

NOVEMBER 15, 1978

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**Can Faith Win Out
in Today's World?**



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Can Faith Win Out in Today's World?

A REWARDING purpose in life. The young man did not have it. By his own admission, he was "a troublemaker from age 12." Deeply involved in drug use, he was unable to cope with the world's "unsolvable problems," and admits: "I turned to compulsive eating. In January of 1977 I became suicidal. I refused to live like this any longer. Every second hurt."

Not many months later, the same young man had found happiness and a rewarding purpose in life. Why? What had brought about the change? Faith!

Happy family life certainly was not being enjoyed by a farm laborer, his wife and their children living in an eastern land. The father was a poor provider and spent his money largely on tobacco, drink and betel nut. He and his family lived in deplorable conditions, were scarcely clothed and were often hungry.

But then the man began to change. He ceased getting drunk, improved his work habits and got better wages. In but a few

months he cleaned up and improved his home. His family then was fed and clothed, with resulting happiness.

What had brought about happy family life? Newfound faith!

A personality change for the better was sorely needed by a 16-year-old girl from a South American land. In her own words, she rebelled against everything that "simply smelled of authority." The girl even became involved with contraband to and from her country. As she herself put it, 'I was a rebel without a cause.'

Yet, this girl was able to make a personality change, abandoning her rebellious and illegal pursuits. How was this possible? She had acquired Bible-based faith.

Brotherhood and unity are not common in today's world. Especially has warfare done much to destroy this spirit. But consider the experience of four men—three Canadian sailors and one German battleship gunnery officer. On one occasion during World War II, the three Canadians had

tried to sink that officer's vessel. Thirty-four years later the former Canadian sailors were reunited. Imagine their surprise when they learned that their wartime enemy had in the intervening period become their spiritual brother, even baptizing one of them as a Christian!

So, then, can faith win out in today's world? It is doing so. Many, once without hope, now have a rewarding *purpose in life*. Formerly joyless fathers, mothers and children now enjoy *happy family life*. Many persons who have recognized that

their attitude and conduct once were wrong have made *personality changes* for the better. And some former foes have been bound together in unbreakable bonds of *brotherhood and unity*.

Primarily, what has been responsible for these favorable developments? Victorious faith! In fact, all the foregoing experiences were featured at various "Victorious Faith" International Conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses held recently. Some of these gatherings are considered in the following account.

Assembling to Promote Victorious Faith



STANDING firm in the midst of the many problems facing today's world are more than 2,000,000 courageous Christians. Moreover, the fact that their current series of over 100 international conventions will bring together well over 2,000,000 persons makes these people a

spectacle before nations and individuals. And dramatic indeed is the theme of these Christian gatherings: "Victorious Faith."

On the convention's opening day, the keynote address has focused attention on these words: "This is the conquest that has conquered the world, our faith."

(1 John 5:4) "What kind of conquest is this conquest by faith?" asked the speaker, answering: "Well, to have faith means to be so thoroughly convinced concerning things unseen or things of the future that these become a reality to the believer. True Christian faith, far different from credulity built on shifting sands of emotion or superstition, is built on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ. Like 'gold, silver and precious stones,' it is indestructible." (1 Cor. 3:11-14) But how does such faith manifest itself?

FAITH FINDS A WAY

For some, mere attendance at one of these conventions posed a test of faith. To illustrate: The spirit of victorious faith was embodied in the comment of a woman from the United States who attended the convention in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. She needs kidney dialysis treatment every other day. Not having a portable unit, for each treatment she would have to enter a hospital in that city. Would this stand in her way? No indeed! She said: "I'm not going to let a little thing like that stop me!" And it did not.

Victorious faith also was in evidence when a large family from the northern United States attended the Montreal convention. A fire had destroyed their home, and they were living in a school bus converted into a camper. The mother, a recently baptized Christian, adopted the attitude, "Jehovah will provide." Most of the family's meager funds were used to make the vehicle roadworthy, but its motor failed near Montreal and they incurred an expensive towing charge to the assembly's Trailer City. Fellow Witnesses voluntarily paid half the towing bill and, upon learning that the motor could not be repaired, arranged for the family to travel back to their home region with friends. Trailer City residents also contributed enough for the family to purchase an

equivalent vehicle on their return. The father, not yet baptized, was so overwhelmed by this spontaneous generosity that he wept, saying that he actually was experiencing the love he had read about in the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses. —John 13:34, 35.

Among the thousands present at the "Victorious Faith" International Conventions in New Orleans was a married sister who was there "alone" with her child of four and a six-month-old baby. "No one in my family is in the truth," she writes, "and while I was there at the Superdome I felt as if I were in an oasis. I knew I'd enjoy it and expected it to be good, but I had no idea of the joy that awaited me to be in one place with all those brothers and sisters." The specially recorded music also was touching. "When the first song was sung," she admits, "I could not get through it because I was weeping with happiness."

THEY MADE A CONQUEST BY FAITH

Those large convention audiences have included many persons who had just made a conquest by faith. How? By abandoning worldly ways, dedicating their lives to Jehovah God through Jesus Christ, and getting baptized in water. Of the 785,051 persons attending the 20 international conventions in the United States, 5,539 individuals were baptized. With the aid of God's holy spirit, some of them had made profound *personality changes*.—Col. 3:8-10.

For instance, one man and his wife were involved in drugs when she began studying the Bible in 1974. Whereas he continued to pursue that course of life, "she chose Jehovah's way." In 1976 the man was granted a divorce by the secular government, but in 1977 he lost all his worldly possessions. Then he remembered what his wife had said about the "last days." (2 Tim. 3:1-5) After contacting many denomina-

tions of Christendom, he became convinced that they were not teaching Bible truth. So the man prayed to God to show him the true religion and to help him to find peace of mind. One day he obtained the address of the local Kingdom Hall and recalls:

"I went there that night and received a Bible free from one of the brothers, even though I offered to pay for it. My looks had convinced him that I needed a Bible, for my hair was way down to my waist. I began to read it that night and, after a while, I realized that I did not understand it. So I went back for further help, received a *Truth* book [*The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*], and was told a brother would study with me. This I eagerly accepted.

"Since then, my former wife and I were remarried (on July 1, 1978) and were privileged to attend the 'Victorious Faith' Convention together with our sons, aged 16 and 14, where I was baptized [on July 22]."

HAPPY FAMILIES WITH VICTORIOUS FAITH

It is not inactive faith—mere belief in something spiritual—that can reunite separated marriage mates. What is needed is dynamic faith—indeed, victorious faith. In a day when marriages are breaking up and families are falling apart, such faith is

winning out. It is resulting in *happy family life*.

To a great extent audiences assembled for the "Victorious Faith" International Conventions are made up of Christian families, those guided by God's Word, the Bible. Interestingly, in one of the Canadian convention cities a deputy mayor remarked: "A point worthy of note is your obvious concern for family life and your life-style that leads to righteousness. This is something I am interested in and I am glad to see you people doing something about it."

Fittingly, the fourth day of these international conventions has as its theme "Have Faith to the Saving of Your Household." (Heb. 11:7) Pointedly, the talk "Coping with Marriage Problems in This Modern World" shows that individual selfishness often is at the root of marital difficulties. Nevertheless, by cultivating Christian qualities it is possible for husbands to be men of God and for wives to be women of God. The program's various features leave no doubt that it is possible—with victorious faith—to make your family life happy.

To attain happiness in marriage, however, some adjustments may be required. For example, in an experience related at the Winnipeg, Manitoba, international convention, one man admitted: "I also had a hard time accepting headship, as it was much easier for [my wife] to take the lead. But in time this has worked out." —Eph. 5:21-23, 33.

What a delight it is to observe entire families manifest victorious faith in today's world! Truly noteworthy was the very large family attending the Spanish international convention in Los Angeles, California. Bible truth began to filter to that family in 1917 when the grandfather started reading the publications of God's people. Years later, the widowed grandmother moved to Mexico and began study-

In Coming Issues

- **Qualified Men for God**
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ing the Bible with some full-time Kingdom proclaimers in that country. Her 12 sons and daughters were required to participate by reading a book and giving a report on it. Today there are more than 150 members of this family displaying victorious faith, among them elders, ministerial servants and pioneers (full-time declarers of the "good news"). In fact, 106 members of this family attended the Spanish convention in Los Angeles.

VICTORIOUS FAITH AMONG THE YOUNG

If happy family life is to be attained, children and youths must not be ignored. Fittingly, then, an entire convention day is devoted to the theme "Youths, Be Examples in Faith." (1 Tim. 4:12) Featured on the program this day is the faith-strengthening drama "Youths—What Is Your Goal in Life?" It deals with the faith and unselfish godly service of the young man Timothy, an associate of the Christian apostle Paul.

Three natural brothers were among those participating in this drama at the "Victorious Faith" International Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They all agreed that the "greatest testing point and strengthening of their faith came as a result of the death of their father after a sudden illness." What had helped these youths to have victorious faith? One of them, Lawrence, answered: "The Truth has kept our family together. When my father was alive, he was strict with us. He used to gather us boys together to tell us things about life." "And he always encouraged us to keep going forward," added Lester, age 17. He also remarked: "Mother just continued in his steps and organized our family to continue onward in the faith." Leon, age 20, who portrayed Timothy in the drama, said: "The [congregational] elders, who gave us companionship and invited us along in field service,

helped us to keep our faith strong." Yes, Christian youths do have faith that wins out in today's world.

BENEFITS ALREADY IN EVIDENCE

These international conventions have been designed to promote victorious faith. Yet, those adhering to God's Word already give evidence that they have benefited from its counsel. One motel owner in the San Francisco, California, area stated: "It was a pleasure to have my place filled with Jehovah's Witnesses. May I say, your children are so well behaved. They don't tinker with the ice machines, play around with the elevator, or run up and down the hallways as the children usually do."

San Juan, Puerto Rico, also was a city in which Jehovah's Witnesses gathered for international conventions. There one hotel manager stated: "I am especially happy with the children. We have absolutely no problems with them and they conduct themselves very well. In spite of the fact that there are more than 200 of Jehovah's Witnesses as guests in the hotel, there is much silence. I wish that [all who] stayed here were Jehovah's Witnesses. I have never seen anything like it, that so many children and adults could be so united and humble."

A man who has for nine years been a security guard at a stadium used by Jehovah's Witnesses in San Juan said: "I find that the organization is fantastic . . . I personally feel much at ease. I have no problems with you. Look, I don't even carry a club. But it isn't this way at other religious conventions. You treat me with great respect . . . Even the children obey me! That never happens!"

VICTORIOUS FAITH FOSTERS BROTHERHOOD

These gatherings of Jehovah's Witnesses have attracted much attention. A contributing factor has been the prevailing spirit of *brotherhood and unity*. For in-

"Victorious Faith"

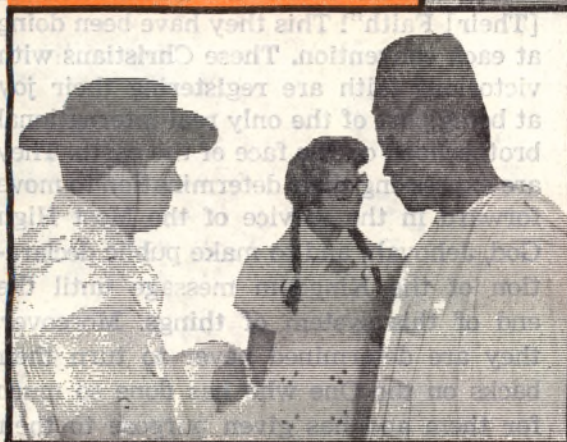


IT IS ACTIVE AND BRINGS JOY—

as illustrated by this happy group
of Kingdom proclaimers and united
family sharing in convention
witnessing activities



The apostle Paul encourages young Timothy. Instructive Bible dramas are featured at all conventions



Argentinians meet Africans. In this divided world, Jehovah's Witnesses of all nations form one international brotherhood

This newly baptized married couple have just demonstrated that they are now sharing in the conquest by faith



stance, writing in *The Times—Picayune*, Wesley Jackson described the Witnesses as "good people, leading extremely high moral lives, which makes them very family-oriented." He also stated: "The many thousands of Witnesses here this week, and they come in all different shapes and sizes, colors and nationalities, are basically very devout Christians whose religious beliefs differ somewhat from the rest of the Christian community. That they are close-knit is obvious from the large throngs which have converged on this city for the first of two international rallies being held in New Orleans."

The spirit of brotherhood and unity evident among Jehovah's Witnesses also was noted in an editorial appearing in the *Washington Afro-American* of June 24, 1978. It stated:

"Although much progress has been made in improving race relations, some researchers have recently seen causes for discouragement. Their appraisal: few blacks and whites sit in the same church pews.

"During sessions of the 'Victorious Faith' International Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses it is apparent such a division does not exist. The 48,000 delegates to the meeting under way at the R. F. K. Stadium eat, worship, and associate together with no racial distinctions."

Realizing, as they do, that God "made out of one man every nation of men," Jehovah's Witnesses are at unity world wide. (Acts 17:26) Like the Christian apostle Peter, they know that "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) Hence, while racial, national and other divisions continue to fragment the human race, the "Victorious Faith" International Conventions are providing a testimony to the entire world that there is one united people displaying invincible faith.

"DECLARATION OF OUR FAITH"

Certainly, victorious faith has been emphasized at these international conventions. For instance, the public talk inspired increased faith in Jehovah and his Messianic King. That discourse, entitled "Jesus Christ—Victorious King with Whom Nations Must Reckon," vividly portrayed the Son of God as a warrior king who must ride in the cause of truth, humility and righteousness and fight for the establishment of a new order over all the earth. —Ps. 45:3-5; Isa. 26:9.

Yet, right now, with international conventions in session throughout the earth, how appropriate it is that Jehovah's Witnesses should make a "Declaration of [Their] Faith"! This they have been doing at each convention. These Christians with victorious faith are registering their joy at being part of the only real international brotherhood on the face of the earth. They are expressing their determination to move forward in the service of the Most High God, Jehovah, and to make public declaration of the Kingdom message until the end of this system of things. Moreover, they are determined never to turn their backs on the One who has done so much for them and has given purpose to their lives.

VICTORIOUS FAITH CALLS FOR ACTION!

However, affirmation of faith is one thing. Putting it into action is another. (Jas. 2:18-20) Friday morning of the "Victorious Faith" International Convention is being devoted to activities in the field. Equipped with literature carried in colorful kits advertising the convention, the delegates are witnessing from house to house, at business places, on the streets and elsewhere. For instance, upwards of 20,000 Witnesses participated in this activity in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and its suburbs. At New Orleans, Louisiana,

more than 30,000 took part in this work.

In various cases, television or other news media personnel accompanied the Witnesses in their Friday morning field service activity. Cheryl Ernst, a staff writer of the *Everett Herald*, wrote in that Washington state newspaper: "They marched forth from the Kingdome [in Seattle] 40,000-strong, like Joshua's army . . . Faith was their armor, the Bible their weapon and words their ammunition."

What impression was made by this special activity? In St. Louis, Missouri, a man approached a Witness doing street work and remarked: "I'll say one thing about Jehovah's Witnesses: Your women dress like ladies." Donna Balkan, a staff writer of the Ottawa, Ontario, *Citizen*, wrote: "Even the most steadfast non-believers could be touched by the delegates' friendly, pleasant manner. Attempts to disagree with them were thwarted by kind words—after all, it's not easy [to] argue with people who talk constantly of love, peace, and the 'ideal living conditions,' which the Kingdom of God will bring to mankind."

A Wise Proverb

"The sacrifice of the wicked ones is something detestable to Jehovah, but the prayer of the upright ones is a pleasure to him."—Prov. 15:8.

These words were written at a time when the worship of Jehovah was centered at a temple in Jerusalem, where animal sacrifices were offered. An Israelite could spend a considerable amount of money to buy a bull or a lamb for sacrifice. This proverb reveals, however, that God preferred a sincere prayer that costs nothing from an upright person, rather than an animal sacrifice from a wicked person. So God's criterion is not the expense an individual goes to in practicing religion, but his heart condition and general life pattern. The verse that follows says: "The way of the wicked one is something detestable to Jehovah, but the one pursuing righteousness he loves."—Prov. 15:9.

THEY KEEP BUILDING VICTORIOUS FAITH

Jehovah's Witnesses confidently await the "ideal living conditions" and other blessings that God's kingdom will bring to humankind. Yet, the worship of Jehovah God and *devoted service* to him already have given them a rewarding *purpose in life*. Also, because of applying Scriptural principles, they now enjoy *happy family life* and have the satisfaction that results from *personality changes* that harmonize with the divine will. And these Christians rejoice that true *brotherhood and unity* bind them together in this divided world.

Yes, Jehovah's Christian witnesses furnish proof that faith *can* win out in today's world. However, they know that it is vital to keep building faith, and their current conventions are benefiting them to that end. One family of delegates put matters quite well in writing: "Brothers, everyone came away from this assembly better able to face the many problems we all deal with in day-to-day life. Thank you for all the work that went into it, and *all* of it to Jehovah's praise." Indeed, these international conventions are promoting victorious faith.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● After America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) launched Pioneer Venus 1 earlier this year, the magazine "NASA Activities" declared that it and its sister craft Pioneer Venus 2

Why Is Venus Different?

"may shed new light on some of the most puzzling questions in planetary science, such as: 'Why do two planets—Earth and Venus—of about the same mass, probably formed from similar materials and situated at comparable distances from the Sun, have atmospheres that have evolved so differently?'"

"Why is the surface of Venus baked by a searing heat, while Earth luxuriates in a climate conducive to life?"

Scientists' inability to answer these two perplexing questions may well lie in a wrong assumption—that the atmospheres of both planets evolved on their own. However, earth's climate reveals the attention of a loving Creator in specially preparing earth to support life, while he has not, at least until now, developed the atmosphere of Venus to this extent.—Gen. 1:1-31.

● Unswerving adherence to principle can stir up admiration even in persons whose own views may differ. A Roman Catholic nun writes in the

Mozambique—A Nun's Insight

Portuguese Catholic missionary periodical "Andare alle genti" concerning her experience with Jehovah's Witnesses in Mozambique. The nun, Dalmazia Colombo, noted that the Witnesses "are even sent into mass exile because of their refusal to become involved in certain political organizations." She continues:

"In fact, in 1972 when I was at Mecanhela (in the Lichinga diocese) I saw ten thousand of them who had been expelled from Malawi and were seeking some way of settling in Mozambique. I can still well remember how they arrived in groups, worn out and poorly clothed, their children with them, carrying just a few household implements and their Bibles. I can still see them sitting under the trees for days on end, patient, calm . . . waiting for the authorities to allow them to have a piece of land to start life over again."

"Several years have gone by since then and once more times have been hard on Jehovah's Witnesses. At the moment, in these new 'Gulag' [concentration] camps for reeducation installed in [Mozambique], 25,000 Jehovah's Witnesses from Malawi and Mozambique have been imprisoned together."

"There is truth in many of the things they say and they are worthy of our admiration . . . How different the world would be if we all woke up one morning firmly decided not to take up arms again, whatever the cost or the reason, just like Jehovah's Witnesses! . . . What would happen if all believers in God were willing because of their faith to collect up their worldly belongings into one single suitcase and wait with their wives and children at the side of the road until the Gulag truck came along to pick them up (this has happened here under my very eyes); would there be any sense in further religious persecution? Certainly the world would not be turned into a concentration camp but, rather, a recruiting center open to the nonviolent volunteers for Christ's own school."

● The world's churches have always supported one or both sides in military conflicts.

Terrorism in the Name of God

Similarly, the World Council of Churches recently granted \$85,000 to a guerrilla movement known to engage in terrorism and murder. A London "Daily Express" editorial cartoon illustrated this with a picture of the Devil jovially telephoning God, declaring: "My take-over bid for the World is going very well, and the World Council of Churches has defected from your side to mine!"

Such actions in the name of Christianity certainly do bring reproach on God and Christ, as also noted by the Los Angeles "Herald Examiner": "It strains our credulity to believe that a group of churchmen, gathered in the name of the Prince of Peace, could sponsor" the guerrillas. But Jesus anticipated such conduct by churchmen who would use his name, and he prophetically rebuffed their appeals for judgmental mercy with the words: "I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness."—Matt. 7:22, 23.

THE PROUD REBEL KORAH

THE Levite Korah, a first cousin of Moses and Aaron, was privileged to see first-hand spectacular displays of Jehovah's power and glory. He was there when the waters of the Red Sea parted, enabling the Israelites to cross on dry land. Then, along with the congregation of Israel, he lifted up his voice in song, praising Jehovah for having destroyed the Egyptian pursuer in the very same sea. From then on, Korah saw the marvelous way in which Jehovah God cared for his people in the wilderness, providing water, manna and meat for them. He also witnessed the vanquishing of the Amalekites who staged an unprovoked attack on Israel. This victory, too, was a proof of Jehovah's care and protection.

From what he witnessed in the course of that year, Korah had enough evidence to know that Jehovah, though dealing mercifully with his people, would tolerate

neither rebellion nor deliberate lawlessness. Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu perished in a fire from Jehovah because they, likely while intoxicated, offered incense that had not been divinely prescribed. Miriam was temporarily struck with leprosy because she criticized her brother Moses regarding his marriage to a Cushite woman and challenged his unique position before Jehovah.—Lev. 10:1, 2; Num. 12:1-15.

On one occasion Korah himself had shared in executing Jehovah's vengeance. After the Israelites became involved in calf worship at Mount Sinai, Moses called for a showdown, saying: "Who is on Jehovah's side? To me!" Only the Levites, which would have included Korah, gathered themselves to Moses. In obedience to Moses' direction, they passed through the camp of Israel and killed 3,000 idolaters with the sword.—Ex. 32:26-28.

SEEDS OF DISCONTENT GROW

However, whatever zeal for righteousness Korah may have displayed on that occasion did not continue. It appears that unfavorable circumstances proved too much of a test for him. He was not content with his lot and proudly wanted to seize a position to which he was not entitled. What were the circumstances under which Korah manifested a proud, rebellious spirit?

When the Israelites left Egypt, they had before them the grand prospect of soon entering the Promised Land. But that changed. Ten of the 12 spies sent into the land brought back unfavorable reports that terrified the Israelites. As a result, they began to murmur against Moses and Aaron, saying: "If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness! And why is Jehovah bringing us to this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder. Is it not better for us to return to Egypt?" (Num. 14:2, 3) For their faithlessness, Jehovah sentenced them to remain in the wilderness, completing 40 years of wandering until all the registered men of war died. So, instead of enjoying an inheritance in the Promised Land, the Israelites had to put up with the hardships of a nomadic life in a bleak and rugged wilderness. How disappointing this must have been!

With the passing of time, discontent began to grow and to flourish among the Israelites. The influential Kohathite Korah, a man perhaps about 80 years of age, evidently got caught up in this spirit of discontent. In time he became a ring-leader in a rebellion against the God-ordained authority of his cousins Moses and Aaron.

The Kohathite Levites encamped near the Reubenites. Consequently there may have been considerable interchange of

thought between Korah and certain prominent men of the tribe of Reuben. Since Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob, some of these descendants of his may have resented Moses' exercise of administrative authority over them. As for Korah, he was not content with serving merely as an assistant to the Aaronic priesthood.

Finally, Korah and the Reubenites Dathan, Abiram and On, along with 250 Israelite chieftains, congregated themselves against Moses and Aaron, saying: "That is enough of you, because the whole assembly are all of them holy and Jehovah is in their midst. Why, then, should you lift yourselves up above the congregation of Jehovah?"—Num. 16:1-3.

Thus, Korah disregarded the fact that Moses and Aaron had received their appointment from Jehovah, and that the holiness of the congregation depended on obedience to God's law. It was not a holiness, a pureness or cleanness that they possessed inherently. Korah wrongly maintained that Moses and Aaron had arbitrarily seized a standing above a congregation of equals, wherein each member was holy.

MOSES GIVES REPROOF

How would it become clear to all that Korah and his supporters were wrong? Moses said: "In the morning Jehovah will make known who belongs to him and who is holy and who must come near to him, and whoever he may choose will come near to him. Do this: Take fire holders for yourselves, Korah and his entire assembly, and put fire in them and place incense upon them before Jehovah tomorrow, and it must occur that the man whom Jehovah will choose, he is the holy one."—Num. 16:5-7.

There was not to be a long period for the settlement of the issue that had been raised. The very next morning, Jehovah

would reveal whom he had chosen to render priestly service to him. As a Kohathite Levite, Korah had not been authorized to offer incense as a priest. For him to present himself before Jehovah to offer incense would signify that he felt that he had the right to perform priestly services. Hence, in telling Korah and his company to make their appearance with fire holders, Moses invited them to act in harmony with their personal desire to seize priestly functions.

Nevertheless, he made it clear to Korah and his rebellious associates that their contention was wrong, stating: "Is it such a little thing for you men that the God of Israel has separated you men from the assembly of Israel to present you to himself to carry on the service of Jehovah's tabernacle and to stand before the assembly to minister to them, and that he should bring you and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you near? So must you men also try to secure the priesthood? For that reason you and all your assembly who are gathering together are against Jehovah. As for Aaron, what is he that you men should murmur against him?"—Num. 16: 9-11.

This reproof should have caused Korah and his supporters to reconsider their position. Korah along with the other Levites had been highly privileged in being separated from among their fellow Israelites to serve at the sanctuary. That was no little, insignificant thing. So Moses was now demonstrating how unappreciative Korah was of the honor and dignity that Jehovah had conferred on the Levites. In rebelling against Jehovah's arrangement, Korah and his supporters were setting themselves in opposition to the Most High. What they were doing had no justification. Aaron had not set himself up as high priest. He was such by God's appointment.

KORAH PERISHES BUT NOT HIS SONS

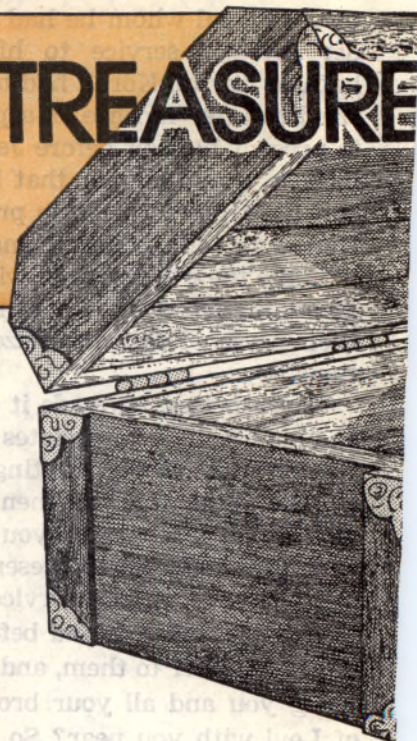
Moses' words, however, fell on deaf ears. The next morning Korah with 250 chiefs boldly took their station before the tabernacle entrance in the courtyard, there to offer incense. Jehovah then forcefully demonstrated that only men of the house of Aaron should serve as priests. A fire from Jehovah consumed Korah and the 250 with him.—Num. 16:35; 26:10.

The sons of Korah did not join their father in this rebellion. They were happy and content to serve as assistants to the priests and, therefore, continued living. (Num. 26:9, 11) Among their descendants were men who wrote songs of praise that became part of the inspired Scriptures. One of these songs or psalms gratefully acknowledges: "A day in your courtyards is better than a thousand elsewhere. I have chosen to stand at the threshold in the house of my God rather than to move around in the tents of wickedness. For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield; favor and glory are what he gives. Jehovah himself will not hold back anything good from those walking in faultlessness."—Ps. 84: 10, 11.

Truly, we do well to imitate the example of the sons of Korah, being always appreciative of what Jehovah God has given us. As for Korah himself, he stands as a warning example to us. When the prospects appear gloomy, we must be careful that pride does not get the better of us. Humbly, we should submit to whatever Jehovah God may permit us to experience, not bristling against it. Never should we allow times of adversity to cause us to become complainers about our lot in life and to scheme to seize what is not rightfully ours. If we remember that humbly serving God is truly worth while, regardless of what the circumstances may be, we can avoid the disastrous course of Korah and remain divinely approved as did his sons.

WHERE IS YOUR TREASURE

"Where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also." — Luke 12:34.



THROUGHOUT human history, many have centered their lives around the acquiring of material possessions—houses, gold, silver, precious stones, extensive flocks and herds of domestic animals, and the like. People have struggled to increase their property, hoping that their labors would benefit children and grandchildren and even later generations. But are material possessions rightly the treasure that should get the prime attention from God's servants?

² If a Christian were to devote himself mainly to the pursuit of material goals, would he not be at variance with persons who are serving God? He would be much like those described by the inspired psalmist David—"men of this system of things, whose share is in this life, . . . who are satisfied with sons and who do lay up for their children what they leave over." (Ps. 17:14) Such "men of this system of things" know nothing loftier than the satisfying of their personal desires. All that life means to them is making a good living, raising a family and leaving behind an inheritance. They give no thought to their obligation toward Jehovah God.

³ How different was David's outlook on life! He declared: "As for me, in righteousness I shall behold your face; I will be satisfied when awakening to see your form." (Ps. 17:15) Yes, his chief interest was in remaining righteous so that he might see God's face, that is, experience divine favor and blessing as if standing before his Maker. On "awakening" to an

assurance from God, David would rejoice in Jehovah's presence with him. Truly, the psalmist's heart had set its affections on spiritual treasures that endure.

⁴ What about today? Judged by our attitudes, words and actions, where is our treasure? Is it here on the earth or is it in the heavens? Just where our treasure is depends on the way in which our hearts are motivating us. Jesus Christ said: "Where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also." (Luke 12:34) Our considering and applying what else the Son of God then stated can be most helpful in setting our affections where they should be.

EVALUATE MATERIAL RICHES PROPERLY

⁵ As we examine the context of Jesus'

1. What has been the chief concern of the majority of mankind? (Ps. 49:6-11; 144:12-14; Matt. 6:31, 32)
2. If a Christian concentrated mainly on material goals, how would he be like "men of this system of things"?
3. What was of greatest importance to David? (Ps. 16:5-8)

4. What determines where our treasure is?
5. (a) Why did Jesus Christ refuse to involve himself in an inheritance dispute? (b) What warning did he give at that time, and why? (c) What illustration did he present to emphasize the folly of attaching undue importance to material things?



words, we note that a large crowd had been listening to the Son of God. One of them spoke up: "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." (Luke 12:13) Since the Mosaic law stipulated that the firstborn son was to receive two parts of the inheritance, there really should not have been any reason for a dispute. (Deut. 21:17) Apparently the man who asked Jesus to intervene wanted more than his legal share. Seeing the issue, the Son of God refused to get involved but warned the crowd against wrongly desiring what others have. He said: "Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness, because even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15) No matter how wealthy a person may be, he simply cannot keep himself alive indefinitely. He will die just as any other man and leave all his piled-up wealth behind. Jesus further emphasized this point when giving the following illustration:

"The land of a certain rich man produced well. Consequently he began reasoning within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, now that I have nowhere to gather my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my storehouses and build bigger ones, and there I will gather all

my grain and all my good things; and I will say to my soul: 'Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, enjoy yourself.'" But God said to him, 'Unreasonable one, this night they are demanding your soul from you. Who, then, is to have the things you stored up?'" —Luke 12:16-20.

⁶ The rich man in this illustration gave no thought as to how he could use his riches to help others. He became solely concerned about his own comforts, hoping to benefit from his stored-up wealth for years to come. He lost sight of the fact that his life could end very quickly and so failed to use his assets in building up a record of fine works with Jehovah God. Therefore, at death, he had no treasure in the form of fine works that could be rewarded by his Maker. As Jesus put it: "So it goes with the man that lays up treasure for himself but is not rich toward God."—Luke 12:21.

⁷ Disciples of Jesus Christ are not immune to the danger of falling into the same state of mind as that of the rich man in the illustration. For example, the Christian disciple James found it necessary to censure certain fellow believers: "Come, now, you who say: 'Today or tomorrow we will journey to this city and will spend a year there, and we will engage in business and make profits,' whereas you do not know what your life will be tomorrow. For you are a mist appearing for a little while and then disappearing. Instead, you ought to say: 'If Jehovah wills, we shall live and also do this or that.' But now you take pride in your self-assuming brags. All such taking of pride is wicked."—Jas. 4: 13-16.

⁸ It is really the height of presumptuous-

6. What did the rich man in Jesus' illustration fail to appreciate, and how did Jesus apply the illustration?
7. What words of the disciple James show that Christians may be ensnared in the way that the rich man of Jesus' illustration was?

8. When would it be presumptuous to pursue long-range material goals, and why?

ness and pride for a person to express determination to pursue long-range material goals with success and do that without any regard for God's will in the matter. There is no way to know what even the next day will bring. The best plans may fail, or death may come suddenly, unexpectedly. Human life is as frail and unstable as a mist and so is not a reliable foundation on which to build one's hopes. Hence, the person who boasts about how he will carry out his plans ignores his dependence on God and disregards the fact that divine blessing is needed for success. As the disciple James well noted, such prideful action is wicked.

⁹ The person who recklessly goes ahead with his materialistic plans and shoves God's will for him in the background comes into grave spiritual danger. The Christian apostle Paul warned: "Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains."—1 Tim. 6:9, 10.

¹⁰ On the other hand, if our hearts are motivating us aright, we will not lose sight of the uncertainty of life and our total dependence on Jehovah God. Then, whenever we make plans for the future, we will prayerfully consider how these plans fit in with God's purpose. This will prevent our getting so wrapped up in materialistic pursuits that we have less and less time for building a strong faith. Such prayerful consideration will also help us to see that material assets are not simply

9. What do we learn from 1 Timothy 6:9, 10 about the danger of striving for riches?

10. (a) What should we do when planning for the future, and why? (b) Are material assets to be used solely for the satisfying of personal pleasures, and what do the Scriptures say about this?

to be piled up for the satisfying of personal pleasures but should be used to benefit needy fellow humans. This unselfish use of money is basic to a person's being a true Christian. The Scriptures tell us: "Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need." (Eph. 4:28) "The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world."—Jas. 1:27.

BEWARE OF BEING SIDETRACKED BY DAILY CARES

¹¹ While many Christians may realize the folly of piling up wealth just for their own pleasure and benefit, they may not realize that daily cares can just as easily distract them from being whole-souled in serving Jehovah God. This was the point that Jesus specifically made when turning attention to his disciples, saying:

"On this account I say to you, Quit being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or about your bodies as to what you will wear. For the soul is worth more than food and the body than clothing. Mark well that the ravens neither sow seed nor reap, and they have neither barn nor storehouse, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more worth are you than birds? Who of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his life-span? If, therefore, you cannot do the least thing, why be anxious about the remaining things? Mark well how the lilies grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, Not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. If, now, God thus clothes the vegetation in the field that today exists and tomorrow is cast into an oven, how much rather will he clothe you, you with little faith! So quit seeking what you might eat and what you might drink, and

11. What counsel did Jesus Christ give about the proper attitude respecting daily cares of life?

quit being in anxious suspense; for all these are the things the nations of the world are eagerly pursuing, but your Father knows you need these things. Nevertheless, seek continually his kingdom, and these things will be added to you."—Luke 12:22-31.

¹² Especially in times of economic hardships or increasing inflation, we do well to meditate on these words of Jesus. All the care, worry and anxiety in the world will not improve our situation. Physical nourishment cannot sustain our lives everlastingly, nor can it secure for us a good name with Jehovah God. Hence, the person who makes food a matter of such anxious care as to neglect his service to God would actually be placing a higher value on physical sustenance than on his life. Similarly, the person who becomes over-anxious about his clothing needs, and begins to slack off in spiritual pursuits, would be assigning greater worth to clothing than to his body. Undue concern about getting daily necessities constitutes a lack of faith in God's ability to provide for his servants.

¹³ In view of Jehovah's matchless record as a Provider, there is no reason for anyone to yield to such a lack of faith. As Jesus pointed out, the ravens do not worry about where their next meal is going to come from nor do the lilies become anxious about their adornment. Yet, those ravens, by looking for food, find enough to sustain them, and the lilies simply grow and put on a gorgeous display of color that not even King Solomon could rival with his beautiful attire. Yes, Jehovah God has arranged matters so that the ravens are able to find the needed food, and the vegetation can be adorned with blossoms of outstanding beauty. Could we, there-

fore, imagine that he would callously allow his servants to starve to death or to walk about without essential clothing? Certainly not. Hence, as a general rule, true Christians can rest assured that, when they do not let the cares of life hinder their service to God, they will have basic essentials. In fact, they will be better off than worldlings in like economic circumstances. Christians fare better because of not wasting their assets in gambling, smoking, heavy drinking or the like.

EXPRESSIONS FROM JEHOVAH'S MOUTH HAVE SUSTAINING POWER

¹⁴ Think, too, of what Jehovah God did for the Israelites in the wilderness. Moses reminded them: "Remember all the way that Jehovah your God made you walk these forty years in the wilderness, . . . he humbled you and let you go hungry and fed you with the manna, which neither you had known nor your fathers had known; in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live but by every expression of Jehovah's mouth does man live." (Deut. 8:2, 3) In the uncultivated wilderness, some three million Israelites simply could not have survived for 40 years. In fact, Jehovah God allowed them to come into a situation where they thought that they would actually starve to death. They cried out to Moses and Aaron: "You have brought us out into this wilderness to put this whole congregation to death by famine." (Ex. 16:3) Without the ordinary means for sustaining life—bread—the Israelites felt that they were doomed.

¹⁵ Jehovah indeed humbled them by letting them experience such helplessness.

12. Why is it unreasonable to give way to extreme worry about food and clothing and to begin to slacken in spiritual pursuits?

13. Why should what Jehovah has done for the ravens and the lilies of the field be of encouragement to us?

14. Without Jehovah's direct help, could the Israelites have survived in the wilderness, and what do Moses' words reveal in this regard?

15. Why did Jehovah permit the Israelites to experience hunger, and in what sense was the manna an expression of his mouth?



Manna,
an expression from Jehovah
that sustained a nation

His purpose in doing so was to teach them that, when the common supply of food failed, the expressions of Jehovah's mouth could sustain man. The miraculous manna was such an expression, for Jehovah gave the command and the manna came to be. Since Jehovah God kept a whole nation alive in a wilderness for 40 years, we can have every confidence that the expressions of his mouth can also sustain us today.

¹⁶ What expressions has Jehovah made about sustaining his servants? The inspired psalmist wrote: "Jehovah will not forsake his people." (Ps. 94:14) And Jesus Christ said: "Never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' . . . For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." —Matt. 6:31-33.

16. What are some expressions that Jehovah has made about sustaining his servants? (Ps. 37:3, 4, 23-26; 145:14-19)

¹⁷ Therefore, all who truly seek God's kingdom and his righteousness first will experience his loving care. Though they may find themselves in seemingly hopeless circumstances, the expressions of Jehovah's mouth will sustain them. As the manna was a tangible expression from Jehovah's mouth and kept the Israelites alive in the wilderness, so today Jehovah's promise to sustain his servants will take a tangible form. For example, Jehovah has at times moved fellow believers or even unbelievers to

the aid of his needy servants. Since undue worry about daily cares of life can be destructive to our spiritual outlook, we do well to keep strong our faith in Jehovah's ability to provide for us. —Heb. 13:5, 6.

¹⁸ This matter of laying up treasure in heaven should not be treated lightly. All future blessings and life prospects depend on it. (Compare Luke 12:45-48.) Hence, it is good for each one to examine himself, asking: Are Kingdom interests really first in my life? Am I using my time, energies and assets in a way that results in praise to God's name and in benefit to my fellow humans? Can I see that material things are not the important thing in my life but that my greatest joy comes from serving Jehovah God? Only if our real treasure is in the heavens can we answer Yes to these questions.

17. What tangible form may the expression of Jehovah's mouth take when it comes to sustaining the life of his servants?

18. (a) Why should we consider seriously whether we are laying up treasures in heaven? (b) What questions might we ask ourselves to determine just where our real treasure is?

PROVE YOURSELF FAITHFUL

"What is looked for in stewards is for a man
to be found faithful."—1 Cor. 4:2.

ALL who are serving Jehovah God as loyal disciples of Jesus Christ have a precious treasure. (Compare 2 Corinthians 4:1-7.) They have in their possession vital knowledge that can mean life to those who begin acting in harmony with it. (John 17:3) Logically, then, they should be exerting themselves in efforts to aid fellow humans spiritually. Also, they should be willing to give material aid to those in need. Such material giving goes hand in hand with spiritual giving. This is because food, clothing and shelter are essential for life, and, without life, a person cannot praise Jehovah God.—Ps. 30:9; 88:10-12.

² Jesus Christ urged his disciples: "Sell the things belonging to you and give gifts of mercy. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, a never-failing treasure in the heavens, where a thief does not get near nor moth consumes. For where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also." (Luke 12:33, 34) Thus, there should be a willingness to use one's time and assets to benefit others. Manifestly, Jesus did not mean that his disciples reduce themselves to poverty and thereafter depend on the charity of others. But these disciples were to be willing to part with possessions to aid persons in real physical or spiritual need.

1. Why should God's servants be exerting themselves in efforts to help fellow humans?

2. In view of Jesus' admonition at Luke 12:33, 34, what should his disciples be willing to do?

³ The spirit of Jesus' counsel is well illustrated by what the apostle Paul instructed Timothy to tell wealthy Christians. We read: "Give orders to those who are rich in the present system of things not to be high-minded, and to rest their hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God, who furnishes us all things richly for our enjoyment; to work at good, to be rich in fine works, to be liberal, ready to share, safely treasuring up for themselves a fine foundation for the future, in order that they may get a firm hold on the real life." (1 Tim. 6:17-19) What does this admonition mean?

⁴ Rich Christians were not to view themselves as superior persons because of their wealth. Nor were they to put their confidence in riches. Because possessions can be stolen, lost or destroyed, they are a very poor foundation on which to build one's hopes. But the eternal God, Jehovah, merits our absolute confidence. Were it not for the generous provisions that He made for sustaining life on earth, no one could keep himself alive. (Acts 14:16, 17; 17:25) How foolish, then, it would be to ignore the Creator and to center one's life around material things!

⁵ By reason of his Creatorship, Jehovah is the Owner of all things. Hence, it is

3, 4. (a) What admonition was Timothy to give to wealthy Christians? (b) In harmony with this admonition, what attitude should they avoid?

5. How should we use our assets, and why? (Luke 16:1-13)



Active help to those in spiritual or physical need brings rich spiritual rewards

only right that we worship him and use whatever assets that we may have in a way that is pleasing in his sight. (Ps. 95:3-6) This means our using these assets to help others spiritually and materially. In the case of wealthy Christians, they were urged to make their fine works that went on record just as abundant as their possessions. By using what they had in relieving the distress of others, they would be laying up treasure in heaven. In fact, all devoted Christians, by keeping active in helping persons in spiritual and physical need, lay up treasure in heaven that will yield rich dividends in the form of rewards from Jehovah God.

⁶ Unlike material possessions that may be stolen or garments that moths may consume, a record of fine works with God is indestructible. Surely, then, while still living, we should want to do our utmost to guard against letting material possessions, daily cares or pleasures interfere with our

making a fine record with Jehovah God. Particularly since life is of uncertain duration, it is urgent that we do not get sidetracked from our main objective—remaining approved servants of Jehovah God and loyal disciples of our Master Jesus Christ. How sad it would be for a person to be overtaken by death without his having made good use of his opportunities to store up treasure in heaven!

⁷ Therefore, it is very important that we fix our hearts on efforts to increase our treasure in heaven. One thing that will aid us in this is our taking time to reflect appreciatively on what Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have done in our behalf. We are indebted to Jehovah God for our very life. (Rev. 4:11) Despite the thankless attitude of so many of humankind, the Most High has continued to allow all to benefit from his generous provisions for sustaining life. (Matt. 5:45) Then, in expression of his superlative love,

6. Why should we be careful not to let anything interfere with our laying up treasure in heaven?

7. What can help us to concentrate on laying up treasure in heaven?

Jehovah God did not even spare his dearest Son, Jesus Christ, from dying a shameful death on a stake. This made it possible for us to be liberated from sin and death, finally to become God's perfect children for all eternity. (Rom. 5:8; 8:32) And Jesus Christ demonstrated his great love by willingly surrendering his life in our behalf. (1 John 2:2) Should not the love that we have been shown compel us to seize every opportunity to prove ourselves thankful by aiding fellow humans spiritually and materially?

USE TIME WELL

⁸ Truly, our love for Jehovah and Jesus Christ should move us to make good use of our time. Would we be doing this if pleasures became so important as to suggest that we could not live without them? Obviously not! We should never lose sight of the fact that, for many centuries, millions upon millions of persons lived without radio, television, movies, cars, sports activities, extensive pleasure trips and the like. Reasonably, then, is it not wise to let such things occupy a secondary place in our lives? Hence, if a person finds himself spending more time in the pursuit of pleasure than in matters directly related to true worship, may it not be that he has become a 'lover of pleasures'? (2 Tim. 3:4) And does he not stand in danger of becoming totally unfruitful in bringing praise to God's name?—Luke 8:14.

⁹ Of course, devoted servants of Jehovah God may rightly enjoy various forms of wholesome relaxation or recreation. Even Jesus Christ accepted invitations to meals and banquets and contributed to the joy of a wedding feast by miraculously transforming water into superb wine.

8. What might show that a person is spending too much time in pursuing pleasures?

9, 10. (a) Based on the example of Jesus Christ, what is the balanced view of wholesome relaxation? (b) What did Jesus mean when he said, "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work"?

(Luke 5:29; 7:36; 14:1; 19:5, 6; John 2:1-11) But Jesus did not make pleasure, including food and drink, the prime thing in his life. Once he told his disciples: "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." (John 4:34) Do we likewise find our greatest delight in doing God's will?

¹⁰ When Jesus said the above words, he was tired and hungry. However, since an opportunity presented itself for giving a witness, he became so absorbed in it that his personal discomfort faded into the background. The joy and satisfaction that resulted from his doing God's will was as food to Jesus Christ. Surely, we want this to be true in our case. Hence, we should keep pleasures in check so that they will not interfere with our experiencing the far greater happiness that comes from helping our fellowmen spiritually and materially.

¹¹ To avoid becoming selfish in our use of time, we need to keep ever before us the thought that time itself is a gift from Jehovah, to be used in harmony with his will. We are not entitled to use time simply for our own pleasure. This is well illustrated in what Jehovah God expected from the Israelites during the Sabbath day. Through his prophet Isaiah, he declared: "If in view of the sabbath you will turn back your foot as regards doing your own delights on my holy day, and will actually call the sabbath an exquisite delight, a holy day of Jehovah, one being glorified, and will actually glorify it rather than doing your own ways, rather than finding what delights you and speaking a word; you will in that case find your exquisite delight in Jehovah." (Isa. 58:13, 14) So, besides refraining from work, the Israel-

11. Are Christians entitled to use time simply for their own pleasure, and what principle can we draw from Isaiah 58:13, 14 in this regard?



ites were to view the Sabbath as a day especially devoted to Jehovah. It was not a day simply for pursuing their own pleasures but a time for finding real delight in doing God's will, keeping spiritual matters in first place. In harmony with the spirit of the Sabbath law, true Christians should be concerned about using each day in a way that will result in praise to Jehovah God.

BE PREPARED FOR THE MASTER'S RETURN

¹² There is still another reason for devoted servants of the Master Jesus Christ not to loiter in doing Jehovah's work. This is highlighted in the following illustration that the Son of God set forth: "Let your loins be girded and your lamps be burning,

12. (a) As shown at Luke 12:35-40, what other important reason do we have for being busy in Jehovah's work? (b) In what state should we strive to be each day, and why?

and you yourselves be like men waiting for their master when he returns from the marriage, so that at his arriving and knocking they may at once open to him. Happy are those slaves whom the master on arriving finds watching! Truly I say to you, He will gird himself and make them recline at the table and will come alongside and minister to them. And if he arrives in the second watch, even if in the third, and finds them thus, happy are they! But know this, that if the householder had known at what hour the thief would come, he would have kept watching and not have let his house be broken into. You also, keep ready, because at an hour that you do not think likely the Son of man is coming." (Luke 12:35-40) Just as we do not know when our life might end, we do not know precisely the time when Jesus Christ

will arrive for executing judgment, though we *do* know that the event is drawing ever nearer. This means that each day should find us in a state of readiness, awaiting our Master's return.

¹³ In the illustration, the slaves are doing just that. Their long robes do not hang loose but are pulled up between their legs and are fastened under the girdle. Thus girded, they continue caring for their duties as their lamps provide needed illumination. Though the time for waiting extends into the second watch (about 9 p.m. to midnight) and even into the third watch (midnight to about 3 a.m.), the faithful slaves remain active and alert. Finally, on arriving and seeing the devotion of his servants, the master rewards them in a most unusual way. He makes them recline at the table and begins serving them. He treats them, not as slaves, but as loyal friends. What a fine reward they receive for having continued to work for their master throughout the night while waiting for his return!

¹⁴ Over 1,900 years have passed since Jesus Christ gave this illustration. So his followers have indeed been waiting a long time for his return to execute judgment on the ungodly world. To many, it may seem as though the second watch has already passed and that we are well along in the third watch. But are some of us getting tired? Or, are we still girded firmly for activity? Are we letting our lights shine through fine conduct and zealous witnessing as we keep ourselves fueled by yielding to the operation of God's spirit? —Matt. 5:14-16; compare Zechariah 4:2-6.

¹⁵ What will our Master look for when

13. (a) In Jesus' illustration, what were the slaves doing during their master's absence? (b) How does the master reward his waiting slaves?

14. In view of the many years that have passed since Jesus stated the words recorded at Luke 12:35-40, what questions might be asked?

15. When returning to execute judgment, what will Jesus Christ look for among those professing to be his disciples?

he returns to execute judgment? He will take note as to whether those professing to be his servants are such in reality. Have they been faithful in obeying the command to "make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded"? (Matt. 28:19, 20) Do they have a fine record of works displaying active concern for the "least" of Christ's brothers? When seeing these brothers of Christ in need, did they feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, extend hospitality to strangers, clothe the poorly clad, give help and comfort to the sick and visit those who were unjustly imprisoned? (Matt. 25:35-40) Have they remained spiritually awake, untarnished by the degrading works of the flesh? —Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 21:34-36; 2 Pet. 3:14.

¹⁶ All of us should think seriously about our standing before God and Christ now. We do not have endless time to build up a record of fine works. Regardless of our present age, either death or our Master's return will overtake us. If we are negligent about our Christian responsibilities, then, as a thief, either event could catch us in an unprepared state. May we, therefore, do our utmost each day to live as if it were our last, not allowing personal desires or pleasures to interfere with our faithfully serving Jehovah God and our Master Jesus Christ. In that case, we will never regret the way in which we have used our time, our energies and our material assets. We will have nothing to fear when standing before the judgment seat of Christ as he renders decisions for his Father. (2 Cor. 5:10) May we then be found as persons with abundant treasure in heaven.

16. Why should we think very seriously about what we are doing in building up a record of fine works with God?



Success Depends On Faithfulness To God

SECOND CHRONICLES starts with the kingship of Solomon, then traces the reigns of the kings of Judah, making only incidental references to the 10-tribe kingdom of Israel, and concludes with the destruction of Jerusalem and its lying desolate until King Cyrus issued the decree authorizing the rebuilding of Jehovah's temple there. Repeatedly the account makes it clear that, when the rulers and the people put their trust in Jehovah God, their undertakings were crowned with success. But their unfaithfulness led to loss of divine blessing and protection.

After firmly establishing himself in the kingship, Solomon, together with the nation's commanders, chieftains, judges and paternal heads, went to the tabernacle at Gibeon to offer sacrifice. Thus the young king petitioned Jehovah's blessing on his rule. During the night, the Most High revealed himself to Solomon and gave him the opportunity to ask for anything that he might desire. The king humbly asked for the needed wisdom and knowledge to judge his subjects. Because he made such a noble request, Solomon was assured that, in addition to wisdom, he would receive "wealth and riches and honor" greater than what had been enjoyed by David and Saul and, in fact, greater than what future rulers would come to have. (2 Chron. 1:1-12) This was indeed fulfilled, for the account tells us: "The king came to make the silver and the gold in Jerusalem like the stones."—1:15.

One of the greatest achievements of Solomon's rule was the building of Jehovah's temple on Mount Moriah. Most of chapters two through seven deal with his building preparations, the construction of the edifice and its furnishings and the inauguration of the temple.

Again in a vision of the night, Solomon received Jehovah's answer to the inauguration prayer. This answer revealed that the continued success of his kingship depended on Israel's faithful adherence to divine law. On the other hand, Israel's unfaithfulness would spell national disaster. Even the glorious temple would become mere heaps of ruins.—7:11-22.

Chapters eight and nine complete the record about Solomon's reign. We are told about his building and rebuilding cities, his use of the surviving Canaanites for forced labor, his arrangements regarding temple services, his maritime operations, the notable visit of the queen of Sheba, Solomon's wealth, his death and his being succeeded as king by his son Rehoboam.

A DIVIDED KINGDOM

Preferring the voice of inexperienced young flatterers to the sound counsel of older men, Rehoboam advised the representatives of the nation that he would impose a heavier yoke on the people than had his father. Since the people had already experienced enough oppression after Solomon departed from Jehovah's law during the latter part of his reign, 10 tribes

revolted, fulfilling Jehovah's word through Ahijah.—10:1-19.

Mustering an army, Rehoboam sought to bring the rebellious tribes back under his control. But, at the order of Jehovah's word through the prophet Shemaiah, he abandoned this plan. The rebellious tribes formed an independent kingdom under Jeroboam, who instituted calf worship. As a result, faithful Levites inhabiting cities under Jeroboam's dominion left for Judah and Jerusalem.—11:1-17.

Because Rehoboam, along with his subjects, also departed from divine law, Jehovah withdrew his protection. Shishak (Sheshonk I) invaded the realm of Judah, capturing one fortified city after another. However, on hearing the divine pronouncement that they would be abandoned to Shishak for their unfaithfulness, Rehoboam and the princes humbled themselves and Jehovah did not permit the Egyptian ruler to bring Jerusalem to ruin. Nevertheless, the city was stripped of its treasures.—12:1-12.

JEHOVAH'S AID TO ABIJAH AND ASA

After the death of Rehoboam, his son Abijah began to reign. Warfare then broke out between Jeroboam and Abijah. On one occasion, Jeroboam's use of an ambush put the warriors of the kingdom of Judah into an extremely dangerous position. But, because they cried to Jehovah for aid, the Most High granted them the victory.—12:16-13:20.

Similarly, when faced with a force of some one million Ethiopian and Libyan warriors under Zerah, Abijah's successor, Asa, looked to Jehovah for assistance. He prayed: "O Jehovah, as to helping, it does not matter with you whether there are many or those with no power. Help us, O Jehovah our God, for upon you we do lean, and in your name we have come against this crowd. O Jehovah, you are our God. Do not let mortal man retain

strength against you." Again, Jehovah made his people triumphant.—14:9-15; 16:8.

Commendably, Asa acted on the words of Jehovah's prophet Oded and took decisive action to destroy places of idolatrous worship. However, despite his having experienced divine help, Asa later made an alliance with Syrian King Ben-hadad to stop Israelite King Baasha from fighting against him. When he was reproved for this faithless action by Hanani the seer, Asa took offense. He had Hanani confined in the house of stocks and also began oppressing other subjects. This led to Jehovah's withholding his blessing from the king. Stricken with a goutlike affliction in his feet, Asa failed to look to Jehovah for aid but sought the help of healers.—15:1-16:13.

A FINE RECORD MARRED BY A BAD ALLIANCE

Asa's son Jehoshaphat distinguished himself as a good king and, therefore, experienced Jehovah's help and protection. He endeavored to clear out idolatry, made arrangements for the people to be taught Jehovah's law and improved the judicial system. Because of relying on Jehovah, he experienced a grand salvation when the combined enemy forces of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir destroyed one another. However, Jehoshaphat unwisely formed a marriage alliance with idolatrous Israelite King Ahab. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and his Baal-worshipping queen, Jezebel, became the wife of Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram. This led to Jehoshaphat's becoming involved in a disastrous military venture with King Ahab. Returning to Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat was greeted with the reproof: "Is it to the wicked that help is to be given, and is it for those hating Jehovah that you should have love?" Later, however, Jehoshaphat again failed in this respect by becoming a partner to

Ahab's successor, King Ahaziah, in a ship-building enterprise. In fulfillment of prophecy, the ships were wrecked.—17:1-20:37.

Judah's next king, Jehoram, under the influence of his wife Athaliah, followed the bad course of the house of Ahab. To strengthen his position as king, he murdered all his brothers and some of the princes. Without Jehovah's blessing, his rule proved to be a failure. He was plagued by revolts from the Edomites and from the city of Libnah. In the final two years of his life, he was stricken with a malady in his intestines.—21:1-20.

When Jehoram's youngest son Ahaziah became king, bad rule continued, for he also was under the influence of Athaliah. While visiting the wounded Israelite king Jehoram, Ahaziah got in the way of Jehu's punitive action against the house of Ahab and was killed. At that, Athaliah, after murdering the royal offspring, usurped the throne. However, Ahaziah's son Jehoash had been hidden by the wife of priest Jehoiada. Later Jehoiada had Jehoash proclaimed king and commanded the execution of Athaliah.

Under the guidance of Jehoiada, Jehoash ruled well and arranged for the temple to be renovated. But, after Jehoiada's death, Jehoash departed from true worship, and even commanded that Jehoiada's son Zechariah be stoned for reproving him for his faithlessness. Jehovah then permitted the Syrians to administer a humiliating defeat on the kingdom of Judah. Jehoash became diseased and finally was assassinated by his own servants.—22:1-24:27.

FROM THE RULE OF AMAZIAH TO THE DESOLATION OF JUDAH

Jehoash's son Amaziah started out well but then turned unfaithful. After many years of peaceful coexistence, the two Israelite kingdoms became embroiled in warfare, and the forces of Amaziah suf-

fered defeat. From the time that Amaziah stopped following God's law, a conspiracy formed against him. Forced to flee to Lachish, he met his death there at the hands of conspirators.—25:1-28.

Uzziah, the next Judean king, ruled well and was favored with many victories over the enemies of the kingdom of Judah. But later he arrogantly took it upon himself to invade the temple and to offer incense like a priest. For this presumptuous action he was stricken with leprosy. His son Jotham then began ruling. Because Jotham followed Jehovah's law, he prospered, gaining the victory over the Ammonites.—26:1-27:9.

However, Jotham's successor Ahaz became a notorious idolater, even going to the point of sacrificing his own son(s). As a result, Jehovah withheld his blessing from Ahaz and his idolatrous subjects. The kingdom of Judah suffered from invasions by the Edomites, the Philistines, the Israelites and the Syrians. Fearful of losing his position as king, Ahaz appealed to the Assyrians for military help. But this unwise action brought no relief, only foreign oppression.—28:1-27.

Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, made determined efforts to remove idolatry from his realm and rebelled against the Assyrians. Though Assyrian King Sennacherib invaded the land of Judah, he failed to seize Jerusalem. Hezekiah was rewarded for putting his trust in Jehovah, for in one night an angel destroyed the cream of the Assyrian military force.—29:1-32:22.

The son of Hezekiah, Manasseh, revived idolatry and became guilty of shameful oppression. However, when taken as a captive to Babylon, he came to his senses and repented. Jehovah God had mercy on him, opening the way for Manasseh to return to Jerusalem. The king then instituted religious reforms, but the people had become too steeped in idolatry for Manas-

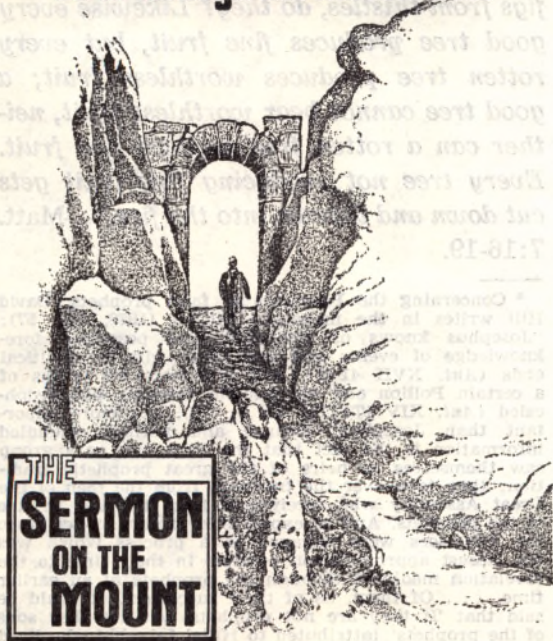
seh's efforts to effect a real change. Even his own son Amon, upon ascending the throne, reverted to idolatry. He perished at the hands of conspirators.—33:1-25.

Judah's last good king, Josiah, initiated a sweeping campaign against idolatry. But it was too late to bring the people to genuine repentance. Also, a heavy bloodguilt rested on Judah. (2 Ki. 24:3, 4) Sadly, Josiah himself was killed in an attempt to turn the Egyptian forces back at Megiddo when they were on their way to battle with the Chaldeans at Carchemish. The last four kings—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah proved to be bad rulers. Jehovah abandoned the kingdom of Judah totally, permitting the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar to reduce Je-

rusalem and its magnificent temple to ruins. Many of the survivors were taken into exile. Finally, in fulfillment of Jehovah's word through his prophet Jeremiah, Cyrus issued the decree that opened the way for the exiles to return to their desolated homeland.—2 Chron. 34:1-36:23.

How forcefully this historical record demonstrates that, apart from faithfulness to Jehovah God, there can be no real success! As the prophet Hanani told rebellious King Asa, foolish acts that show lack of faith in God can lead only to disaster, whereas, "as regards Jehovah, his eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him."—2 Chron. 16:9.

"Go In Through The Narrow Gate"



AFTER encouraging his hearers to pray earnestly for help in doing God's will, Jesus declared: "*Go in through the narrow gate; because broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones finding it.*"—Matt. 7:13, 14.

In ancient times, roadways through gates were the means of entry into cities. Frequently, the Scriptures liken the course of life that individuals follow to a road or pathway. (Prov. 4:18, 19) According to the Son of God, the road to "destruction," or death out of divine favor, is "broad and spacious." It permits people to live just as they please, without making changes to conform to Biblical standards of conduct. "Many" have chosen that spacious roadway of 'easy living.'

On the other hand, the Bible likens the Messianic kingdom of God to a city, to which access is gained through a "narrow" gate and a "cramped" road. (See Hebrews 11:10; 13:14.) Persons on this "road leading off into [eternal] life" must discipline their hearts to develop proper motivations. They must exercise self-control in all areas of human conduct; and, at times, 'the way' of true worship calls for the endurance of violent persecution. (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4) Since most people prefer living without self-sacrificing exertion and self-restraint, they do not seek out the way of life pleasing to God. Consequently, "few are the ones finding" the narrow gate and the cramped road that leads to life.—Compare Matthew 7:8; Luke 13:24.

Next, Jesus gave a warning to persons who would wish to stay on the road to life: "*Be on the watch for the false prophets that come to you in sheep's covering, but inside they are ravenous wolves.*"—Matt. 7:15.

By "false prophets," Jesus meant religious teachers who falsely claim to represent God. These deceivers would present themselves "in sheep's covering." By putting on a hypocritical display of gentleness, meekness and other sheeplike qualities, they would try to give the impression of being part of the "flock" of God's worshipers. (See Psalms 78:52; 80:1; 100:3.) Inwardly, though, the false prophets would be "ravenous wolves," that is, extremely covetous, grasping and eager to prey on others for personal gratification.

The Son of God stated that the false prophets would "come to you," that is, from outside the flock that he, as "the fine shepherd," would gather. (John 10:11) Rather than being a threat for the distant future, the deceivers were in existence right then. Evidently Jesus had in mind especially the Pharisees, who falsely

claimed to be God's spokesmen. They had "seated themselves in the seat of Moses," claiming to be official interpreters of divine law. (Matt. 23:2) But the Pharisees were hypocrites who actually hindered people from finding the narrow gate and the cramped road that leads to life. (Matt. 23:13-15; Luke 6:39) As to the deceptive "sheep's covering," Jesus' words on a later occasion are instructive:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you resemble white-washed graves, which outwardly indeed appear beautiful but inside are full of dead men's bones and of every sort of uncleanness. In that way you also, outwardly indeed, appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."*—Matt. 23:27, 28.

How might a person recognize 'wolves in sheep's covering'? Jesus gave a basic guideline along with an illustration: "*By their fruits you will recognize them. Never do people gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles, do they? Likewise every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit; a good tree cannot bear worthless fruit, neither can a rotten tree produce fine fruit. Every tree not producing fine fruit gets cut down and thrown into the fire.*"—Matt. 7:16-19.

* Concerning the Pharisees as false prophets, David Hill writes in the magazine *Biblica* (1976, Vol. 57): "Josephus knows of Pharisees who possessed foreknowledge of events and used their gift for political ends (*Ant.* XVII 41-45), and elsewhere he speaks of a certain Pollion and his disciple Samalas who prophesied (*Ant.* XIV 172-176; XV 3, 370). But more important than Josephus' meagre and perhaps muddled information is the fact that the Pharisees as a group saw themselves as heirs of the great prophetic tradition: they took over the tradition from the men of the Great Assembly who received it from the last in line of the prophets. And as expert interpreters of Scripture the Pharisees were engaged in a process which was the closest approximation possible in their time to the revelation mediated through the prophets of an earlier time. . . . Of them, as of their successors, it could be said that 'If they are not prophets, yet are they sons of the prophets' (attributed to Hillel [a rabbi who lived about the time of Jesus]). Entirely consonant with this is Jesus' word about the Pharisees building the tombs of the prophets and adorning the monuments of the righteous (*Mt* 23, 29). It is therefore not impossible that the Pharisees in Jesus' day laid claim to the role and authority (if not the name) of prophet."

Each fruit-bearing tree or plant brings forth its own particular type of fruit. Not all plants bear fruit that can be eaten by humans. It would be a waste of time to seek from thorns and thistles edible fruits like grapes and figs. Fruits fit for human consumption must come from a tree that is both healthy and of the right kind. If a tree consistently bore "worthless fruit," it would be a sure indication that the tree itself had become "rotten." Such a rotten tree would be "cut down" and used along with brambles, thorns and weeds as fuel for fires.—Compare Psalm 58:9; Ecclesiastes 7:6; Isaiah 44:14-16; Matthew 6:30; 13:30.

While his hearers had fresh in mind this illustration from agricultural life, Jesus

repeated the basic principle: "*Really, then, by their fruits you will recognize those men.*" (Matt. 7:20) In a figurative sense those "fruits" would include what the false prophets would say in the way of teaching. In this regard, Jesus added: "*A good man brings forth good out of the good treasure of his heart, but a wicked man brings forth what is wicked out of his wicked treasure; for out of the heart's abundance his mouth speaks.*"—Luke 6:45.

Fruits revealing the true nature of false prophets would involve also their general course of conduct. (Compare Mark 7:21-23.) A person cannot hide his true heart condition indefinitely. Eventually his words and deeds will reveal him for what he is.

QUESTIONS from READERS

● First Timothy 6:15, 16 mentions "the one alone having immortality." Why is this applied to Jesus rather than to Jehovah?

These verses read: "This manifestation the happy and only Potentate will show in its own appointed times, he the King of those who rule as kings and the Lord of those who rule as lords, the one alone having immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom not one of men has seen or can see. To him be honor and might everlasting. Amen."—1 Tim. 6:15, 16.

Many persons have thought that these words describe Jehovah. That is understandable, for most of those things could be said of God, he the "King of eternity," "incorruptible," a "happy God" and the "Lord of lords." (1 Tim. 1:11, 17; Deut. 10:17) Also, no man ever saw or can see him. (Ex. 33:20) However, when Paul wrote 1 Timothy 6:15, 16, he could not say

that Jehovah alone possessed immortality, for Jesus was given immortality at his resurrection.—1 Cor. 15:50-54; Heb. 7:16; Rom. 6:9.

The description in 1 Timothy 6:15, 16 does, though, fit Jesus, who is "the reflection of [Jehovah's] glory and the exact representation of his very being." (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15) Since Jesus' resurrection and ascension to heaven, he "dwells in unapproachable light." No man has actually seen the glorified Jesus. When he revealed himself to the persecutor Saul, the overpowering light blinded Saul. (Acts 9:3-8; 22:6-11; John 14:19) And as a grand Potentate Jesus will receive everlasting honor, for his Father crowned him "with glory and honor."—Heb. 2:9; Phil. 2:9-11.

But how is it that Jesus 'alone has immortality'? Let us note the setting. Paul was not discussing God's kingship or immortality but was contrasting Jesus to others of mankind. Jesus is "King of those [men] who rule as kings." (Rev. 17:12, 14; 19:16) Christ is also preeminent in lordship, being "Lord of those [humans] who rule as lords." (Compare 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6.) So when Paul wrote that Jesus is "the one alone having immortality" he meant that of all kings or lords from humankind, the glorified Christ is alone immortal.

"A Basket of Summer Fruit"

At times Jehovah God conveyed a message to his prophets by means of simple illustrations. An example of this is found at Amos 8:1-3, where we read: "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah caused me to see, and, look! there was a basket of summer fruit. Then he said: 'What are you seeing, Amos?' So I said: 'A basket of summer fruit.' And Jehovah went on to say to me: 'The end has come to my people Israel. I shall no more do any further excusing of them. "And the songs of the temple will actually be a howling in that day," is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. "There will be many a carcass. In every place one will certainly throw them out—hush!"'"

In the Hebrew text the expressions "summer fruit" ("qayits") and "end" ("qets") are very similar, resulting in a play on words. The "basket of summer fruit" points to the fact that the har-

vest, and, hence, the agricultural year, was coming to a close. Likewise unfaithful Israel was facing its end. Jehovah God would no longer excuse or pardon the sins of the people. At the time of the execution of his judgment, the songs of praise sung at the temple would become a "howling," a loud and bitter lamentation over the many slain ones. In view of this awesome manifestation of God's displeasure, only silence was appropriate.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

December 24: Where is Your Treasure? Page 16. Songs to Be Used: 23, 20.

December 31: Prove Yourself Faithful. Page 21. Songs to Be Used: 25, 88.

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