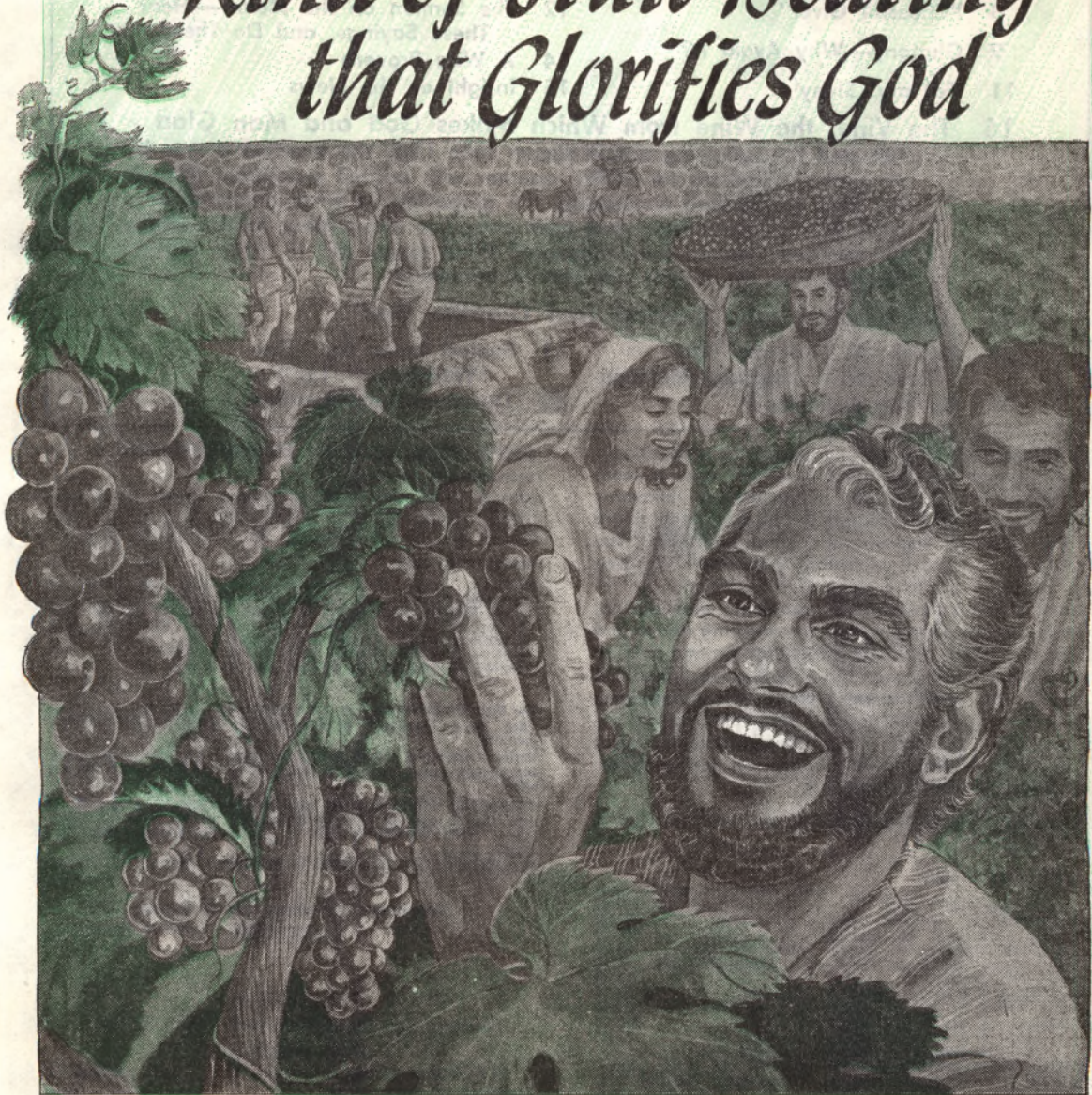


DECEMBER 15, 1978

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

THE *Kind of Fruit Bearing that Glorifies God*



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A WATCHTOWER enables a person to look far into the distance and announce to others what is seen. Likewise, this magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, aids the reader to see what the future holds. Since it began publication in 1879, "The Watchtower" has held faithfully to God's Word as its authority. It stays clear of all political involvement. It points to the Bible prophecies showing that Jesus Christ is God's means for restoring peace and harmony to this globe. It shows that this Son of God, on the basis of his shed blood, will release mankind from sin and death to enjoy eternal life in happiness on a paradise earth. Because Jehovah God will accomplish all this soon through his kingdom by Jesus Christ, "The Watchtower" announces that kingdom as the real hope for mankind.

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Ten cents a copy

Watch Tower Society offices	Yearly subscription rates for semi-monthly editions in local currency
America, U.S., 117 Adams St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201	\$2.00
Australia, 11 Beresford Rd., Strathfield, N.S.W. 2135	A\$2.50
Canada, 150 Bridgeland Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6A 1Z5	\$2.00
England, Watch Tower House, The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN	£1.70
Hawaii, 1228 Pensacola St., Honolulu 96814	\$2.00
New Zealand, 6-A Western Springs Rd., Auckland 3	NZ\$3.00
Nigeria, West Africa, P.O. Box 194, Yaba, Lagos State	₦1.40
Philippines, P.O. Box 2044, Manila 2800	P10.00
South Africa, Private Bag 2, Elandsfontein, 1406	R1.80

(Monthly editions cost half the above rates.)
Remittances for subscriptions should be sent to the office in your country. Otherwise send your remittance to 117 Adams Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Printed in U.S.A.

NOW PUBLISHED IN 82 LANGUAGES

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The Bible translation used in "The Watchtower" is the modern-language "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures," unless otherwise indicated.

Notice of expiration is sent at least two issues before subscription expires. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS should reach us thirty days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label). Write Watchtower, R.D. 1, Box 300, Wallkill, New York 12589, U.S.A.

POSTMASTER: Send Form 3579 to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.

Average Printing Each Issue:
9,800,000

Published by
Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
of Pennsylvania

117 Adams Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, U.S.A.

Frederick W. Franz, Pres.

Grant Suiter, Secy.

Christmas Has a Long Reach



NOT ONLY DOES IT NOW SPREAD AROUND
THE WORLD; IT ALSO REACHES FAR BACK
INTO ANTIQUITY

YOU are jostled by the crowds that pack the department store. For the five hundredth time in recent weeks you hear over the loudspeakers the lilting tune of "Jingle Bells." It goes well with the cash registers ringing up sales. Santa Claus is there in his red suit and white beard, giving presents to children that line up to sit on his lap. The "Merry Christmas" signs scattered about are in English, but the babble of voices surrounding you are in a strange tongue. You wonder where you are.

You are in Japan, a land the population of which is less than one percent Christian in religious affiliation. Since World War II Christmas has become a major celebration there.

Recently, Japanese Buddhists played up Christmas by decorating a 53-story building in Tokyo with colored lights outlining the form of the virgin Mary.

Regarding Japan, *Newsweek* magazine observed some time ago:

"Christmas is now the biggest holiday of the year. . . . The last days of December swim by in a series of parties in homes, offices, factories, and nightclubs that leave the nation with a colossal hangover on which to start the new year."

Forests of Christmas trees decorate the shopping areas. Christmas cards are on display, but usually show the holy family and the angels with slanted eyes and black hair. Santa Clauses are everywhere, many of them women. One department store executive said: "We find women are better at winning the confidence of children, especially the little ones." They are also popular with the bigger celebrators, for pretty-girl Santas are in restaurants and

strip-tease Santas are in nightclubs.

**HONG KONG, SINGAPORE,
SOUTH KOREA, HAWAII, AFRICA**

In Hong Kong 90 percent of the population is non-Christian Chinese, but by mid-October business districts are resplendent in Christmas decorations and jammed with shoppers. The rotund, white-bearded, red-suited gentlemen are everywhere, holding children on their laps and handing out presents. Communist-owned stores have been foremost in climbing onto the Christmas bandwagon.

In Singapore two months before Christmas huge signs at department stores proclaim "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!" Paintings depict Santa Claus and the birth of Jesus. Live Santas in the traditional red suits distribute sweets to children.

Christmas is one of the biggest holidays in South Korea, for nonbelievers as well as the 14 percent of the population who declare themselves to be Christian. The night spots are filled on Christmas eve, but family parties are more prevalent. Shoppers crowd into the department stores to buy gifts. Santa Clauses are present, as also are Christmas trees.

In Hawaii the Buddhists exchange Christmas gifts, decorate their homes for the holiday and hold family feasts.

Many non-Christian Africans in Kenya regard Christmas as a time for celebrating. On Christmas day they feast, drink beer, exchange gifts and dance. They work themselves into a frenzy from drumming and dancing all night. Many of their huts have Christmas trees decorated with flowers. Instead of the usual fir trees they use banana fronds or such evergreens as cypress trees.

COMMERCIALIZED CHRISTMAS REACHES COMMUNIST LANDS AND JEWRY

One traveler commented on his return to the United States:

"Recently, as we went through the inner sanctum of the Kremlin, the guide pointed to the ultramodern new Bolshoi theater and said, 'That is where we put up a big fir tree and hold our Christmas celebration each year, the only difference being that we hold it on January 7, and you on December 25.' In East Berlin last December, I was surprised to see very large, decorated Christmas trees in public places."

Jews generally reject Jesus Christ, but most of them decorate their business places with Christmas ornaments, join in the office parties and send out holiday greeting cards. Regarding Hanukkah, Rabbi Morris Kertzer states in his book *What Is a Jew?*:

"American Jews have transmuted this minor festival into a major one largely because its traditional customs so closely parallel the Christmas celebration which occurs at the same time. . . . In imitation of the general atmosphere prevailing in December, Hanukkah is now marked by exchanges of gifts for young and old, and homes are gaily decorated with a variety of Hanukkah symbols."

A former president of The Union of American Hebrew Congregations asked: "Has not Christmas become a universal holiday observed by all?" After mention-

ing how the Jews are swept up into the gift-giving and hilarious partying of Christmas, he says:

"If I were a Christian minister instead of a Jewish teacher, there is nothing that I would lament so much, and bitterly resent, as this wholesale transformation by myriads of Christians, by some Jews, and many non-believers in either Judaism or Christianity, . . . of such a holy day into so heathen a holiday, devoid of its profounder spiritual significance."

CHRISTMAS REACHES BACK INTO ANTIQUITY

"Put Christ back in Christmas!" This is the cry frequently heard by many who sincerely wish to honor Christ Jesus on the anniversary of his birth. They fail to realize that Christ was never in Christmas. The Puritan Church of England not only ignored Christmas; they also prosecuted any unregenerated souls that dared to keep it in secret! In early New England, Christmas celebrations were forbidden by law because the Puritans were offended by the non-Christian origins of its customs and traditions.

On December 25 both Romans and ancient Greeks celebrated the birth of the unconquered sun. The practice traces back to Babylon. Nimrod was deified as the sun-god. When cut down by his enemies he was represented by a log, and when reborn he was symbolized by an evergreen tree. After documenting this, Dr. Alexander Hislop's *The Two Babylons* states:

"Now the Yule Log is the dead stock of Nimrod, deified as the sun-god, but cut down by his enemies; the Christmas-tree is Nimrod *redivivus*—the slain god come to life again."

The log was burned on the eve of December 24; by the next morning it had been replaced by an evergreen tree. Dr. Hislop shows the pagan origins of the other customs surrounding Christmas—the candles, the feasting, the wassail bowl, the

mistletoe, the giving of gifts and others.—Pp. 91-103.

Jesus was not born on December 25, but in the fall when shepherds were with their flocks out in the open fields. Moreover, Christians did not celebrate his birth, but were commanded to memorialize his death by the Lord's Evening Meal, which he instituted on the night of his betrayal. "Keep doing this," he said, "in remembrance of me."—Luke 22: 19, 20.

Protestants get their Christmas customs from the Catholics. The Catholics got them from ancient Rome, as British cardinal Newman admitted that the Catholic Church did "transmute the very instruments and appendages of demon-worship to an evangelical use" and that much of his church's customs "are all of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church." From the Romans the Christmas practices reach back through Greece, Persia, Egypt, Assyria and finally to Babylon and Nimrod the sun-god.

Christmas has nothing to do with Christ. It is saturated with demonism. Neither of these facts will cause its demise. It survives and spreads because it is commercial. More and more, Santa Claus and Saint Nicholas are becoming "Saint Gimme."

"Peace Among Men Whom He Approves"



THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS A MOMENTOUS EVENT, BUT IT WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

IN THE year 2 B.C.E., around the first of October, a man and his wife had traveled to Bethlehem to be registered, in compliance with a decree issued by

Caesar Augustus. The woman was heavy with child. "While they were there, the days came to the full for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her son, the first-born, and she bound him with cloth bands and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the lodging room."—Luke 2:6, 7.

Much about this birth was unusual, and an announcement made of that birth was also unusual: "There were also in that same country shepherds living out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks. And suddenly Jehovah's angel stood by them, and Jehovah's glory gleamed around them, and they became very fearful. But the angel said to them: 'Have no fear, for, look! I am declaring to you good news of a great joy that all the people will have, because there was born to you today a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in David's city.'—Luke 2:8-11.

This was momentous news! The Jews were on the watch for Messiah's coming. Could these shepherds really believe that this newborn babe was he? The angel continued: "This is a sign for you: you will find an infant bound in cloth bands and lying in a manger." Suddenly a host of angels appeared, praising God and declaring: "Glory in the heights above to God, and upon earth peace among men whom he approves." The shepherds hastened to Bethlehem—they knew that this was David's city, where the Messiah was to be born. They found the babe in the manger—the sign given them by the angel. They thus became eyewitnesses to the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the human birth of the Messiah. Overjoyed, the shepherds returned to their flocks, glorifying and praising God.—Luke 2:12-20, footnote; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:4-6.

It is this birth that many nations today celebrate on December 25. That this

could not be the correct date is shown by these words from *Clarke's Commentary* concerning Luke 2:8:

"It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the *first rain*: during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the passover occurred in the *spring*, and the *first rain* began early in the month of *Marchesvan*, which answers to part of our *October* and *November*, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country the whole of the *summer*."

No flocks would be in open country at night in December, so the *Commentary* concludes:

"On this very ground the *nativity* in *December* should be given up."

The date for Jesus' birth can be narrowed down more than just to the time that shepherds were in open country with their flocks at night. Jesus began his ministry when he became 30; it continued for three and a half years, when he was put to death on the torture stake at the age of 33½ years.* The half year means that his birth would have to be six months before a passover, or in the fall, around October 1. However, the fact that the exact date of Jesus' birth is not given indicates that Christians are not expected to celebrate it. His birth was only the beginning.

HIS DEATH MORE IMPORTANT

"Better is the end afterward of a matter than its beginning." (Eccl. 7:8) Certainly this was true in the case of Jesus' life here on earth. Jesus himself considered that the important event to commemorate was his death, not his birth. It marked the successful conclusion of Jehovah's purpose in sending Jesus to the earth. By Jesus' death a ransom for all

* For the Scriptural evidence of a three-and-a-half-year ministry, see *Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 921.

redeemable mankind was provided. By his death Jesus kept integrity under the severest of tests and proved Satan to be a liar. By his death he gained the kingdom that will end wickedness and bring in lasting peace. His willingness to leave heaven, to come to earth and die sacrificially, and then his exaltation in Kingdom power are shown in Philippians 2:5-11:

"Keep this mental attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake. For this very reason also God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground, and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Jesus Christ becomes the Prince of Peace spoken of at Isaiah 9:6, and as Jehovah's king of righteousness he will bring in the peaceful conditions of Psalm 72:6, 7: "He will descend like the rain upon the mown grass, like copious showers that wet the earth. In his days the righteous one will sprout, and the abundance of peace until the moon is no more." Appropriately, then, the angel announcing his birth to the shepherds spoke of him as the one who would bring "peace among men whom he approves." From all of this we see that it is his death that is important. His birth was necessary as a prelude to his death, but it was his death that accomplished so much and merits memorializing. Hence, the date of his birth is not even recorded, but the date of his death is known and its remembrance is commanded.—Luke 22:7, 19, 20.

"MEN WHOM HE APPROVES"

Jehovah forbids mixing his worship with that given to demon gods. "You are not to conclude a covenant with them or their gods," he told his people Israel. "They should not dwell in your land, that they may not cause you to sin against me. In case you should serve their gods, it would become a snare to you." (Ex. 23:32, 33; 1 Sam. 5:1-4) This restriction is repeated to Christians: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness? Further, what harmony is there between Christ and Belial?"—2 Cor. 6:14, 15.

The preceding article showed the non-Christian roots of Christmas. It is founded on the worship of the sun by many ancient peoples. Even the work of ransom and reconciliation accomplished by the death of Jesus is mimicked. The resurrected Jesus as a mediator reconciles God and sinful humankind. The mistletoe in the Christmas customs is the pagan representation of a false messiah reconciling God and man. Hislop's *The Two Babylons* comments on this and the customary kiss under the mistletoe:

"Let the reader look at the singular practice still kept up in the South on Christmas-

In Coming Issues

- **Completely Victorious Through Faith**
- **What Makes a Government Real to You?**
- **Why Keep Free from Murmuring?**

eve, of kissing under the mistletoe bough. That mistletoe bough in the Druidic superstition, which, as we have seen, was derived from Babylon, was a representation of the Messiah, 'The man the branch.' The mistletoe was regarded as a divine branch—a branch that came from heaven, and grew upon a tree that sprang out of the earth. Thus by the engrafting of the celestial branch into the earthly tree, heaven and earth, that sin had severed, were joined together, and thus the mistletoe bough became the token of Divine reconciliation to man, the kiss being the well-known token of pardon and reconciliation."—Pp. 98, 99.

Men and women who have Jehovah's approval and thereby enjoy the promised peace will stay clear of pagan celebrations, even though these are disguised as an honoring of Jesus' birth. Additionally, the crass commercializing of Christmas flagrantly violates the spirit of Jesus.

CHRISTMAS GIVING VERSUS CHRISTIAN GIVING

The commercial aspect of Christmas is lamented over and over, but some contend that this is offset by the fact that much giving takes place during the season. This gives the holiday a Christian flavor, since Jesus stressed the matter of giving so much. So the argument goes. However, in many instances it is a matter of exchanging presents, of looking for a return from the one to whom a person has given a gift. If the giving is not reciprocated, the one who fails to do this is struck off the Christmas list and no present is sent the next year. This is just the opposite course to that recommended by Christ Jesus. He

showed the proper spirit in these words:

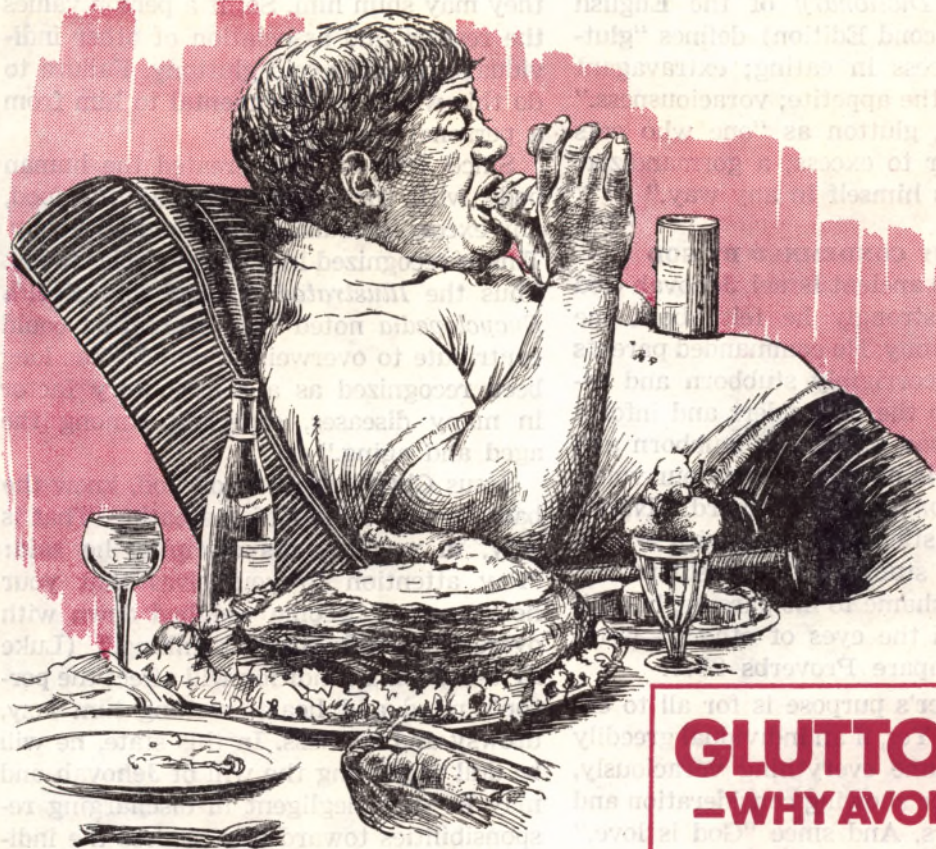
"When you spread a dinner or evening meal, do not call your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors. Perhaps sometime they might also invite you in return and it would become a repayment to you. But when you spread a feast, invite poor people, crippled, lame, blind; and you will be happy, because they have nothing with which to repay you. For you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous ones."—Luke 14:12-14.

The same spirit is reflected in the counsel in Proverbs 19:17: "He that is showing favor to the lowly one is lending to Jehovah, and his treatment He will repay to him." Both this scripture and the one just preceding it show that Jehovah makes a repayment. Maybe the one to whom you give will also wish to give to you. There is no wrong in this, but the point is: your motive in giving is not to receive a present in return. Your giving may stimulate a return, as Jesus indicated: "Practice giving, and people will give to you. They will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing. For with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you in return." Even so, you give because you find happiness in giving: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Luke 6:38; Acts 20:35.

Practice giving the year around. It helps others. It gives you happiness. It pleases Jesus far more than setting aside a worldly holiday in his name for exchanging presents. And it wins the approval of Jehovah, who will repay the cheerful giver with peace under God's kingdom by Christ.

"Cheerful Giver"

"Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."—2 Cor. 9:7.



GLUTTONY —WHY AVOID IT?

"LET us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die." That was the way some people felt about life, as indicated by the apostle Paul. But does man live to eat or eat to live? Those of whom Paul spoke evidently concluded that they lived to eat and drink. (1 Cor. 15:32) However, they were wrong.

True, Jehovah created mankind with the ability to eat. For this reason, God made provision to satisfy man's need for food, and told the first man, Adam: "You may eat to satisfaction."—Gen. 2:8, 9, 16.

Yes, man was to "eat to satisfaction." This would be good for his organism and would enable him to serve well the purpose for which he was created. That is why the

wise man said of sinful mankind: "I myself commended rejoicing, because mankind have nothing better under the sun [aside from serving God's purpose] than to eat and drink and rejoice, and that it should accompany them in their hard work for the days of their life."—Eccl. 8:15.

WHAT IS GLUTTONY?

The abundant food that God supplied was to serve this purpose. Food was not to be wasted, for wastefulness would show lack of appreciation for this provision. But customarily eating too much would also betray a lack of proper gratitude. That is why gluttony must be avoided.

But what is gluttony? *Webster's New*

International Dictionary of the English Language (Second Edition) defines "gluttony" as "excess in eating; extravagant indulgence of the appetite; voraciousness." It describes a glutton as "one who eats voraciously, or to excess; a gormandizer; one who gluts himself in any way."

GLUTTONY CONDEMNED BY GOD

In his law to ancient Israel, Jehovah God showed how strongly he felt about the matter of gluttony. He commanded parents to take an incorrigibly stubborn and rebellious son to the city elders and inform them: "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he is not listening to our voice, being a *glutton* and a drunkard." Notice the characteristics associated with a glutton. His being stubborn and rebellious certainly brings shame to his parents, humiliating them in the eyes of others.—Deut. 21:18-21; compare Proverbs 28:7.

The Provider's purpose is for all to enjoy good food. Yet, if an individual greedily tried to consume everything voraciously, he would not be showing consideration and love for others. And since "God is love," this would run counter to the Creator's qualities.—1 John 4:8.

WHY AVOID IT

Gluttony is condemned by God, and it does not harmonize with the divine quality of love. Overeating cannot bring true satisfaction or happiness to the glutton himself. Those factors alone should prompt the thoughtful person to avoid gluttony. But there are other reasons to shun it.

A glutton, being greedy, deprives others of their share of the good things that Jehovah provides for all to enjoy. At a meal, the gluttonous person may make it impossible for other diners to eat to satisfaction. For this reason, the glutton may eventually be despised. Yes, by yielding to selfish craving, he actually isolates himself from others. Because of his greedy ways,

they may shun him. So, if a person values the respect and association of other individuals, he will avoid gluttony. Failure to do this would be detrimental to him from a personal standpoint.

Since Jehovah God created the human body with the proper capacity for food, any excess is bound to affect us adversely. This is recognized in medical circles today. Thus the *Illustrated Medical and Health Encyclopedia* noted that overeating could contribute to overweight, which "has long been recognized as a contributory factor in many diseases, especially among the aged and aging."

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, knew the bad physical effects of overeating. That is why, in warning his disciples, he said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking." (Luke 21:34) Such a condition will affect the person's mind and heart, making him lazy, drowsy and careless. In this state, he will be dull respecting the will of Jehovah and may be very negligent in discharging responsibilities toward him. Unless the individual corrects his course, he may incur God's displeasure and lose his life.

People in Noah's day before the flood gave themselves over to eating, drinking and pleasure-seeking to such an extent that they paid no heed to the warning of impending destruction, as sounded by Noah and his family. In effect, the people lived to eat and drink. As a result, they lost their lives.—Matt. 24:37-39.

In the days of the apostles of Jesus Christ, it appears that some gave themselves up to overindulgence. Hence, when Paul instructed Timothy and Titus as to who should serve in responsible positions within the Christian congregation, he warned against appointing greedy persons and specified that those selected should be "moderate in habits." (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9) Obviously, this would exclude

gluttons. Such "greedy persons" will not inherit God's kingdom.—1 Cor. 6:9, 10.

ADDITIONAL REASON TO AVOID IT

In loving counsel, Jehovah says: "Do not come to be among heavy drinkers of wine, among those who are gluttonous eaters of flesh. For a drunkard and a glutton will come to poverty." (Prov. 23:20, 21) If we do not want to come to spiritual poverty, yes, and maybe even to material poverty, we will do well to heed these words and avoid gluttony.

In this time, when the majority of mankind have defied God's laws and have rebelled against everything decent, all lovers of life who want to win divine approval need to pay attention to the inspired counsel of the apostle Peter, who said: "The time that has passed by is sufficient for you to have worked out the will of the nations when you proceeded in deeds of loose conduct, lusts, excesses with wine, revelries, drinking matches." (1 Pet. 4:3) So, what must we do now? Well, as Paul put matters, "the night is well along; the day has drawn near. . . . As in the daytime let us walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts. . . . But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not be planning ahead [selfishly, and perhaps gluttonously] for the desires of the flesh."—Rom. 13:12-14.

As we have noted, gluttony does not show appreciation for God's loving provision of food for mankind to eat to satisfaction. Nor does it show love for God and for one's fellowman. Moreover, it is detri-

mental to a person's own well-being and happiness. Therefore, it is the course of practical wisdom to avoid gluttony.

True, if an individual has made it a practice to overeat, real effort will be required to 'push himself away from the table' so as to avoid overindulgence. But, in view of the Bible's condemnation of gluttony and the fact that gluttons will not inherit God's kingdom, this is something to consider in all seriousness. Earnest prayer may be required to overcome inclinations to overeat. Yes, a person will need to pray for God's spirit and for Jehovah's aid in cultivating its fruits, which include self-control. (Luke 11:13; Gal. 5:22, 23) But avoiding gluttony is that important, and Jehovah will help those earnestly seeking his aid in this regard.

Today, because of greed on the part of many of mankind, others do not have enough food to eat to satisfaction. As a result, some curse God, contending that he makes life very hard for them. Jehovah is the great Food Provider, and he expects that provision to be used with proper respect and appreciation.

In the near future, God, through Jesus Christ and his kingdom, will bring law-defying gluttons to an end. Then persons who have heeded Jehovah's loving counsel and have not had companionship with gluttons will hunger no more. They will enjoy the complete fulfillment of the inspired words: "He [Jehovah] has satisfied the dried-out soul; and the hungry soul he has filled with good things."—Ps. 107:9.

'FAT AND SHINY'

Jeremiah 5:28 describes those who become prosperous by lawless means: "They have grown fat; they have become shiny. They have also overflowed with bad things." Such wicked men were fat in the sense that they were well nourished. Hence, their skin did not hang loose as if they were suffering from malnutrition. No, it was filled out and smooth, "shiny." But their prosperity was only temporary. Jehovah was going to hold an accounting against them.—Jer. 5:29.

'Hear these sayings, and do them'

JESUS concluded the Sermon on the Mount with a twofold illustration: "Therefore everyone that hears these sayings of mine and does them will be likened to a discreet man, who built his house upon the rock-mass. And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house, but it did not cave in, for it had been founded upon the rock-mass."—Matt. 7:24, 25; compare Luke 6:47, 48.

The expression "these sayings of mine" refers to the things taught in the Sermon on the Mount. "Everyone that hears" those sayings does not mean only those who actually were present for Jesus' great discourse. Included also are all who later hear by word of mouth and by reading his famous sermon. However, lasting benefits result only to the one who both hears "and does" what Jesus encouraged.

This does not mean merely performing acts of worship, self-denial and charity that others can admire. Few could



match the zeal of the Pharisees for such things. Yet their acts were done hypocritically and meant nothing to God. (Note Matthew 6:1, 2, 5, 16.) Rather than emphasizing deeds that are visible to humans, Jesus urged his listeners to transform themselves *from within*, cultivating dispositions of mind and heart that truly please God. For example, the Son of God admonished his audience to recognize their spiritual poverty and need for God (Matt. 5:3), to develop mildness of temper toward God and fellow humans (Matt. 5:5), to be lovers of righteousness, merciful, pure in heart and peaceable. (Matt. 5:6-9) Persons who heed this counsel will develop a truly godlike personality. This will manifest itself in "fine works" that shine brilliantly to the glory of God. This includes being activated, as were many of Jesus' listeners at that time, to proclaim the "good news" to others.—Matt. 5:14-16; compare Colossians 3:10, 16.

The person who is "discreet" (discerning, showing good judgment, prudent) builds his house "upon the rock-mass," a large body of rock such as a mountain, cliff or large rock-shelf. The house solidly fixed to a rock foundation will remain intact during violent storms. "Rain" and "floods" (which occur suddenly in torrent valleys during a cloudburst) will not sweep away its foundation.* "Winds"

* For an account of how quickly storms and destructive floods can arise in Palestine, see the modern-day experience recorded in *Awake!* of April 8, 1970, p. 24.

lashing at it from all sides will not cause that house to topple. It will not "cave in" during a storm.

In a figurative sense, building one's house on the rock-mass means molding one's thoughts, motivations and subsequent deeds according to the whole body of "these sayings of mine," as found in the Sermon on the Mount. Adversities that strike suddenly like a violent storm in Palestine cannot wash away such a solid foundation for godly conduct. It is during times of hardship that the doer of Jesus' words 'will become like' (or prove himself to be like) the discreet builder on a rock foundation. The personality traits and qualities that he has developed in accordance with God's Word will not "cave in" under trialsome circumstances. He will not quit his service to God.

On the other hand, Jesus went on to say: *"Everyone hearing these sayings of mine and not doing them will be likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and struck against that house and it caved in, and its collapse was great."*—Matt. 7:26, 27; compare Luke 6:49.

In the land where Jesus carried out his ministry, it would be foolish to build a house on sand. Rain, floods and violent winds would make short work of such a structure. 'Its collapse would be great'—thorough and beyond repair.

Something similar will happen figuratively to the one "hearing these sayings of mine and not doing them." Such a one bases his life, not on obedience to teachings of Christ, but on selfish disobedience to Christ's sayings that, like sand, washes away in a flood. During tranquil days, when life is largely trouble free, such an individual may be able to conceal his lack of godly qualities. But as soon as hard-

ships strike, he "will be likened," or prove himself to be like, the foolish builder on sand. As far as any pretense of being a servant of God is concerned, stormy adversities will cause him to buckle and suffer a 'great collapse.' In discussing the need to replace wrong thoughts and motivations with correct ones, so as to become a happy 'doer of God's work,' Bible writer James gave counsel similar to that of Jesus:

"Become doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves with false reasoning. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, this one is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, and off he goes and immediately forgets what sort of man he is. But he who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it."—Jas. 1:22-25.

Next, Matthew's Gospel account adds: *"Now when Jesus finished these sayings, the effect was that the crowds were astounded at his way of teaching; for he was teaching them as a person having authority, and not as their scribes."*—Matt. 7:28, 29.

Jesus' "way of teaching," that is, the whole body of instruction in the Sermon on the Mount, brought astonishment to his hearers. It was not the type of teaching that they were accustomed to getting from "their scribes," who were learned in Jewish oral tradition. When the scribes taught something, they spoke it "in the name of" some previous authority. In this regard, we read in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*:

"The term *mish-shum* ['in the name of'] is important in Jewish tradition. R[abbi] Meir speaks a parable in the name (*mish-shum*) of Rabban Gamaliel, . . . He who heard something in the house of instruction and passed it on was obliged to

quote the authority to which he appealed, in whose name he passed on the tradition. One of the 48 conditions for acquiring the Torah is that 'one pronounces every saying in the name of its author . . . , 'Ab[oth], 6, 6; cf. Meg[illah], 15a. This shows what or how much authority the statement has."

A rabbinic account relates that Hillel the Great, who lived during the first century C.E., taught a particular tradition correctly. "But, although he discoursed of that matter all day long, they received not his doctrine, until he said at last, So I heard from Shemaia and Abtalion [authorities previous to Hillel]."

A Wise Proverb

"The very lips of the righteous one keep pasturing many, but for want of heart the foolish themselves keep dying."—Prov. 10:21.

At first it might appear that this proverb is basically about how one uses the tongue, but its point actually goes deeper. It has to do with what one is at heart and how this affects things.

The person who senses his spiritual need and strives both to satisfy it and to live in accord with it is a blessing to those around him. He appreciates Jehovah's counsel and principles. This is evident by how and why he uses his lips.

How, though, does "the righteous one keep pasturing many"? Some Bible translations render this, 'keep "feeding" others.' But the Hebrew word that is used here conveys more meaning than just "feeding." It carries the thought of guiding as well as nourishing, much as an ancient shepherd cared for his sheep. (1 Sam. 16:11; Ps. 23:1-3; Song of Sol. 1:7) This is how it is with the righteous person. He guides or leads others to the way of virtue and righteousness, his speech nourishing the hearers. As a result, they can lead happier, more satisfying lives. And they may receive everlasting life.

What a contrast there is, though, with the person in "want of heart"! He shows a lack of good motive or little care about the consequences of his course. Do you not know of many like that, whose outlook on life is 'Well, just let the chips fall where they may'? Such a person does just whatever he wants, oblivious of the future results. Because he ignores considering the penalties of his course, he often winds up as a victim to them. While the righteous one helps to keep others alive, the person in want of heart cannot keep even himself alive.

Jesus did not teach that way. Rather than speaking in the name of another human, the Son of God often declared: "Truly I say to you," "However, I say to you." (See, for example, Matthew 5:18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44.) He spoke as "a person having authority," one who directly represented God, as was the case with inspired prophets of pre-Christian times. (Compare Matthew 28:18.) How thankful we can be that God has seen fit to have this great discourse recorded in his inspired Word!

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● "Caravan" magazine of New Delhi, India, recently described a religious controversy between two "Christian" sects in Kerala state. The Orthodox sect and the Jacobite sect, says the journal, have, since early in this century, been feuding both outside and in court over matters of leadership and church property.

Churches and Peace

"It is disgusting to hear, during the controversy, the provocative speeches of these priests," observes "Caravan." "Though they claim to be the real followers of Jesus Christ, they ignore his most important advice: love thy neighbours as you love thyself. Not only do they make derogatory speeches against each other but also resort to physical violence. They preach that belief in religion will lead to real peace. But they themselves are spreading hatred and sowing seeds of discontent which are bound to spoil the peace."

The above comments from an Indian observer do not seem overstated.

● In an article on sun worship in "Saturday Review" magazine, the noted science writer Isaac Asimov describes various ancient festivals associated with the winter solstice (December 21—when days begin again to become longer than nights). He notes that

Worship of the Sun? or the Sun?

the Romans celebrated this "with a week-long Saturnalia [for the agricultural god, Saturn] from December 17 to 24. It was a time of unrelieved merriment and joy. . . . gifts were given all round."

Asimov goes on to relate that in the third century, "the worship of Mithra, a sun-god of Persia, was becoming popular, especially among the soldiers. The Mithraists celebrated the birth of Mithra at the winter solstice, a natural time, and fixed on the day December 25 so that the popular Roman Saturnalia could build up to the Mithraist 'Day of the Sun' as a climax.

"At that time, Christianity was locked in a great duel with the Mithraists for the hearts and minds of the people of the Roman Empire. . . . Sometime after A.D. 300, Christianity managed the final coup of absorbing the

Saturnalia, and with that it scored its final victory over Mithraism. December 25 was established as the day of the birth of Jesus, and the great festival was made Christian. There is absolutely no biblical authority for December 25 as having been the day of the Nativity."

How, then, should a Christian view a holiday so deeply rooted in the worship of unbelievers? "Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers, for it cannot be done," says God's Word. "You must leave them and separate yourselves from them. Have nothing to do with what is unclean, and I will accept you." —2 Cor. 6:14-18, "Today's English Version."

● "U.S. News & World Report" predicted the possible signing of an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty toward the end of December, most likely around Christmas. The news journal added: "At that time, Sadat wants to meet with Begin and Carter at the summit of Mount Sinai, where the Bible reports

"Peace" at Mount Sinai?

that Moses made his covenant with God and received the Ten Commandments."

Whether or not these national leaders are able to make such a peace agreement, the "spectacular" of choosing Mount Sinai as the location could accomplish nothing, other than bringing their peace move into the limelight. It is of interest that, in writing of two ancient "covenants," the apostle Paul referred to "one from Mount Sinai, which brings forth children for slavery." (Gal. 4:24-26) Could a peace treaty signed at the same location have any more desirable result?

Actually, whatever peace moves the nations may make in this "time of the end" can bring them only closer to the fulfillment of the prophecy: "Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night. Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them." (1 Thess. 5:2, 3) However, this will open the way for that other "covenant" mentioned by Paul to have its glorious fulfillment. That unchangeable covenant contains the Divine promise that "all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves," not by any human peace-making efforts, but by means of the Christ.—Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:8, 16.

The Vine, the wine from which makes God and man glad

"My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit and prove yourselves my disciples."—John 15:8.



TO US today it might seem strange for a person to compare himself to a grapevine. But this is what the most notable man ever on earth did. On the night when he drank wine for the last time with eleven of his loyal companions, he said the following significant words: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the cultiva-

1. What comparison of himself to a plant did the notable man of whom John the son of Zebedee was a companion make?

tor. I am the vine, you are the branches." One of his companions, John the son of Zebedee, heard, remembered and recorded those thought-provoking words for us.—John 15:1, 5.

² Many hundreds of years before this a man in the same land told a parable or illustration and in it he compared a man

2, 3. (a) According to the parable given by Jotham the son of Judge Gideon, of what plants did the symbolic trees make request for a ruler but without success? (b) Their final choice of a king was to result in what?

to a vine. He, too, was in danger of his life. As a parting shot he told the parable to show how king-makers, by not picking the right person for kingship, would meet up with national disaster. Likening his own people to trees, he pictured how these searchers for a ruler over them first made their request to an olive tree and then to a fig tree, but they met with refusals by these fruitful trees.

³ "Next," Jotham, the lone surviving son of Judge Gideon of Israel, went on to say, "the trees said to the vine, 'You come, be queen over us.' In turn, the vine said to them, 'Must I give up my new wine that makes God and men rejoice, and must I go to wave over the trees?'" After this third refusal, the symbolic trees felt obliged to make a fruitless bramble the king over them. (Judg. 9:3-14) Because of this bad choice of a ruler, Jotham indicated that they would not drink the wine of rejoicing such as a fruitful vine would furnish. —Judg. 9:15-20.

⁴ For this reason Jesus Christ, who also was rejected as king over the nation of Israel, was not the first to liken a man, himself, to a grapevine. He had just introduced a memorial for his approaching death, in which he used the wine in the common drinking cup to represent his blood that was to be shed the next afternoon. But, then, to give a brighter meaning to wine as a symbol, he said: "I tell you, I will by no means drink henceforth any of this product of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father." (Matt. 26:26-29) New wine is especially exhilarating, and the "wine" drunk new in the kingdom of his heavenly Father would certainly be the wine of rejoicing.

⁵ It being Passover night, wine was

4. A little while earlier Jesus had used the product of the vine to picture what, but, then, how did he afterward give a brighter meaning to it?

5. In his parable of the grapevine, what indicates whether Jesus used it to picture just himself or not?

prominent, at least four cups of it being drunk during this final get-together of Jesus with his disciples in the year 33 C.E. Logically, this led on to his telling a new parable about the grapevine. However, in this illustration Jesus used the grapevine as a whole to symbolize more than just himself. To make this clear, he said to his faithful disciples: "I am the vine, you are the branches." —John 15:5.

⁶ By those words Jesus did not mean that this Christian "vine" would have only eleven branches, to correspond with those eleven faithful apostles then reclining with him at the table. The Messianic "vine" was to have many more branches, enough to make up an entire new Christian nation. Jesus hinted at this new nation when he said to the representatives of the unbelieving Jewish nation: "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits." —Matt. 21:43.

⁷ The likening of a nation to a grapevine was not new. Jesus' own heavenly Father, Jehovah, used this plant as symbolic of a nation. For example, he inspired the psalmist Asaph to address him and say: "You [Jehovah] proceeded to make a vine depart from Egypt [in Moses' day]. You kept driving out the nations [from the Promised Land], that you might plant it. You made a clearing before it, that it might take root and fill the land. The mountains were covered with its shadow, . . . O God of armies, return, please; look down from heaven and see and take care of this vine, and the stock that your right hand has planted." (Ps. 80:8-15) Because Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. and the Gentile Times then began for worldly nations to dominate all the earth, the nation of Israel suffered great inroads by the Gen-

6. Because there were only eleven apostles there, did Jesus mean that the "vine" would have only eleven branches, or not, especially in the light of his words at Matthew 21:43?

7. In Psalm 80:8-15, what nation is compared to a "vine," and why was there a cry for God's consideration of it?

tile nations. Hence, the psalmist's painful cry for God's consideration.

⁸ When Jehovah God anointed Jesus with holy spirit after his baptism in the Jordan River, a new "vine" was planted. There was a dire need for this. Why? More than 700 years beforehand, the prophet Isaiah had foretold why. Jehovah inspired him to say: "And now, O you inhabitants of Jerusalem and you men of Judah, please judge between me and my vineyard. What is there yet to do for my vineyard that I have not already done in it? Why is it that I hoped for it to produce grapes, but it gradually produced wild grapes? And now, please, may I make known to you men what I am doing to my vineyard: There will be a removing of its hedge, and it must be destined for burning down. . . . And I shall set it as a thing destroyed. It will not be pruned, nor will it be hoed. And it must come up with the thornbush and weeds; and upon the clouds I shall lay a command to keep from precipitating any rain upon it. For the vineyard of Jehovah of armies is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the plantation of which he was fond. And he kept hoping for judgment, but, look! the breaking of law; for righteousness, but, look! an outcry."—Isa. 5:3-7.

⁹ Things did not improve with Israel, but, about 100 years later, Jehovah could say to Israel: "Long ago I broke your yoke [of slavery in Egypt] to pieces; I tore your bands [of restraint] apart. But you said: 'I am not going to serve,' for upon every high hill and under every luxuriant tree you were lying sprawled out, prostituting yourself. And as for me, I had planted you as a choice red vine, all of it a true seed. So how have you been changed toward me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?"—Jer. 2:20, 21; Hos. 10:1, 2.

8. When did Jehovah plant a new "vine," and how does Isaiah 5:3-7 explain the need for this?

9. Later, in Jeremiah's day, what question did Jehovah ask about his national "vine"?

¹⁰ It was just as Moses, back in 1473 B.C.E., had foretold: "For they are a nation on whom counsel perishes, and among them there is no understanding. . . . For their vine is from the vine of Sodom and from the terraces of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the venom of big snakes and the cruel poison of cobras."—Deut. 32:28-33.

THE NEED FOR A NEW "VINE"

¹¹ The time was due for the vintage of this symbolic national "vine" when Jesus the Son of God came as the anointed one, or Messiah, in 29 C.E. What would be the fruitage that he as God's representative would gather from this "vine"? On Nisan 11, 33 C.E., three days before the close of his public ministry of three years and a half, Jesus illustrated the kind of reception that he would get, by telling a parable. Directing this to the chief priests and the elders in the temple by way of comment on their objections to his activities and teachings, he said:

"Hear another illustration: There was a man, a householder, who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and erected a tower, and let it out to cultivators, and traveled abroad. When the season of the fruits came around, he dispatched his slaves to the cultivators to get his fruits. However, the cultivators took his slaves, and one they beat up, another they killed, another they stoned. Again he dispatched other slaves, more than the first, but they did the same to these. Lastly he dispatched his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' On seeing the son the cultivators said among themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance!' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes,

10. Because counsel would perish on Israel, what kind of "vine" did Deuteronomy 32:28-33 say that Israel would become?

11. According to Jesus' parable of the vineyard, what kind of treatment was the Messiah to receive at the hands of the cultivators at the time of the vintage?

what will he do to those cultivators? . . .

" . . . Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'The stone that the builders rejected is the one that has become the chief cornerstone. From Jehovah this has come to be, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? This is why I say to you, The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits. Also, the person falling upon this stone will be shattered. As for anyone upon whom it falls, it will pulverize him."—Matt. 21:33-44.

¹² What fruitage should the Israelite cultivators of Jehovah's national "vineyard" have offered to his Son Jesus Christ? It should have been faith in the Son as the true, promised Messiah and the acceptance of him as the Son of the One who planted and owned the national "vineyard" of Israel. If they had rendered such kind of fruitage to the Son of God, it would have resulted in their being taken into the real Messianic kingdom of God. Because they did not produce the fruitage that should have marked the typical kingdom of God in Israel, the privilege of being God's kingdom was to be taken from them as a nation. Hence, another nation of "vineyard" cultivators was to be created. This new nation would produce fruits suitable for God's kingdom. Those cultivators would render the due fruits to the Divine Planter and Owner of this vineyard.

¹³ In God's determination of those who should enjoy the privileges of his Messianic kingdom, the important thing is "fruits." The Jewish cultivators thought that, by withholding the rightly expected fruits and even killing Jesus the "heir" of God's kingdom, they could grab his inheritance. They thought that they could maintain themselves in the rulership of the typical kingdom of God, under the covenant of the

Mosaic law. (John 11:47-53) But not so, according to the conclusion drawn from Jesus' parable. (Matt. 21:41) What did Jesus say about the royal Stone that the builders of a structure for God had rejected just the day previous after his triumphal ride into Jerusalem? It would be made the chief cornerstone in God's new royal structure, the heavenly "kingdom of God."

¹⁴ As regards "the true vine" that Jehovah God had planted and was cultivating, Jesus knew that this could not be deadened, even though the Jewish cultivators of the typical national "vine" were allowed to put him to death later on Passover day. Hence, even though it was just before his going to the garden of Gethsemane and being arrested, Jesus did not think it to be pointless for him to give to his disciples the parable of the vine and the branches.

¹⁵ "I am the true vine," said Jesus, "and my Father is the cultivator. Every branch in me not bearing fruit he takes away, and every one bearing fruit he cleans, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in union with me, and I in union with you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remains in the vine, in the same way neither can you, unless you remain in union with me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He that remains in union with me, and I in union with him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from me you can do nothing at all."—John 15:1-5.

THE PLANTING AND CULTIVATING

¹⁶ When did the great Vine Culturist plant this fruitful vine? It was in the year

14. Why did Jesus not think it to be pointless for him to give the parable of the vine and the branches shortly before his arrest at Gethsemane?

15. According to John 15:1-5, who is the cultivator of "the true vine," and what does he do to the branches according to whether they bear fruit or not?

16, 17. (a) When did Jehovah plant "the true vine," and how? (b) How was Jesus Christ one greater than the patriarch Jacob, and when were "branches" produced on the "true vine"?

12. What fruitage did the cultivators of the typical national vineyard fail to offer, and so how would God make sure of receiving the right kind of fruitage?

13. (a) What did the Jewish "vineyard" cultivators think they could do by seizing the inheritance of the Owner's Son? (b) What did Jesus say would happen to the royal stone that the builders of a structure rejected?

29 C.E., at the time that he anointed the newly baptized Jesus with his holy spirit. (Isa. 61:1, 2) Then it was that Jehovah established the central stalk of the symbolic "vine" of the Messianic kingdom. Here we recall that the typical kingdom of Israel stemmed from the patriarch Jacob, who was surnamed Israel. He became father to twelve sons, from whom the twelve tribes of Israel sprang. (Acts 7:8-14) Thus Jesus Christ corresponded to Jacob.

¹⁷ This Greater Jacob was the central vine stalk. He chose twelve apostles, who became prospective "branches" for this spiritual "vine." (John 15:16; 6:70) That is why, on that Passover night, he called them "branches." But 51 days later, on the day of Pentecost, twelve faithful apostles were anointed with holy spirit. In this way they became twelve secondary foundations for the new nation of spiritual Israel. On them, the heavenly New Jerusalem is built. (Rev. 21:14; Eph. 2:20) However, on that day of Pentecost the others of that group of about 120 disciples were among the first to receive the holy spirit and speak in tongues, and by this they too were made "branches" in that spiritual "vine," Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ There the new nation, spiritual Israel, came into being. Natural Israel as a nation had not seized the opportunity that Jehovah, by means of his mediator Moses, had set before it according to Exodus 19:6, 7. So the words of that divine statement were applied by the apostle Peter to members of the new nation of spiritual Israel. Where? In his first inspired letter, at 1 Peter 2:9, 10, where it is written: "But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness

into his wonderful light. For you were once not a people, but are now God's people; you were those who had not been shown mercy, but are now those who have been shown mercy."

¹⁹ Happily, the Christian nation of spiritual Israel continued to flourish after Jehovah carried out his words of warning set out in Isaiah 5:5-7, upon the symbolic "vineyard" of natural Israel. As the Cultivator of what he planted, he gives the needed attention to the "branches" of the "true vine," Jesus Christ, no less than he gave the former "vineyard" of natural Israel down till 33 C.E. He does so for the purpose of keeping a clean, productive set of "branches" that are disciples of Jesus Christ. Suckers and dead wood should have no place among those "clean" branches. That is why, in his parable, Jesus said to his faithful apostles: "Every branch in me not bearing fruit he takes away, and every one bearing fruit he cleans, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you."—John 15:2, 3.

²⁰ Judas Iscariot, the traitorous apostle, was not present when Jesus said those words. Jesus had already dismissed him from their company at the end of the Passover supper. (John 13:26-30) The eleven remaining faithful apostles had wholeheartedly accepted his word or Messianic message, and for that reason he pronounced them "clean." For instance, up north in Capernaum, when Jesus asked those apostles, "You do not want to go also, do you?" Simon Peter answered: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life; and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God."—John 6:67-69.

19. After Isaiah 5:5-7 was fulfilled, what happened to the nation of spiritual Israel, and why did Jehovah give it no less attention than he gave to the typical "vineyard" of Israel?

20. Because of their accepting what could Jesus pronounce the eleven faithful apostles "clean," in harmony with the account of John 6:67-69?

18. What opportunity did natural Israel not seize, as set out in Exodus 19:6, 7, and to whom does Peter apply the words of that divine statement?

²¹ So there were no dead twigs of fruitless unbelief about those loyal apostles. There were no distracting suckers of unscriptural Judaism attached to them. They were undividedly giving their attention to the cause of "the Holy One of God." They believed him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt. 16:16) On still another occasion, Peter said to him:

21. So, from what things were those apostolic "branches" clean, and what effect must Jesus' word spoken privately have had on them?

"Look! We have left all things and followed you; what actually will there be for us?" (Matt. 19:27) In the face of such decisions, Jesus' words, especially spoken to the apostles privately, must have had a purging effect, leaving them in a spiritual condition that was "clean." All the "branches" that remain in such a "clean" condition could devote themselves in full commitment to the unique purpose of Jehovah's "true vine." This would work out in gladness for both God and men.

THE Kind of Fruit Bearing that Glorifies God



WHAT, really, is the purpose of a grapevine? Long ago the Planter of the first grapevine asked his prophet Ezekiel about this, in these words: "Son of man, in what way does the vine tree happen to be different from every other

1. By Jehovah's words at Ezekiel 15:1-5, what did he indicate to be the primary purpose of a grapevine?

tree, the shoot, that has come to be among the trees of the forest? Is there taken from it a pole with which to do some work? Or do people take from it a peg on which to hang any kind of utensil? . . . Look! When it happens to be intact, it is not used for any work." (Ezek. 15:1-5) Clearly, then, the primary purpose of the grapevine is to

bear fruit, the luscious grapes from which wine is made.—Judg. 9:13.

² Wine entered into the celebration of the last Passover of Jesus with his apostles. After that supper he gave his own illustration of the “true vine” and its “branches.” With this in mind he could say to his eleven faithful apostles: “You did not choose me, but I chose you, and I appointed you to go on and keep bearing fruit and that your fruit should remain; in order that no matter what you ask the Father [the Planter of the vine] in my name he might [in view of your bearing fruit] give it to you.”—John 15:16.

³ That it might bear fruit to the full, the grapevine is pruned every season. It is like what Jesus as the spiritual “vine” said: “Every branch in me not bearing fruit he takes away. . . . If anyone does not remain in union with me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up; and men gather those branches up and pitch them into the fire and they are burned.” (John 15:2, 6) What lesson, then, does this convey to us? Well, if any one of us is a “branch” in the spiritual “vine” and values his privilege, he will not want to get pruned off. So it behooves him to bear fruit—much of it!

THE FRUIT

⁴ What, though, is the fruit? The fruit, the grapes, does not picture the disciples of Christ. The branches are what picture the spirit-begotten disciples. What the fruit borne by the branches does picture the inspired Scriptures indicate. For example, when Jehovah compared ancient Israel to a vineyard, he named the fruit for which

he was looking. He said: “The vineyard of Jehovah of armies is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the plantation of which he was fond. And he kept hoping for judgment, but, look! the breaking of law; for righteousness, but, look! an outcry [like that of ancient Sodom].”—Isa. 5:7; Gen. 18:21; 19:13.

⁵ So, as part of the fruit of that typical “vineyard” of Israel, what was looked for by Jehovah the Planter was judgment (involving justice) and righteousness, the opposite of lawbreaking and scandalous conduct. Judgment and righteousness were missing in Israel in Jesus’ day. Shortly before he was martyred at Jerusalem he said to the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees: “You give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cummin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness.” (Matt. 23:23) On the matter of the breaking of God’s Law, Jesus further said: “You [Pharisees and scribes] have made the word of God invalid because of your tradition.” “They teach commands of men as doctrines.”—Matt. 15:6, 9.

⁶ Judgment and justice, mercy, faithfulness, righteousness, the keeping and not a twisting of God’s Law were part of the fruit that Jehovah looked for from the typical “vineyard” of Israel. To be consistent, should he look for fruit different from all that to be on the “branches” of his “true vine”? Not at all! The fruit that He desires as an adornment of those “branches” is Christlike qualities of personality. But there is more to the fruit than an idle personality.

⁷ The active expression of traits of personality is also required! For example, in

2. In harmony with that purpose of the vine, what did Jesus say in John 15:16 was his thought in choosing those apostolic “branches”?

3. Why is the pruning of a vine done seasonally, and what lesson should this convey to an appreciative “branch” in the “true vine”?

4. What is the “fruit,” as indicated in the case of Isaiah 5:7?

5. In Jesus’ day, what weightier things of God’s Law were the religious leaders neglecting, and what were they teaching as doctrines?

6, 7. (a) As in the case of natural Israel, what fruit should be looked for on the “branches” of the “true vine,” and how should this be demonstrated? (b) In Jeremiah’s day, how was Israel committing adultery in two ways?

the prophet Jeremiah's day Jehovah voiced his disappointment at the fruit offered to him by the typical "vineyard" of Israel. He said: "Upon every high hill and under every luxuriant tree you were lying sprawled out, prostituting yourself. And as for me, I had planted you as a choice red vine, all of it a true seed. So how have you been changed toward me into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine? . . . How can you say, 'I have not defiled myself. After the Baals I have not walked'?" (Jer. 2:20-23) So another part of the fruit for which Jehovah looked from the "vine" of typical Israel was moral cleanness and the exclusive worship of Him. But, instead of finding such fruit upon its branches, Jehovah found the committing of fornication and adultery between individual Israelites, also spiritual adultery on the part of the whole nation through the making of friendly alliances with the pagan nations roundabout.—Compare James 4:4.

⁸ Furthermore, instead of worshiping Jehovah exclusively as their covenant God, the nation was idolatrously running after the Baal images and worshiping them. In effect, the "grapes" of the "vine" of typical Israel were 'the grapes of Sodom,' so that its "clusters" were bitter. Hence, the fruit of the Israelite "vine" included homosexuality like that of ancient Sodom. (Deut. 32:32) The undesirable fruit stands out in contrast with what God wants.

⁹ The unchanging God does not want either such kind of fruit on the "branches" of his "true vine," Jesus Christ. So the spiritual Israelites of the Kingdom class must keep themselves morally clean. They must not commit spiritual adultery by making friends with this world. Nothing

less than exclusive devotion to Jehovah as God is what is absolutely required of them. What do they care if the world hates them for bearing such fruit? "Because you are no part of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on this account the world hates you." That was what Jesus told his eleven faithful apostles on the night that Judas Iscariot betrayed him.—John 15:19.

¹⁰ Their being no part of this world by keeping away from its politics and conflicts is the expression of the fruit of cleanness and stainlessness from this world. This fruit must characterize those who belong to Jehovah's organization as represented by his Son, "the true vine," Jesus Christ. They must demonstrate unqualified attachment to God's kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ. This calls for their open acknowledgment and acceptance of the Son of God as the long-promised Messiah, or Christ. Fruit of this kind was not presented to Jesus the Messiah by the typical "vine" of natural Israel. It failed to produce the "fruits" of the kingdom of God. This resulted in tremendous loss to them, for the kingdom of God was taken away from them and was given to the nation that would produce the required fruit, the spiritual Israel. (Matt. 21:43) This new nation is made up of the "branches" that prove their union with the "true vine" by not rejecting Jesus the Messiah as the Jewish nation did but by openly accepting him and walking in his footsteps.

¹¹ So this involves more than just acknowledging and accepting the Messiah in one's heart, 'taking Jesus into one's heart,' as Christendom's evangelists say. There

8. How were the Israelites not rendering to Jehovah exclusive worship?

9. How must the "branches" of the "true vine" keep from spiritual adultery, even if it incurs the world's hatred?

10. (a) The fruit of what kind of separateness and stainlessness must "branches" in the "true vine" bear, and what action does this call for on their part? (b) By not producing such kind of fruit, what loss did the nation of Israel suffer?

11. (a) Because of the prophecy of Matthew 24:14, what is involved more than just 'taking Jesus into one's heart'? (b) What feature about the "true vine" is an obligatory one for the vine's "branches"?

must be a confirming and disclosing of this by public action. (Rom. 10:10) There must be a personal taking part in the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matt. 24:14) If a dedicated, baptized, spirit-anointed "branch" in the Christ "vine" is not taking an active part in that foretold work, how could he be producing the "fruits" of the kingdom of God? The obligatory feature in this regard is that they are "branches" in the one who was the first to be anointed with the spirit of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah to preach the good news of the Kingdom. (Isa. 61:1-3; Luke 4:16-21) As is the "vine" stalk, so the sap-imbibing "branches" should be also!

¹² The prophecy of Matthew 24:14 had a partial fulfillment in the first century C.E., from the time of Jesus' ascension to heaven and appearance in God's presence to the year 70 C.E., when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. But that fulfillment prefigured the full-scale fulfillment of the prophecy down here from 1914 onward. At the end of the Gentile Times in autumn of that year, God's Messianic kingdom was born up in the heavens. Today, more than 19 centuries after the Christ "vine" began growing its "branches," there is only a small remnant of those "branches" still alive and producing the "fruits" of the kingdom of God, inasmuch as there are to be at most 144,000 of such "branches" as joint heirs with Jesus Christ. (Rev. 7:4-8; 14:1-3) Upon this remnant the responsibility devolves to get "this good news of the kingdom" preached earth wide for all nations to hear.

¹³ The bearing of the fruit of obedience

12. Since the year 1914, Matthew 24:14 must be fulfilled on how great a scale, and upon whom does it devolve to get "this good news" preached to such an extent?
13. So by the production of what "fruit" on the part of the remnant of the vine "branches" has Jesus' Father been glorified earth wide?

to the command to preach has resulted in glorifying Jehovah God. It is just as Jesus said for the encouragement of his "branches": "My Father is glorified in this, that you keep bearing much fruit and prove yourselves my disciples." (John 15:8) In this time for the final fulfillment of Matthew 24:14, has the remnant of such "branches" borne "much fruit"? If we check up on the records that are available for the period from the postwar year of 1919 C.E., we must say Yes! By such "fruit" production Jehovah God has been glorified world wide.

IN UNION WITH THE "VINE"

¹⁴ Unbreakable union of the "branches" with the Christ "vine" has been necessary for the producing of so much fruit during these turbulent times since the outbreak of World War I in 1914. To the remnant of productive "branches" the words of Jesus have certainly applied: "Remain in union with me [the True Vine], and I in union with you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remains in the vine, in the same way neither can you, unless you remain in union with me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He that remains in union with me, and I in union with him, this one bears much fruit; because apart from me you can do nothing at all. If anyone does not remain in union with me, he is cast out as a branch and is dried up; and men gather those branches up and pitch them into the fire and they are burned."—John 15:4-6.

¹⁵ Jesus Christ would not appoint to these "branches" a kingdom in association with

14. How, in John 15:4-6, does Jesus show that unbreakable union with him was necessary for the remnant of the "branches" to produce so much fruit?

15. (a) If the apostles had not stuck to him, what would Jesus never have appointed them to in association with him? (b) Why could not the remnant come out for the League of Nations and remain in union with "the true vine"?



THE FRUIT-BEARING REMNANT AND "GREAT CROWD" WILL BE SAFEGUARDED
WHEN THE ANGEL REAPS THE "VINE OF THE EARTH"

him in heaven unless they stuck to him even through hardships. (Luke 22:28-30) To retain their anointing with the spirit of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, they have to remain in union with him, the "vine" stalk. Otherwise, their prospective place in the celestial kingdom would be taken away from them. (Rev. 3:5, 11) Consequently, when the Gentile Times ended in 1914 and it was revealed that God's Messianic kingdom had been brought to birth in the heavens, what was the remnant of anointed "branches" obliged to do? Loyally hail the glorified Jesus Christ as God's enthroned Messianic King! To remain in union with him, they could never renounce him in favor of a man-made substitute for the rightful kingdom over all the earth, such as the League of Nations. Since they remained in union with him, he did not break off union with them.

THE "GREAT CROWD" OF REVELATION 7:9-17

¹⁶ During the last four years of the life of the League of Nations as a peace-keeping organization the foretold "great crowd" began to form of men and women who were made glad by the Kingdom fruit that was held forth by the branches of "the true vine." The cruel hardships and trials imposed on them during World War II because of their association with the anointed remnant did not force them to dissociate themselves from those bearers of Kingdom "fruit." They knew that, to be loyal to the enthroned King who is "the true vine," they had to be loyal to his "branches," his spiritual brothers. (Matt. 25:31-40) Along with Christ's "brothers," they refused to accept the revived organization for world peace and security in the form of the United Nations organization. Instead of advocating this revived sub-

stitute for Jehovah's Messianic kingdom, they kept on preaching along with the remnant of Kingdom heirs as Jehovah's Witnesses.

¹⁷ When it comes to dwelling safely on earth under one's own vine and fig tree in a figurative way, what does that "great crowd" prefer? They prefer to dwell under "the true vine" and its "branches" because these represent Jehovah's kingdom by Christ. (Mic. 4:1-4) Before learning the good news of Jehovah's newly born kingdom under the control of Jesus Christ "the true vine," they used to dwell under another vine—"the vine of the earth." (Rev. 14:19) What kind of "vine" is that? It is the earth-wide political organization by means of which human rulers defiantly try to hold onto world domination, thereby competing with Jehovah's Messianic kingdom.

¹⁸ The fruit-bearing "branches" of the "vine" that Jehovah has planted have urged those of the "great crowd" to get out from under "the vine of the earth." No longer should they partake of its poisonous, death-dealing grapes and wine. Why so? Because that "vine" is doomed to destruction, as foretold in Revelation 14:18-20:

"Still another angel emerged from the altar and he had authority over the fire. And he called out with a loud voice to the one that had the sharp sickle, saying: 'Put your sharp sickle in and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, because its grapes have become ripe.' And the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and he hurled it into the great winepress of the anger of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress as high up as the bridles of the horses, for a distance of a thousand six hundred furlongs."

17. (a) When it comes to dwelling under a "vine" in a figurative way, under which "vine" does the "great crowd" prefer to dwell on earth? (b) Under what "vine" had they been dwelling beforehand?

18. Why have the "branches" of the "true vine" urged those of the "great crowd" to get out from under the "vine of the earth"?

16. (a) How did World War II affect the relationship of the "great crowd" with the remnant of the vine "branches"? (b) With whom did the "great crowd" align itself as regards the United Nations, and why?

Here it is the case of one symbolic vine against another, for the glorified Jesus Christ, who is "the true vine," crushes the enemy vine, "the vine of the earth." The "horses" used in the treading of the deep winepress 200 miles long are the war mounts of Jesus Christ and his angelic armies.—Rev. 19:11-15.

¹⁹ The "winepress" of God's "anger" is reserved for the anti-Christian "vine of the earth." On the other hand, ever since God restored the remnant of spiritual Israelites to his favor in the postwar year of 1919, there is no "rage" that he has against this symbolic or spiritual "vineyard." He has watched over this "vineyard" of spiritual Israel to make it productive to his glory. There is no proper place in it for things similar to thornbushes and weeds that hinder and take away from the fruitfulness of this "vineyard." (Luke 6:44) Hence, the "great crowd" now associating itself with Jehovah's "vineyard" should not want to bring improper things like thornbushes and weeds into the fruitful "vineyard." This would result in hurt to the "great crowd," for Jehovah, in his unchangeable purpose to make his spiritual "vineyard" productive to the full, would war against such "thornbushes and weeds." He would step on such to crush them and then burn them as with fire.—Isa. 27:4.

²⁰ Now is the time for the "great crowd" to make peace with Jehovah and to take hold on his "stronghold" or reservoir of strength so as to be empowered to do what is pleasing to him. It is timely for them to keep in mind the words of the song that is now being sung to his "vineyard" of spiritual Israel: "In that day sing to her,

you people: 'A vineyard of foaming wine! I, Jehovah, am safeguarding her. Every moment I shall water her. In order that no one may turn his attention against her, I shall safeguard her even night and day. There is no rage that I have. Who will give me thornbushes and weeds in the battle? I will step on such. I will set such on fire at the same time. Otherwise let him take hold of my stronghold, let him make peace with me; peace let him make with me.' In the coming days Jacob will take root, Israel will put forth blossoms and actually sprout; and they will simply fill the surface of the productive land with produce." —Isa. 27:2-6.

²¹ Now is the "day" for the remnant of spiritual Jacob or Israel to show fruitfulness by filling the face of the earth with life-sustaining produce. Jehovah has made the land productive all around the globe, for hundreds of thousands have responded to the Kingdom witness given by the remnant and have sprung up in more than 200 lands to form a "great crowd" that hails Jehovah as Universal Sovereign and Jesus Christ as the one now authorized to rule as king over all the earth.—Rev. 7:9-17.

²² The fruit bearing on the part of the "branches" of the "true vine" has indeed been glorifying to Jehovah God, the Cultivator. As a result of their Christian labors the "great crowd" gives glory to this God who planted and cultivated such a grand thing as this royal "vine" and its branches. Taking a lesson from the fruitful "vine" and its "branches," those of the "great crowd" likewise shun all barrenness and seek to be fruitful in cultivating all the qualities of godly personality and in actively expressing and displaying them to Jehovah's glory.

19. (a) Why is there no "winepress" of God's anger reserved for his spiritual "vineyard"? (b) Why would it be hurtful to the "great crowd" for them to introduce things like "thornbushes and weeds" into that vineyard?

20. What kind of relationship should the "great crowd" seek with Jehovah, and what song to his "vineyard" should they join in singing?

21. (a) To what extent must the remnant of spiritual Jacob, or Israel, show fruitfulness? (b) What shows that Jehovah has made the land productive for them? 22. How has the fruitfulness of the remnant of "branches" of the "true vine" had an effect with regard to God, and how also the fruitfulness of the "great crowd"?

DURING the last quarter of the seventh century B.C.E., Baruch served as a secretary to the prophet Jeremiah. He lived at a time when his fellow Israelites had no regard for the word of Jehovah but insisted on following their own ways. Therefore, the prophecies that Baruch recorded at Jeremiah's direction largely pointed to calamity. Since these prophecies were very unpopular, Baruch at times shared the unpleasant experiences of the prophet Jeremiah. On one occasion, the impact of the circumstances surrounding him and the content of the prophetic messages even unbalanced Baruch, and this resulted in his having a specific prophetic message directed to him.

It was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign that Jeremiah dictated to Baruch the prophetic message respecting Jerusalem's destruction at the hands of the Chaldeans. On a special fast day in the late fall of the next year, Baruch, with the scroll he had written, appeared in the temple courtyard. Why Baruch and not Jeremiah? Jeremiah was prevented from going there, possibly by decree of the temple officials. So Jeremiah sent Baruch to read the word of Jehovah to the assembled Israelites. One of the men hearing the public reading was a certain Micaiah. At once he made report regarding this to

BARUCH— *A secretary who received a prophetic message*



King Jehoiakim's secretary and the princes.—Jer. 36:1-13.

The princes then sent Jehudi to Baruch, requesting that he come with the prophetic roll. Baruch was treated kindly, being invited to sit down and to read from the roll. On hearing the strong denunciatory message, the princes became fearful, their faces and bearing doubtless revealing their apprehension. They felt under obligation to inform King Jehoiakim regarding the contents of the roll. To determine just what share Baruch might have had in producing the prophetic roll, the princes asked: "How did you write

all these words from his mouth?" Baruch's answer made it clear that he was merely the secretary who faithfully recorded what Jeremiah dictated. He said: "Out of his mouth he kept declaring to me all these words, and I was writing in the book with ink." Realizing that the prophetic message would arouse the king's anger, the princes advised that Baruch and Jeremiah go into hiding. As the princes had anticipated, Jehoiakim commanded that the two men be seized. However, on account of Jehovah's protection, the hiding place of Jeremiah and Baruch remained undiscovered.—Jer. 36:14-26.

This experience must have greatly encouraged Baruch, because earlier a prophetic message had been directed to him personally. That message served to set his thinking straight. It was during the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign that Baruch exclaimed: "Woe, now, to me, for Jehovah has added grief to my pain! I have grown weary because of my sighing, and no resting-place have I found." (Jer. 45:3) The pain that Baruch experienced was the distress that resulted from dwelling among his lawless countrymen. They were corrupt, stubborn and unrepentant. Baruch may well have felt like Lot in Sodom, of whom the Bible says: "That righteous man by what he saw and heard while dwelling among them from day to day was tormenting his righteous soul by reason of their lawless deeds." (2 Pet. 2:8) In addition to being pained at heart, Baruch experienced grief. Why did he feel that Jehovah God had added such grief to his pain?

The word of Jehovah did not hold forth a change for the better during Baruch's lifetime. Rather, it was a gloomy message, pointing to certain doom. This prospect filled Baruch with grief. From a personal standpoint, he had no hope of bettering his position. So he simply gave way to

sighing. He could find no peace, no "resting-place."

Baruch's attitude was not a wholesome one. He needed to be corrected. Jehovah's word to him was: "Look! What I have built up I am tearing down, and what I have planted I am uprooting, even all the land itself. But as for you, you keep seeking great things for yourself. Do not keep on seeking. For here I am bringing in a calamity upon all flesh, . . . and I will give you your soul as a spoil in all the places to which you may go."—Jer. 45:4, 5.

Since the destruction that Jehovah had decreed through the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah was bound to come, it was certainly no time for any individual to think about "great things" for himself. It was no time to think about material security, prosperity, possessions or prominence. Baruch was urged to be content, satisfied in escaping the coming destruction with his life. What could compare with that in value? (Matt. 16:26) Though assured of surviving, Baruch was to share in the hardships of the people generally. He was given a foretaste of the kind of protection he would be given when Jehovah shielded both him and Jeremiah from falling into the hands of King Jehoiakim.

Even after the destruction of Jerusalem, Baruch found that he still needed endurance and had to rely on Jehovah's protection. When Jeremiah told the people the word of Jehovah, advising that they not flee to Egypt, they paid no attention. To excuse their rejection of Jehovah's word through Jeremiah, they misrepresented Baruch, saying: "Baruch the son of Neriah is instigating you against us for the purpose of giving us into the hand of the Chaldeans, to put us to death or to take us into exile in Babylon." (Jer. 43:3) Thus they claimed that Jeremiah, who was now old, was under the influence of his secre-

tary and was no longer speaking the word of Jehovah but was presenting the message of his secretary as the message of the Almighty. In the face of such an attitude, Baruch needed to maintain faith in Jehovah's promise to preserve him.

We today can benefit from the experience of Baruch. His serving Jehovah faithfully as Jeremiah's secretary did not result in his receiving special material rewards. Likewise, we today should not expect some special treatment when suffering and

hardships befall people as a whole. We should be willing to suffer hardship also during the coming "great tribulation," satisfied with Jehovah's assurance: "Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger." (Matt. 24:21, 22; Zeph. 2:3) Then, when we see the execution of God's judgment against the wicked, we can look forward confidently to receiving our soul or life as a spoil by surviving the "great tribulation" into Jehovah's new order of righteousness and peace.

Do You Remember?

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

- How could those who heard Jesus Christ speak in the first century C.E. 'pass over from death to life'?—John 5:24.

Because of being sinners, the people in the days of Jesus' earthly ministry were under the condemnation of death. However, by listening to the Son of God, repenting of their transgressions and accepting him as the promised Messiah who would redeem them from sin and death, individuals ceased to be under condemnation. Thus, in a figurative way, they 'passed over from death to life.'—9/1 p. 18.

- What did the apostle Paul mean when he wrote, "love never fails"?—1 Cor. 13:8.

As seen from the context, the apostle was discussing the fact that love will continue, whereas miraculous gifts will cease. Hence, "love never fails" in the sense that it will never end or be lacking.—9/15 p. 21.

- Who were the Nephilim?

In Noah's days, they were the offspring of disobedient spirit sons of God and women. The name Nephilim means "fellers," persons who caused others to fall. These powerful hybrids contributed greatly to the violence existing in Noah's days.—10/1 p. 4.

- What is the significance of the conviction expressed at Psalm 41:3 regarding Jehovah's changing a righteous person's bed in time of sickness?

Jehovah God strengthens his servants to

endure illness and engenders within them the kind of hope that is essential for recuperation. Thus the Most High transforms or changes the bed of sickness into one of recuperation.—10/15 pp. 6, 7.

- Why is it urgent from a personal standpoint for disciples of Jesus Christ to maintain exemplary conduct and to be zealous in doing public witnessing and other fine works?

Regardless of what a person's age may be now, either death or the "great tribulation" will end his opportunity to build up a record of fine works with Jehovah God. Hence, the individual cannot be negligent in discharging Christian responsibilities, as that affects his record with his Maker and can lead to loss of divine blessings.—11/15 p. 25.

- When especially should serious consideration be given to the length of time a man has been a Christian before appointing him as an elder?

This is when the congregation already has elders with many years of experience in Christian living. When a man who has been baptized in recent years is appointed in such a congregation, this can lead to his getting "puffed up with pride." (1 Tim. 3:6) However, if the congregation is made up of new converts, the appointment of a man who may be relatively new but who meets the Scriptural qualifications does not pose the same spiritual danger. Such a man realizes that he is serving because of a need and not because of his being particularly outstanding as a spiritual person.—12/1 pp. 19, 20.

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