behest of the Jewish leaders. The attempt had been made previously to kill him. (Luke 4:28, 29; John 5:18; 8:59; 11:53) In demanding his death, the Jewish leaders went so far as to cry out before the Roman governor Pilate: "His [Jesus'] blood come upon us and upon our children." (Matt. 27:25) They also intimidated Pilate with a political threat. (John 19:12) Certainly the Jewish opposers, and particularly Christ's bitterest enemies, the chief priests and leaders, would not have connived to maneuver a fake "death" for him. They would see that he was *dead*. In any event, the matter was out of their

hands and he was sentenced and put to death by the Romans. The Roman historian Tacitus (c. 110 C.E.) stated about Christians: "The name is derived from Christ, whom the procurator Pontius Pilate had executed in the reign of Tiberius."* The Jewish Talmud also records the hanging of Jesus (on a stake). These and other non-Christian historical accounts support the fact that even Jesus' opponents never doubted the historicity of Jesus or of his death.

TESTIMONY AS TO CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

As to Christ's resurrection, there are no fewer than four men who testified publicly to seeing Jesus after his resurrection, and one of their accounts tells us that he was seen by more than 500 Christian disciples. (Matt. 28:16, 17; John 20:19; 21:1, 2; Acts 1:15, 22; 1 Cor. 15:6-8) Some one, however, may say, 'Yes, but these are all Bible accounts, by Christians. How do we know that they are true?'

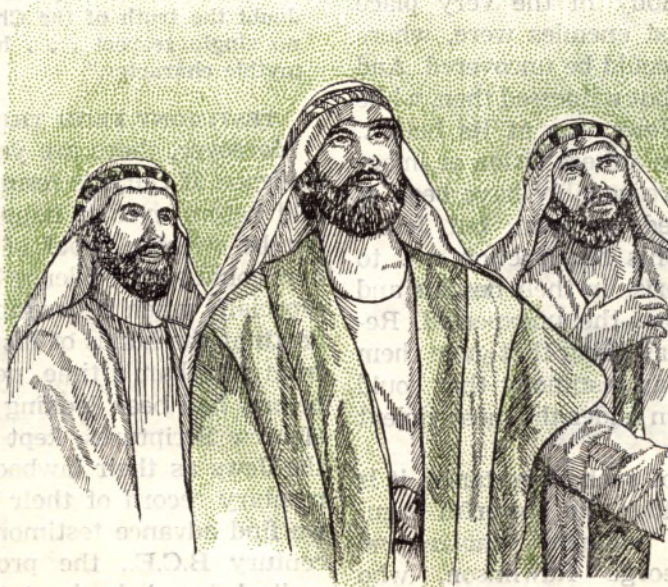
To answer that question we might ask: How do you otherwise account for the zeal of so many people in proclaiming that resurrection? Even their enemies claimed that Christians had 'turned Jerusalem and Judea, yes, the world, upside

down' by their zealous witnessing to Christ's resurrection. (Acts 5:28; 17:6) Persecution and other factors brought about their scattering and proclaiming this teaching to the point that the Roman world, from Rome to Mesopotamia, took note of their zeal.

As to the truthfulness of these early Christians, consider the following statement by Bible scholar A. J. Maas:*

"Briefly, therefore, the fact of Christ's Resurrection is attested by more than 500 eyewitnesses, whose experience, simplicity, and uprightness of life rendered them incapable of inventing such a fable, who lived at a time when any attempt to deceive could have been easily discovered, who had nothing in this life to gain, but everything to lose by their testimony, whose moral courage exhibited in their apostolic life can be explained only by their intimate conviction of the objective truth of their message. Again the fact of Christ's Resurrection is attested by the eloquent silence of the Synagogue which had done every-

thing to prevent deception, which could have easily discovered deception, if there had been any, which opposed only sleeping witnesses to the testimony of the Apostles, which did not punish the alleged carelessness of the official guard, and which could not answer the testimony of the Apostles except by threatening them



"Christ's Resurrection is attested by more than 500 eyewitnesses . . . who lived at a time when any attempt to deceive could have been easily discovered"

* *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913 edition), Volume XII, p. 790.

* *Annals* (XV, 44).

'that they speak no more in this name to any man' (Acts, iv, 17). Finally, the thousands and millions, both Jews and Gentiles, who believed the testimony of the Apostles in spite of all the disadvantages following from such a belief, in short the origin of the Church, requires for its explanation the reality of Christ's Resurrection, for the rise of the Church without the Resurrection would be a greater miracle than the Resurrection itself."

With a similar argument we can refute the untruthfulness of the charges by Jesus' enemies that the resurrection was an imposture, that his body was stolen, or that it was a visionary hallucination or a collusion. It is clear that the witnesses to the resurrection were certainly not men of power or influence, to overcome or bribe the guards stationed at the tomb. There was little likelihood of a collusion among so many, especially as to something that would be of no personal gain to them. Their witnessing to the resurrection could have no selfish motive; it exposed them to suffering and death. They gave their testimony in the very place where the bitterest enemies were, where certainly a fraud could be uncovered. And they did not wait, but witnessed then, while the rage of the Jews was at its height. Now, if it had been a mere vision or imagination, it would reasonably have been of something expected by them; but Jesus' appearance after his resurrection was to them a great surprise in their despair and downcast condition—the unexpected. Really, it was the very thing that gave them the courage to bear testimony that could not be broken down under the most violent persecution.

In this matter of such importance, it is beneficial to consider the powerful argument of another eminent scholar and archaeologist, George Rawlinson, who wrote:*

"The early converts knew that they

* *The Historical Evidences of the Truth of the Scripture Records*, pp. 225-227.

might at any time be called upon to undergo death for their religion. They preached and taught with the sword, the cross, the beasts, and the stake ever before their eyes. . . . and every early writer advocating Christianity, by the fact of his advocacy, braved the civil power, and rendered himself liable to a similar fate. When faith is a matter of life and death, men do not lightly take up with the first creed which happens to hit their fancy; nor do they place themselves openly in the ranks of a persecuted sect, unless they have well weighed the claims of the religion which it professes, and convinced themselves of its being the truth. It is clear that the early converts had means of ascertaining the historic accuracy of the Christian narrative very much beyond ourselves; they could examine and cross-question the witnesses—compare their several accounts—inquire how their statements were met by their adversaries—consult Heathen documents of the time—thoroughly and completely sift the evidence. All this together—and it must be remembered that the evidence is *cumulative*—constitutes a body of proof such as is seldom producible with respect to any events belonging to remote times; and establishes beyond all reasonable doubt the truth of the Christian Story. In no single respect . . . has that story a mythic character."

TESTIMONY FROM THE PROPHECIES

Moreover, there are yet other points of evidence. If Christ's resurrection was foretold before ever it happened, would this not be striking proof of its reality? For how could such evidence be manufactured, especially when it described the Messiah's death at the hands of his own people, who from Abraham's time, nearly 2,000 years before, had been looking for him? In the Hebrew Scriptures, kept for centuries by the Jews as their lawbook and the documentary record of their national history, we find advance testimony. In the eighth century B.C.E., the prophet Isaiah described Jesus' death at the behest of his own people, the Jews:

"He was despised and was avoided by men . . . He was despised, and we held him

as of no account. . . . He was being brought just like a sheep to the slaughtering; . . . he was severed from the land of the living ones. . . . And he will make his burial place even with the wicked ones, and with the rich class in his death.”—Isa. 53:3-9.

Of the fact that God would raise him up again to life, the prophet went on to say: “If you will set his soul as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he [being resurrected] will prolong his days, and in his hand what is the delight of Jehovah will succeed. . . . the righteous one, my servant, will bring a righteous standing to many people; and their errors he himself will bear.”—Isa. 53:10, 11.

The later prophet Daniel foretold his sacrificial death:

“And after the sixty-two weeks [actually in 33 C.E.] Messiah will be cut off, with nothing for himself. . . . he will cause sacrifice and gift offering [at the Jews’ temple] to cease [replacing them with the real sacrifice of his life].”—Dan. 9:26, 27.

King David prophetically foretold a resurrection from Sheol, the grave, and the apostle Peter applies the prophecy to Jesus Christ. Fifty days after Christ’s resurrection he spoke to 3,000 Jews who recognized the prophecy as referring to Jesus and accepted Peter’s explanation. Peter said:

“God resurrected [Jesus] by loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to continue to be held fast by it. For David says respecting him, ‘I had Jehovah constantly before my eyes; because he is at my right hand that I may never be shaken. . . . Moreover, even my flesh will reside in hope; because you will not leave my soul in Hades, neither will you allow your loyal one to see corruption.’ . . . Because [David] was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath that he would seat one from the fruitage of his loins upon his throne, he saw beforehand and spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he forsaken in Hades nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God resurrected, of which fact

we are all witnesses.”—Acts 2:24-32; compare Psalm 16:10.

The apostle Paul also pointed to the fortieth psalm as applying to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Paul depicts Jesus as saying, at the time of his baptism: “You prepared a body for me . . . Look! I am come . . . to do your will.” Paul adds: “By the said ‘will’ we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time.”—Heb. 10:5, 7, 10; Ps. 40:6-8.

Certainly there is a remarkable correlation between these prophecies uttered centuries beforehand and Jesus’ death and resurrection. It would be impossible for all the factors involved to be maneuvered by Jesus, or for the story to be made up by his apostles.

JESUS’ OWN WORDS

Furthermore, at the Passover after his baptism, Jesus began to speak of his coming death and resurrection, though it was not until after witnessing the events themselves that his disciples could look back and understand what he meant. The apostle John records such beginning at this early point in Jesus’ association with them, when Jesus said to the Jews: “Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” John adds: “He was talking about the temple of his body. When, though, he was raised up from the dead, his disciples called to mind that he used to say this; and they believed the Scripture and the saying that Jesus said.”—John 2:19, 21, 22; compare Matthew 12:40; 16:21-23; Mark 8:31; 10:33, 34.

Since the truth about the resurrection concerns the only possible hope for those who have died, and for all humankind facing the prospect of dying, it should be a subject of the greatest concern, not only to those who believe in Christianity, but to all men everywhere.

Most people love life and would like to

see it prolonged indefinitely, if health and contentment accompanied it. They look at news reports daily, hoping to hear good news of peace, progress in the war against disease, and better economic conditions. They hear the testimony of witnesses to daily events, and accept the historical rec-

ords written by men, even using history as a basis for planning the future. How much more important and sensible it is, then, to examine with open minds the abundant evidence of Christ's resurrection, upon which rests the hope and promise of life in happiness for humankind!

BALAAM was a diviner whose reputation for pronouncing effectual curses and blessings had spread far beyond the borders of his native land. His home was Pethor, a town situated in the upper Euphrates valley near the Sajur River. Not far from there lay Haran, where God-fearing men such as Abraham, Lot and Jacob once had lived. This fact may explain why the diviner Balaam knew about the true God, even referring to him as "Jehovah my God."—Num. 22:18.

But how did Balaam come to be a resister of God's will? When the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, Moabite King Balak and his people were struck with fright at seeing the vast multitude, perhaps numbering about 3,000,000. The representatives of the Moabite nation took counsel with the elders of Midian and decided that Israel was a threat to their welfare. (Num. 22:1-4) They were fully aware of what Jehovah God had done for Israel in delivering the nation from Egypt and also knew about his granting them a

A MAN WHO RESISTED GOD'S WILL



smashing victory over the powerful Amorite kingdoms east of the Jordan River. Hence, they had no hope of defeating the Israelites in battle. But they reasoned: 'What if the Israelites could be cursed? Might that not serve to weaken them, making it possible to drive them away?' Therefore, King Balak, with a view to gaining the mastery over Israel, was moved to seek Balaam's services.

THE FIRST DELEGATION

Soon a delegation of Moabite and Midianite elders or princes was on the way to Pethor. The message to Balaam was: "Look! A people has come out of Egypt. Look! They have covered the earth as far as one can see, and they are dwelling right in front of me. And now do come, please; do curse this people for me, for they are mightier than I am. Perhaps I may be able to strike them and I may drive them out of the land; for I well know that the one whom you bless is a blessed one and the one whom you curse is cursed."—Num. 22:5-7.

Balaam then asked the delegation to stay overnight and promised to relate to them the word of Jehovah the next day. What was the divine revelation to Balaam? "You must not go with them. You must not curse the people, for they are blessed." (Num. 22:8, 12) In view of this, Balaam told the men: "Go to your country, because Jehovah has refused to let me go with you." (Num. 22:13) From these words, the delegation could infer that Balaam really wanted to go but just was not allowed to do so. When reporting what had happened, they said to Balak: "Balaam has refused to come with us." —Num. 22:14.

A MORE DISTINGUISHED DELEGATION SENT

Hence, it appears that Balak concluded that the offer made to Balaam and the delegation itself were not impressive enough. The Moabite king apparently reasoned that Balaam had his price, and he was determined to have the diviner on the scene so that a more potent curse could be pronounced. Therefore, the king sent a larger and more honorable delegation, assuring Balaam that he would be honored greatly for execrating Israel. —Num. 22:15-17.

BALAAM WANTS THE REWARD

What would Balaam do now? "If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold," said he, "I should not be able to pass beyond the order of Jehovah my God, so as to do something small or great." (Num. 22:18) Balaam knew full well that any attempt to curse Israel was against Jehovah's will. Yet, he did not send the men away but apparently toyed with the idea that Jehovah might allow him to leave with the messengers. So he told them: "Now you men also stay here, please, tonight that I may know what further Jehovah will speak with me." (Num. 22:19) Though saying that no price could

get him to curse Israel, Balaam really wanted the reward. His thinking evidently was: 'If only I had divine permission to go, I would not hesitate to leave for Moab immediately.'

Subsequent events reveal that this was indeed how Balaam felt. That very night he got what he was seeking—God's allowance to accompany the delegation. But this included the divine stipulation: "Only the word that I shall speak to you is what you may speak." (Num. 22:20) Balaam did not delay. In the morning he saddled his she-ass and was on his way to Moab with the princes whom Balak had sent. Now that he had permission to go, Balaam was determined to curse Israel and thereby to get the promised reward. There was nothing to stop him. Or, was there?

Jehovah God was not pleased about Balaam's going with the men, bent on cursing Israel despite being under command not to do so. Balaam was in for quite a surprise. His she-ass began to behave in a most unusual way. Why? An angel of Jehovah had stationed himself in the path. Balaam was forcefully shown that resisting God's will would mean death for him. Again he was reminded that the only thing that he was authorized to do was to speak what Jehovah wanted him to say. —Num. 22:22-35.

Did Balaam change his intention after this? It might appear that way from what he said to King Balak: "The word that God will place in my mouth is what I shall speak." (Num. 22:38) In actuality, however, Balaam still wanted the reward and was willing to do what he could to gain it.

This may give rise to the questions: Why did the true God choose to speak through a diviner? Why did he not simply let him pronounce a curse on Israel, which curse time would have revealed to be totally ineffectual? In this regard, we must keep in mind that the Moabites and the Midianites recognized that military might

alone would not succeed against Israel. As far as they were concerned, in the person of Balaam they had at their disposal the most powerful weapon against Israel, namely, the means to have an effectual curse pronounced against them. Furthermore, Balaam wanted to cooperate so that he could get the rich material reward offered. But what if this famous diviner, instead of cursing the Israelites, would be forced to bless them to the limit despite his wishes to the contrary? Would this not prove that no weapon could succeed against God's people? So, it evidently served Jehovah's purpose well to use Balaam to bless Israel, to the consternation of Moabite King Balak.

When Balaam arrived, the Moabite king must have been pleased indeed. Balak offered sacrifices, doubtless in appreciation to the gods of Moab for the success in getting the diviner to come. The offering provided the occasion for sacrificial feasting, in which Balaam and the princes shared by having portions sent to them.—Num. 22:40.

BALAAM FAILS TO CURSE ISRAEL

Later, Balak took Balaam to an elevated site, from which the diviner could get a good view of the encamped Israelites. At once Balaam set out to accomplish what

he had been called upon to do. He requested that Balak erect seven altars and offer upon them seven bulls and seven rams. Then, Balaam withdrew alone to a bare hill, there evidently to perform rites for the purpose of 'coming upon unlucky omens.' But here Jehovah compelled Balaam to pronounce a blessing upon Israel. Two other attempts to curse God's people Israel also failed miserably.—Num. 23:1-24:9.

Balak's anger, therefore, blazed against Balaam. "It was to execrate my enemies that I called you," he said, "and, look! you have blessed them to the limit these three times. And now run your way off to your place." (Num. 24:10, 11) Balaam tried to excuse his failure, saying: "Was it not also to your messengers whom you sent to me that I spoke, saying, 'If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I should not be able to pass beyond the order of Jehovah so as to do something good or bad out of my own heart. Whatever Jehovah may speak is what I shall speak'?"—Num. 24:12, 13.

Thereafter, impelled by God's spirit, Balaam uttered prophetic pronouncements that included a message of doom for Moab. Then Balak and Balaam parted. The Bible reports that Balaam "returned to his place," simply meaning that the diviner went his own way. But did Balaam finally learn the lesson that resisting God's will was useless? Did he go back to Pethor? No.—Num. 24:14-25.

BALAAM RESISTS GOD'S WILL TO THE END

Balaam still wanted the reward and he sought to get it in any way possible. Since he could not curse Israel, he came up with a plan whereby the Israelites might bring God's curse upon themselves. He instructed Balak as to how he could use Midianite and Moabite women to get Israelite males to engage in idolatry and fornication. (Num. 31:16; Rev. 2:14) The scheme had

In Coming Issues

- **Something New About God's Name**
- **What Draws You to God?**
- **Where Did Those Verses Go?**

a measure of success, for thousands succumbed to the allurements of licentious sex worship. As a result, 24,000 men of Israel perished.—Num. 25:1-9.

But did Balaam's defiant resistance to God's will prove to be rewarding? Not in the least. When Jehovah commanded the Israelites to take vengeance upon the Midianites for their part in ensnaring the Israelites, Balaam was still in their midst and so the sword of execution caught up

with him. (Num. 31:7, 8) Yes, for his headstrong action, Balaam paid with his life.

The diviner from Pethor thus stands as a warning example to all who insist on ignoring God's will and who pursue selfish gain instead. (2 Pet. 2:15, 16; Jude 11) This should encourage us to study the Holy Scriptures, to find out what God's will is for us and then to do it, never taking a foolish course like that of Balaam.

do you remember?

Have you read recent issues of *The Watchtower* carefully? If so, you will doubtless recall these points:

● Why was the prophet Jeremiah commanded to remain single?—Jer. 16:24.

This served to confirm the fact that the fulfillment of Jehovah's word regarding the destruction of Jerusalem was certain. The prophet would thus be spared fathering children that would experience calamity. Since Jeremiah was fully absorbed in his prophetic work, he heeded God's command without voicing complaint.—1/1 p. 19.

● What factors explain why God's kingdom is not as yet controlling all of earth's affairs?

Jehovah God does not impose his rule simply by force. He wants willing subjects who have been educated to know him. This education would take time, and time was also needed to select and train the ruling body. Furthermore, it has been God's purpose to provide a firm basis for faith in his rulership, to reveal the principles of his government, demonstrate his qualities as universal Ruler and to furnish clear identification of the Messiah, the King who would rule in his name.—1/15 pp. 15-17.

● What does it mean to fear God?

It means to have a wholesome dread of displeasing God. This is coupled with love, so that an individual will have no fear of approaching the Most High in prayer. Rather, he is confident that Jehovah God is interested in him as an individual and so does not hesitate

to pray about the most intimate matters, including his sins.—2/1 p. 26.

● How was the Moabitess Ruth richly rewarded for choosing Jehovah as her God and Israel as her people?

Ruth was highly favored in becoming a link in the line of descent leading to King David and terminating in Jesus Christ.—2/15 p. 26.

● When will the memorial of Christ's death cease to be celebrated?

This will be at the time when all members of Christ's "bride" are united with him in the heavens for the purpose of serving as associate king-priests.—3/1 p. 7.

● Who were 'transferred into the kingdom of the Son of God's love,' and from what time onward?—Col. 1:13.

The faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, spiritual Israelites, came under his rule starting with Pentecost of the year 33 C.E.—3/1 p. 19.

● In what sense does "all fullness" dwell in Jesus Christ?—Col. 1:19.

Jesus Christ occupies the foremost place in the Christian congregation as regards pre-eminence and authority. He also has the "fullness" of everything that Christians need for their guidance and instruction. His example and teachings are perfect, lacking nothing that must be supplemented by human philosophies and traditions. It was according to the good pleasure of Jehovah God that all fullness should thus dwell in his Son.—4/1 pp. 17, 18.

QUESTIONS from READERS

● What was Jesus' point when he said that you do not sew a new patch on an old garment or put new wine in old wineskins?

Basically, he meant that Christianity would not, and in fact could not, be made to conform to the Judaism of his day with its traditions of men that had developed.

According to Mark's account, Jesus said: "Nobody sews a patch of unshrunk cloth upon an old outer garment; if he does, its full strength pulls from it, the new from the old, and the tear becomes worse. Also, nobody puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the wine bursts the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. But people put new wine into new wineskins."—Mark 2:21, 22; Matt. 9:16, 17; Luke 5:36-39.

Jesus had just been asked why his disciples did not practice fasting as did the religious

leaders, the Pharisees. Christ replied that, while he was with his followers, fasting as a sign of mourning was inappropriate. Then he said what is quoted above.

There was practical sense in his illustrations. If you sew a patch of new cloth on an old garment, the new material will shrink and rip away when this garment is washed. Or, if you put new wine in an old skin bottle that has lost its elasticity, the skin will burst when the new wine ferments and gives off carbon dioxide.

Jesus thus helped his hearers to appreciate that no one should expect his followers to conform to the old practices of Judaism, such as ritual fasting. Also, his powerful new teachings could not fittingly be contained in the system of Jewish religion. Rather, those hearing and following Jesus could rejoice in the vitality of his teachings without trying to compromise them with the Pharisaical ways of the Jewish leaders.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

May 28: The True Religion—How to Identify

It. Page 5. Songs to Be Used: 9, 31.

June 4: Christianity and the Record of True Religion. Page 11. Songs to Be Used:

112, 27.

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