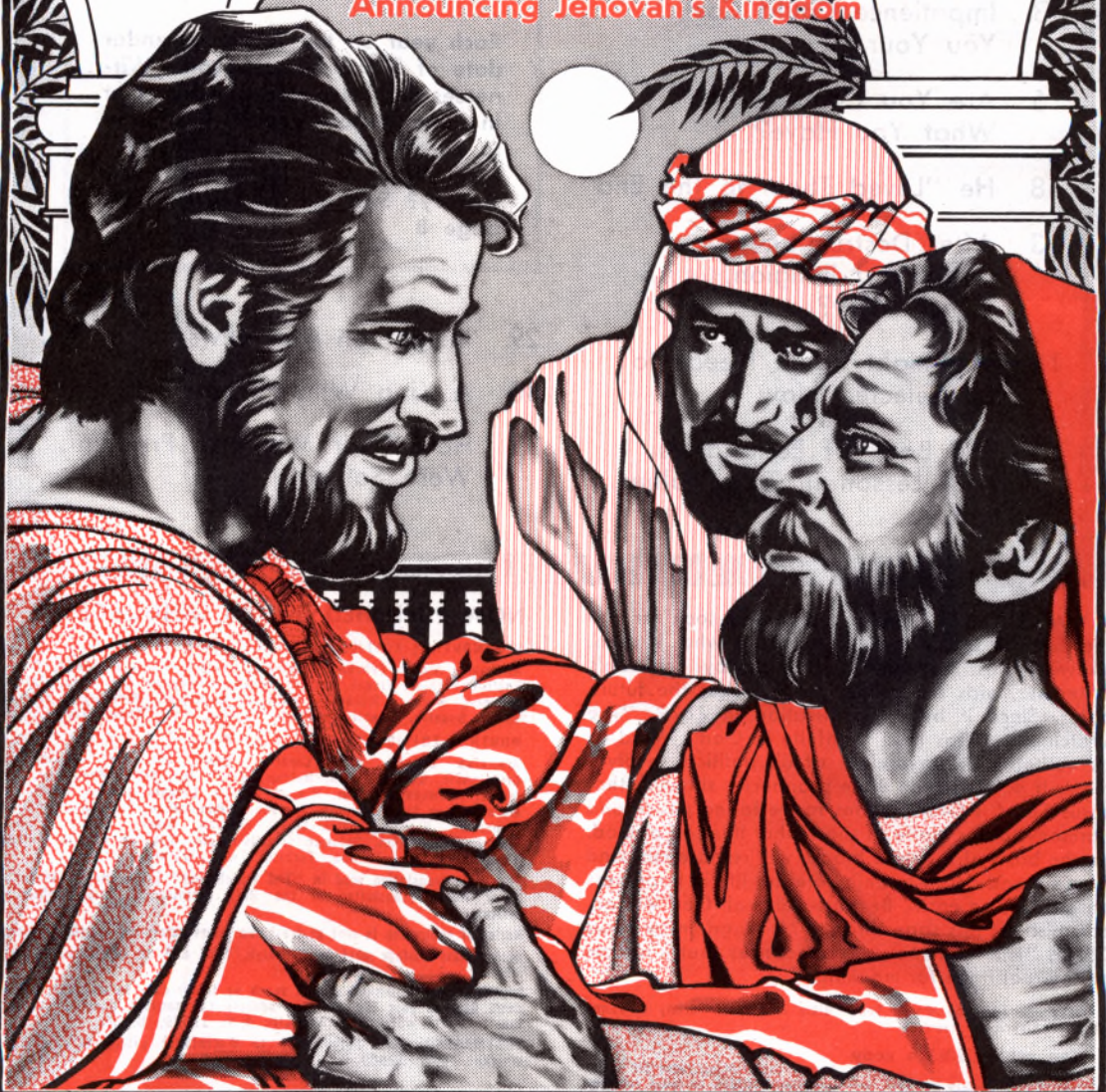


MARCH 1, 1980

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



HE LOVED THEM TO THE END

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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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Impatience Could Cost You Your Life

"IMPATIENCE Paid for with Life." Those were the arresting words headlining a short article in the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of October 16, 1978. The persistently honking horn of an automobile standing before the closed barriers of a railroad crossing prompted the young lady attendant there to raise the barriers prematurely. This allowed "an impatient car driver" to pass through. Just as he was halfway across, a speeding train struck the car broadside, dragging it 180 m (590 feet) down the tracks. The article concluded: "The 44-year-old driver paid for his impatience with his life."

Certainly a drastic example, but one that illustrates how dangerous impatience can be. No doubt you have heard of persons who have suffered relapses simply because they became impatient and got out of bed or went back to work too soon after a serious illness. And relapses can be extremely serious, even deadly. Yes, impatient people can put themselves in peril, even in dire danger of losing life itself.

The words "patience," "patient" and "patiently," as well as the closely related word "long-suffering," appear over 30 times in the Holy Scriptures. An interesting example is found at 1 Thessalonians 5:14, where Christians are advised to "be long-suffering toward all." As *The Bible in Living English* renders it, they are to "be patient with everybody." More easily said than done? True. But why? What causes us to become impatient?

CAUSES OF IMPATIENCE

Ignorance can sometimes cause impatience. A person

with limited knowledge may fail to see the need for exercising patience. However, with an accurate knowledge of *all* the facts, an individual might feel different. If the "impatient car driver" had known accurately the nearness and speed of the train that later struck him, he undoubtedly would have shown patience.

Another reason for impatience may be that a person thinks too highly of himself or takes himself too seriously. Fittingly, then, the Bible says: "Better is one who is patient than one who is haughty in spirit." (Eccl. 7:8) A person "haughty in spirit" is impatient with individuals who may make him wait or who slow him down in his activity. But is *his* time more valuable than *theirs*? He generally seems to think so. The impatient individual is inconsiderate and lacks empathy, the ability to put himself in the other person's place. He is quick to find fault with the weaknesses and shortcomings of others. Not only is he "haughty in spirit" but he is also lacking in love.

Whatever the cause, however, an im-

patient person may act rashly, foolishly. Yes, for Proverbs 14:29 says: "He that is slow to anger is abundant in discernment, but one that is impatient is exalting foolishness." The example cited at the outset certainly demonstrates how foolish impatience can be. Did this impatient driver have anything so important to do that it could not have waited another two or three minutes? Of course, waiting a while might have made him late for an appointment. But, as it turned out, because of impatience he failed to keep any such appointment at all! So if you do not want to act foolishly, learn to be patient.

BEING "PATIENT WITH EVERYBODY"

How often people get impatient with strangers! They may find fault with the way others drive, or may complain about the service that clerks or waiters give them in stores or restaurants. But being patient with family members and friends sometimes is even more difficult. A salesman may exercise great patience all day long, trying to please customers, only to come home in the evening and be anything but patient with his wife and children.

Why, at times we even fail to be patient with ourselves! But this, too, is important lest we become discouraged because of our limitations and imperfections. Being impatient with ourselves can make us think we are waging a losing battle and may cause us to give up in despair in our race for life. This would be most dangerous.

In the matter of putting on the Christian personality, the Scriptures are very realistic. Though instructing Christians to make changes in their lives, nowhere does the Bible claim that these necessary personality adjustments can be made overnight; nor does it indicate that each individual will find it easy to make them. (Col. 3:5-10) For example, consider the habit of smoking. Some former smokers found that giving up cigarettes really was

not very difficult. But others had a struggle before they finally succeeded in shaking the habit. Nevertheless, being persistent led to eventual success, whereas being impatient might have led to early failure.

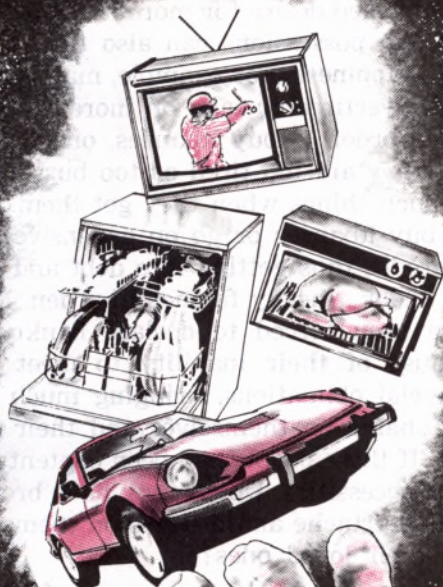
Of course, the very height of foolishness is being impatient with God. And yet, have you not heard the complaint: "If God is ever going to do anything about wickedness, it is about time he did it"? Well, the Bible assures us: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9) Strangely, it is this very patience on God's part that sometimes tends to make us impatient.

What if this system of things has lasted longer than we once thought or hoped it would? This has not been without a reason. The apostle Peter also wrote: "Furthermore, consider the patience of our Lord as salvation." (2 Pet. 3:15) An accurate knowledge of God's purposes and a humble appraisal of our own relative unimportance will enable us to remain patient just as long as Jehovah sees fit to be patient with this old system and its people.

The Bible writer James encourages Christians to be patient, by saying: "Exercise patience, therefore, brothers, until the presence of the Lord. Look! the farmer keeps waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, exercising patience over it until he gets the early rain and the late rain. You too exercise patience; make your hearts firm, because the presence of the Lord has drawn close."—Jas. 5:7, 8.

Let us never make the mistake of getting impatient with God. Also, we need to guard against becoming impatient with our spiritual brothers and sisters, our relatives, friends and strangers. As the Scriptures say, 'let us be long-suffering or patient with everybody.' Remember, impatience could cost you your life!

Are you content



with what you have?

THE seeking of happiness is an in-born human desire. This desire is right and proper. It was planted in human hearts by the Creator, because, as "the happy God," he wants all his creatures to be happy.—1 Tim. 1:11.

However, the question is: How can a person achieve happiness? In view of the emphasis placed on material comforts to-

day, many people seem to equate happiness with material possessions. When asked whether they would like to know how to attain happiness in their lives, they often answer: 'If I had money, I would be happy.'

The prevalence of such thinking should not be surprising. By means of all kinds of advertisements and propaganda—some blatant, some subtle—the commercial elements of the world are constantly encouraging people to buy more and to spend more. People are made to feel that they can actually save money by buying the new products, despite the fact that they already have the same item, though it is an older or a different model. For example, a certain advertisement in Hong Kong urges: "If you already own a large car, own this car, too," a more compact model. Another advertiser asks: "Room air conditioner gobbling energy?" Then comes the suggestion: "Replace now with a high efficiency . . . unit."

Partly as a result of all the bombardment of commercial advertising, there is discontent among people. Many try to find ways of making more money in order to buy more material things, thinking that this will bring them the happiness and security for which they long. But how often their effort ends in failure and frustration! Some, failing to gain the desired wealth by legitimate means, have resorted to unlawful methods—stealing, armed robbery, selling narcotics, and the like. This underscores the truth of the Bible proverb: "He that is hastening to gain riches will not remain innocent."—Prov. 28:20.

But some persons may say: 'Is it not true that, while many have failed to get rich, others have succeeded?' Yes, in every country there are some who have become wealthy through hard work or ingenuity, although their numbers are comparatively low. However, the more important question is: Are they content and happy? It

must be admitted that even those who have been successful in accumulating riches often are not satisfied, always wanting to become wealthier. The Creator of man well knows such inclination of imperfect humans. His Word pointedly states: "A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver, neither any lover of wealth with income." (Eccl. 5:10) How accurate this observation has proved to be!

THE FUTILITY OF RICHES

The Creator also knows well the harm and unhappiness a materialistic way of life can bring. Because of God's loving concern for mankind, in his Word he has given much counsel to warn man against this pitfall. No matter how successful a person may be in accumulating material wealth, he is bound to lose all his possessions in death. It is certainly futile to concentrate all one's efforts on gaining riches that must be left behind for others. The situation is aptly described by wise King Solomon in these words: "Just as one has come forth from his mother's belly, naked will one go away again, just as one came; and nothing at all can one carry away for his hard work, which he can take along with his hand." Thus the wise man had good reason to conclude: "This too is a grave calamity: exactly as one has come, so one will go away; and what profit is there to the one who keeps working hard for the wind?"—Eccl. 5:15, 16.

Besides, those consumed with the desire to be rich often suffer from sicknesses induced by such destructive emotions as anxiety, fear and jealousy. Solomon, a keen observer of life in ancient times, accurately pointed out: "All his days he eats in darkness itself, with a great deal of vexation, with sickness on his part," evidently including digestive troubles. (Eccl. 5:17) Modern medical research has amply confirmed the very harmful effect that

negative emotions can have on a person's physical health. Is poor health not too high a price to pay for material wealth?

Unbridled desire for more material comfort and possessions can also ruin a person's happiness. For example, many people work overtime or take on more than one job in order to buy luxuries, only to find that they are too tired or too busy to enjoy such things when they get them. Others buy luxuries or go on expensive trips on credit, thus getting into debt and coming under a heavy financial burden. Many have been forced to declare bankruptcy because of their inability to meet such financial obligations, bringing much pain and shame on themselves and their families. If these people had been content with life's necessities, would they have brought such heartache and distress on themselves and their loved ones?

TRUE HAPPINESS AND CONTENTMENT

By his superior wisdom, man's Creator knows the course that leads to genuine contentment and happiness. Through the Christian apostle Paul, he lovingly counsels: "To be sure, it is a means of great gain, this godly devotion along with self-sufficiency. . . . So, having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things." (1 Tim. 6:6-8) A person who is content with the necessities of life is not driven to increase his possessions by greed or ambition. He is spared much anxiety and the unhappiness bred by discontent. Satisfied with what he has, he is able to devote his time and energy to things that are more important and rewarding than material riches.

To be *truly* happy, we need a good relationship with God. This is possible only by having an accurate knowledge of the Creator and by serving him wholeheartedly. But some may ask: 'Why must a person be devoted to God in order to be happy? Are there not many people in the

world who are not at all religiously inclined and yet who seem to enjoy their material prosperity and the finer things in life?" True, but we must remember that genuine happiness is deeper than just pleasure or the momentary enjoyment of something. It involves a deep sense of well-being and inner peace. A man may get pleasure from his possessions. But, in view of the uncertainty of life, how can he be sure that he will have the same enjoyment tomorrow? Even though he may feel that he is happy, can something that rests on a very transient basis be considered true happiness?

The Bible describes persons who consider themselves happy because of their material prosperity. They are depicted as saying: "Our garners full, furnishing products of one sort after another, our flocks multiplying by thousands, ten thousand to one, in our streets, our cattle loaded down, without any rupture and with no abortion, and with no outcry in our public squares. Happy is the people for whom it is just like that!" However, the Bible then points to a superior happiness: "Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!"—Ps. 144: 13-15.

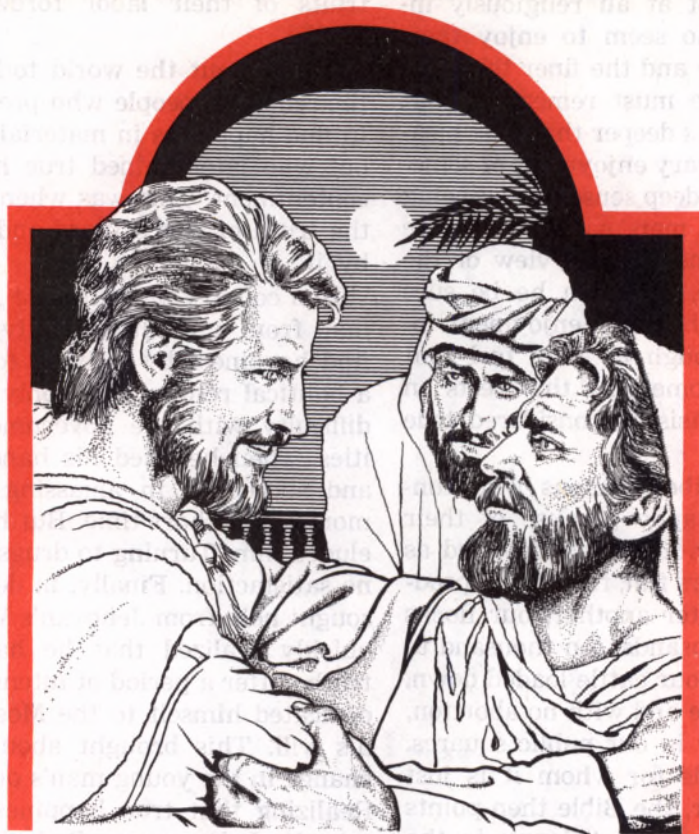
A person who is devoted to God and enjoys a close relationship with his Creator has a deep sense of security and peace, which is essential to true happiness. The individual knows that no matter what adversity may befall him, he is assured of God's loving care. (Heb. 13:5, 6) Because of being a servant of God, a person also has a purpose in life and a grand hope for the future. He knows that the Most High is going to remove all the hatred and wickedness that have brought so much pain and sorrow to this earth. The present system will be replaced by righteous rule, under which people "will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance," but will be able to enjoy the

fruits of their labor forever.—Isa. 65: 17-25.

Throughout the world today, there are thousands of people who previously failed to find happiness in materialistic pursuits, but who later gained true happiness and contentment. This was when they learned the truth of God's Word and began living by it.

In a country of Southeast Asia, a young man from a wealthy family had tried to find happiness by striving to bring about a political reform. This only got him into difficulty with the governmental authorities. Then he tried his hand at business and succeeded in amassing considerable money in a short time. But happiness still eluded him. Turning to drugs brought him no satisfaction. Finally, in desperation, he sought help from Jehovah's Witnesses and quickly realized that he had found the truth. After a period of intensive study, he dedicated himself to the Most High to do his will. This brought about a complete change in the young man's outlook on life. Realizing that true happiness can be attained only by serving God wholeheartedly, he became a full-time proclaimer of the good news of God's kingdom. He has since enjoyed many blessings in his new vocation, including a soul-satisfying happiness that he never experienced while engaging in materialistic pursuits.

Yes, real contentment and happiness can be achieved only by seeing material things in true perspective. While they are provided by our loving Creator for our enjoyment, they are by no means the chief source of happiness. In fact, pursuing them without regard for God's will can only lead to loss of happiness. True happiness and contentment come from serving the grand Creator and doing his will. This enables us to derive the fullest enjoyment from God's material creation and the greatest happiness from spiritual things.



HE “LOVED THEM TO THE END”

JOHAN, the apostle, enjoyed a very fine relationship with Jesus. He was the one “whom Jesus used to love,” as referred to in his Gospel. At the final “evening meal,” John reclined next to Jesus, and it was he to whom Jesus, when on the torture stake, gave the special privilege of taking Jesus’ mother, Mary, into his own home and caring for her as if she were his own mother.—John 13:23; 19:25-27; 20:2; 21:20.

This mutual bond between Jesus and John did not arise out of physical attraction. Nor was John a sentimentalist, as some have concluded, though it is true he spoke much about love. Actually, true and sincere Godlike love is a strong, pure quality, closely linked with loyalty. In all his writings, John manifested a strong love and loyalty toward Jesus Christ and Jehovah. Jesus, who “knew what was in man,” greatly appreciated this, and so a

deep attachment was formed between them.—John 2:25.

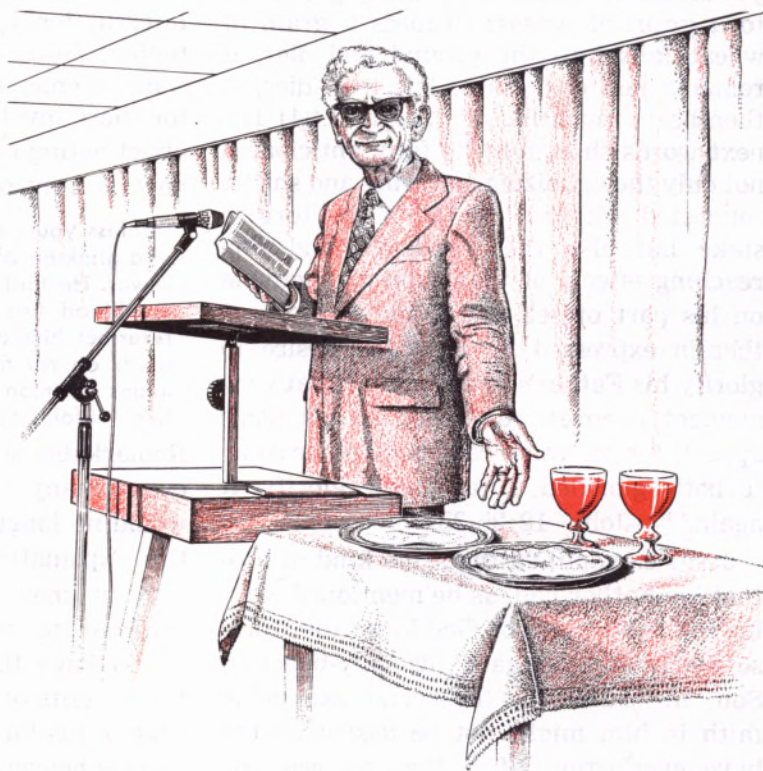
When we think of that last evening that Jesus had with his followers, it is difficult to put ourselves in their position. None of them, not even John, had any clear idea of what was going to happen to Jesus that night. When it came to the point of Jesus' saying, "All of you will be stumbled in connection with me on this night," and Peter's strong rejection of any such thing's happening on his part, still less of his denying his Master, then "all the other disciples also said the same thing." (Matt. 16: 21-23; 26:31-35) What a tremendous shock it must have been when things turned out exactly as had been predicted! To them, that evening meal had started as one more memorializing of the original Passover supper. To Jesus, however, it had the greatest possible significance, as shown by all that Jesus told his disciples and expressed in prayer to his Father, especially when, "after he had the evening meal," he instituted the memorial of his own death. We can learn much about this by reading chapters 13 to 17 of John's Gospel.

That detailed account was written about 65 years after those events had taken place, and this surely verifies Jesus' words respecting the operation of "the helper, the holy spirit": "That one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you." (John 14:26) Yes, the beloved John had become well taught, and we can imagine his depth of

feeling and appreciation when he wrote concerning Jesus:

"Now, because he knew before the festival of the passover that his hour had come for him to move out of this world to the Father, Jesus, having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end."—John 13:1.

John must have often reflected on the wonders of that unfailing loyal love shown by Jesus, conveying a wealth of undeserved kindness. Those disciples had been so sure of themselves; yet they were weak and



failed when the test came. Not that they were bad at heart. It was just human weakness, of which Satan took advantage, but only for the time being.—Luke 22:32.

"KEEP DOING THIS"—WHY?

We are now approaching the anniversary of Jesus' death on Nisan 14, 33 C.E.,

and another celebration of the "Lord's evening meal." This will be observed on Monday, March 31, 1980, after sundown, in all congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses. So, what thoughts are uppermost in our minds? Why did Jesus, after first passing the loaf and then the cup to his disciples, repeat the words: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me"?—1 Cor. 11:20, 23-26.

That Jesus himself knew what all of this meant is shown by what he said a few days earlier, when he gave this simple, yet forceful, illustration, likening himself to a grain of wheat: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains just one grain; but if it dies, it then bears much fruit." (John 12:24) His next words show that he fully anticipated not only the agonizing suffering and shame connected with his death on the torture stake but also the wonderful and far-reaching effects of that supreme example on his part of self-sacrificing love. Jesus therein expressed his heartfelt desire to glorify his Father's name, and at that very moment Jehovah responded to his Son's appeal, for "a voice came out of heaven: 'I both glorified it and will glorify it again.'"—John 12:25-33.

Jesus exemplified the same kind of love that his Father had, as he mentioned early in his ministry: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." Yes, he was the "man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all." He 'tasted death for every man.' (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4-6; Heb. 2:9) He actually took the sinner's place, as vividly described at Isaiah 53:4-7, 10, and the apostle Paul, at Philippians 2:5-11, confirms how that sacrificial "death on a torture stake" worked

out gloriously for mankind. It would be good for all of us to read these passages in full, and to ponder over them, as the Memorial season approaches.

Besides the far-reaching effects just discussed, there were some important immediate effects that Jesus had especially in mind when instituting the memorial of his death. It is true that on one occasion he spoke of himself as "the living bread that came down from heaven," and then said: "For a fact, the bread that I shall give is my flesh in behalf of the life of the world." (John 6:51) However, after an interruption by some Jews who were listening, Jesus continued to speak on the same theme, with a deeper significance for those involved. He had already spoken about eating of this symbolic "bread," but now he went on to say:

"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourselves. He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life, and I shall resurrect him at the last day . . . He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in union with me, and I in union with him." (John 6:53-56)

Remarkable words these! They stumbled even "many of his disciples . . . [who] would no longer walk with him." What is the explanation?—John 6:60-66.

Jesus knew that the world of mankind, referred to in the previous scriptures, would have the opportunity of receiving the benefits of the ransom sacrifice at the time of his kingdom, when there would be "a new heaven and a new earth" and even 'death would be no more.' (Rev. 21:1-4; Luke 23:42, 43) But he also knew that it was his Father's good pleasure for some of earth's sin-stricken human family to share with him in his heavenly throne as kings and priests with him. (Luke 22:28-30; Rev. 3:21; 20:6) He knew that while he, "who is Christ," was primarily Abraham's

seed, yet these others of the Christian congregation "in union with Christ Jesus," making up the spiritual "Israel of God," would also be "really Abraham's seed, heirs with reference to a promise." (Gal. 3:16, 28, 29; 6:16) This was indeed an expression of "undeserved kindness upon undeserved kindness."—John 1:16.

The 11 faithful apostles with Jesus that night, Nisan 14, were the first to be invited to eat of that loaf of unleavened bread and drink of that cup of wine, which, as Jesus said, represented his sinless flesh and his lifeblood. (1 Cor. 11:23-26) Others would follow who, as Jesus said, would be "putting faith in me through their word." (John 17:20) In connection with these believers, notice the frequent repetition of the words "in union with" that are used only with reference to Jehovah and Christ Jesus and those of the anointed Christian congregation, as shown at John 6:56; 10:38; 14:10, 11, 20; 15:4-7; 17:21-23, 26. *An American Translation* uses both the phrase "in union with" and the phrase "united to (with) me."

The members of this congregation are dealt with in a special way, though not because of any merit on their part. (Eph. 2:5; 1 John 2:2) They are begotten by God's spirit to a heavenly hope, the hope of sharing with Christ in his heavenly resurrection, provided that they first prove faithful, as Paul said, in "sharing in his sufferings, submitting . . . to a *death like his*," a sacrificial death, giving up all hope of life on a paradise earth. (Phil. 3:10) This sacrificial course commences from the time when one is chosen by God as a member of that Christian congregation, making up "Christ's body," as explained at Matthew 16:24 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. These members are brought into the "new covenant," validated by Christ's shed blood, and share in its ministry.—1 Cor. 11:25; 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:1-7.

There are still some on earth who are "in union with Christ Jesus" and have the witness of God's spirit of being 'God's spirit-begotten children' and "joint heirs with Christ." (Rom. 8:1, 14-17) They will have these precious truths very much in mind when they come together for the "Lord's evening meal." However, the great majority of Jehovah's Witnesses who will meet that night do not have that heavenly hope. They know they are not of the "little flock," but identify themselves with the "great crowd" of "other sheep" that Jesus spoke about. (Luke 12:32; John 10:16; Rev. 7:9) They, too, exercise faith in the shed blood of Jesus. (Rev. 7:14) They have the hope of 'inheriting the Kingdom,' in that they will enjoy its blessings of everlasting life on earth, as Jesus promised at Matthew 25:31-40. They also enjoy the close association with Christ's "brothers," mentioned in that illustration. Compared with the spiritual Israelites, as "foreigners" they greatly appreciate the privilege and responsibility of sharing with them in producing Kingdom fruits. (Isa. 56:6, 7; 61:5; Matt. 21:43) Some have even died because of their faithful stand for the truth and their fearless proclamation of the Kingdom message. However, though they may die a martyr's death, they do not die a sacrificial death like Jesus and those who are "joint heirs with Christ" in the heavenly kingdom. Realizing this distinction, they do not partake of the emblems of unleavened bread and the cup of wine that signify not only receiving the benefits of Christ's death but a sharing with him in the same sacrificial course.

SELF-EXAMINATION

Though the great majority of those today who make up the "one flock, [under the] one shepherd" appreciate this distinction, the question might arise with some as to how a person knows if he has been in-

vited to the heavenly calling. This can no longer be determined by any external evidence as when the miraculous gifts of the spirit were given in the early days of the Christian congregation. Of even greater value than those gifts was the glorious hope of gaining the heavenly inheritance given to those who were "called children of God" and were "partakers of the heavenly calling." (Heb. 3:1; 1 John 3:1-3) There was then only the one hope, but today, when that part of God's "administration" is about complete, the gates of the Kingdom are swinging wide open with an invitation for a "great crowd" to gain earthly blessings, as already mentioned. Especially has this been true from 1935 onward, when the "great crowd" was clearly identified as an earthly class with hope of endless life in a paradise earth.—Eph. 1:10; Rev. 7:9-17.

Is it left to the individual to choose as to which hope he will entertain, whether heavenly or earthly? No. Before any personal hope can be entertained, the step of unqualified dedication and baptism must be taken by the person's agreeing henceforth to do God's will, not his own will. God causes His will to be done by the operation of his holy spirit. How that spirit operates with those chosen by God as prospective members of the "little flock," quickening within them a heavenly hope, is explained at Romans 8:14-17. Those Christians had unmistakable evidence *within themselves* that they had been called to the heavenly kingdom.

Do those dedicated servants accepted by God as members of the "great crowd" also receive God's spirit? Definitely yes, similar to those faithful servants of God in pre-Christian times, such as Moses and John the Baptizer, who had no heavenly hope. (Matt. 11:11) God is dealing with each and every one of his dedicated servants today, cultivating in them a hope

of life in his kingdom. Paul told those early Christians that they were being "saved in this hope," the heavenly one. He also spoke of the hope for "creation," the rest of the human family, who were "waiting for the revealing of the sons of God" with the prospect of themselves enjoying "the glorious freedom of the children of God" as his restored earthly children.—Rom. 8:18-25.

So each one has to be saved in a certain hope. It should be an absorbing hope and should be very real to you. If, after an honest examination, you feel there is any degree of uncertainty, or if you recognize it was strong emotional feelings that led you to conclude that you had received the heavenly calling, or perhaps that such a calling in some way set you apart as distinct and somewhat superior to the others, entitling you to special treatment and respect, then you have good cause to re-evaluate your position. In sincerity and humility, do not hesitate to ask God for wisdom and guidance and for help to do his will. He will not reproach you. "God is dealing with you as with sons," whom he loves.—1 Cor. 11:28; Heb. 12:4-11; Jas. 1:5-8.

All true sheeplike ones who attend the "Lord's evening meal," whether as observers or partakers, delight to be present "in remembrance" of all that Jesus did in proving his loyal love for his Father, also for everyone exercising faith in him. As Jesus "loved them to the end," may we show the same spirit of endurance and loyalty to the end. John spoke of Jesus' followers as being "in the world." For our encouragement, Jesus agreed with this, and added: "In the world you are having tribulation, but take courage! I have conquered the world." (John 13:1; 16:33) So may all of us, as Paul exhorted, daily "keep the festival . . . with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth."—1 Cor. 5:8.

The reader will find it beneficial to read
Jeremiah chapters 40 to 49 before
examining this and the following article.

"Cursed be the one that is carrying out the mission of Jehovah neglectfully; and cursed be the one that is holding back his sword from blood."

—Jer. 48:10.

"ORGANIZED Religion of the world has fallen!" Such words we may expect haters of all popular religion to shout out jubilantly, when organized religion of today goes down in violent destruction. In which way will the survivors of that almost unbelievable event go? What will there be for them to turn to then? We ask these questions in all seriousness.

² In unbelief some who have stuck to a form of popular religion till now may ask, 'Will the Creator of heaven and earth permit such a thing?' This question is like that raised about 2,625 years ago because of a Jew of the priestly line, the young prophet Jeremiah of the city of Anathoth in the Middle East. He appeared to be prophesying against the religion practiced by his own people at that time. According to

1. What problem will the destruction of Organized Religion pose for the survivors?

2. What question was raised because of Jeremiah's prophesying, and after nearly 40 years of such prophesying, where did he find himself?

AFTER DESTRUCTION OF ORGANIZED RELIGION, WHICH WAY?

Jeremiah, their temple, the only one allowed by religious law, was to be burned down. Their temple city, Jerusalem, was to be reduced to a rubbish heap. The practicers of the popular form of religion were to be carried off into exile in the land of their conquerors, to stay there for 70 years. Jeremiah's prophesying of such calamities roused strong protest. Near the end of 40 years of such prophesying Jeremiah found himself imprisoned in Jerusalem, under the reign of the last king of the royal family of David to sit on the throne, Zedekiah.

³ The God whose name was called upon the temple of Jerusalem did permit such a religious disaster to occur. In fact, Jerusalem got the message of such doom right from this God himself, Jehovah. What? Was he going to destroy his own religion, the worship of him as the true God? Not at all! He simply purposed to destroy the polluted, distorted form of his worship then being carried on in the temple that bore his name, to the disgrace of that sacred name. Jehovah's word through Jeremiah's mouth won out!

3. By permitting such a religious calamity, was Jehovah destroying his own worship, or what?

Those stubbornly objecting to it lost out. In the summer month of Ab, the fifth month of their calendar year, from the seventh through the 10th day of that month, the temple was torn down, and the battered, famine-stricken city of Jerusalem was wiped out. Prior to this the king, Zedekiah, was captured in flight and the emaciated thousands of Jewish survivors were marched off as prisoners, headed for wearisome exile in Babylon, now the mistress of the world.

⁴ Well, now, is all such ancient history of real concern to us today? Yes! For what reason? For the reason that it was prophetic, and so it needed to be recorded and preserved on the pages of the Sacred Bible in many living languages down to our day. A deep student of that ancient history, a Jew whose people were directly tied in with that tearful history, stressed the importance of such ancient history by writing these words in the first century of our Common Era: "Now these things went on befalling them as examples, and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived."—1 Cor. 10:11.

⁵ Those portentous words were what the Christian apostle Paul wrote, about 15 years before the rebuilt city of Jerusalem was destroyed, together with its temple, in 70 C.E., that time by Roman legions. There will be no third time for such a thing to occur, for no Jewish temple crowns the Jerusalem of today. Now three great religions claim an interest in that historical city, that of Christendom, that of Islam and that of Jewry.

⁶ There are religions that are older than that of Christendom. And yet, according to

what Jeremiah of the first Jerusalem indicated, Christendom will be the first section of Organized Religion to be destroyed. Ah, yes, Jerusalem was prophetically pictorial of Christendom, for she claims to practice the religion that was started in the second Jerusalem in 33 C.E. After this modern counterpart of the doomed Jerusalem of Jeremiah's day is wiped out, then in which way will any surviving adherents of her go? Over to any surviving non-Christian religions? Their doing so would mean their taking refuge in other parts of what is destined to eternal destruction, namely, Organized Religion.

⁷ Let us note how this was portrayed after the first Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E., in Jeremiah's day. Some of the poor Jews of the land were allowed to stay behind in the conquered land of Judah under Gedaliah, whom the victorious King Nebuchadnezzar had appointed to be governor over the land. That took place in the fifth lunar month (Ab) of 607 B.C.E. Jeremiah and his secretary Baruch had been spared alive, and the Babylonian army commander granted Jeremiah his choice of remaining behind with the poor of the land under Governor Gedaliah. What now? The season for the autumnal harvest in the seventh month (Ethanim, or Tishri) was drawing near. Thus the appointed time for celebrating the festival of ingathering, or of booths, for seven days (Tishri 15-21) was approaching. But, alas! there was no temple of Jerusalem at which to celebrate the feast with rejoicing.—Deut. 16:13-16.

⁸ Except for a detachment of occupation troops, the Babylonian army had left the land, dragging with it many surviving Jews as captives. So Jewish fugitives began filtering back from neighboring lands roundabout into the land of Judah. Were they re-

4. Is all such ancient history of importance and concern to us today?

5. Before what religious calamity did Paul write 1 Corinthians 10:11, and why will there not be a repeating of such a thing?

6. What will be the first part of Organized Religion to be wiped out, and then what will going over to other parts of Organized Religion mean?

7. After Jerusalem's fall, where did the Babylonians allow Jeremiah and his secretary to live, and what festival was then approaching?

8. Did fugitive Jews come back to Judah in order to celebrate the festival of ingathering?

turning to their homeland in order to obey their Lawgiver, Jehovah, by celebrating the festival of booths, or of ingathering, even without Jerusalem and its temple? As matters turned out, they did not do so.

⁹ In which way did the returnees and the poor of the land go? They were not obliged to leave the land. But Jeremiah had foretold 70 years of utter desolation of the land, without man and domestic animal, as due to befall the land. Still Jeremiah told the occupants of the land to stay there in peace, with nothing to fear from the departed Babylonians. Their governor, Gedaliah, was a Jew like themselves, only now subject to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Thus Jehovah their God was not forcing them out of their God-given land, even though he had inspired Jeremiah to predict 70 years of total desolation of the land of Judah.

AN ASSASSIN STRIKES!

¹⁰ What a deplorable religious condition confronted those "poor of the land" who were left in the territory of Judah! No temple in Jerusalem toward which to pray to Jehovah! With the exception of Jeremiah, no priest, no Levite! No altar on which to have their sacrifices offered up! Yes, and no golden "ark of the covenant" surmounted by two angel images, toward which the high priest could sprinkle the blood of Atonement Day sacrifices on Tishri 10. It had vanished to a location no human knows to this day!—Hos. 3:4.

¹¹ Here there stepped upon the stage of action a villain! He appeared in the person of Ishmael the son of Nethaniah. Likely King Baalis of the Ammonites to whom Ishmael had fled from before the Babylonians felt Ishmael a good one to hire to

assassinate Gedaliah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar appointed to be the provincial governor of Judah. Why so? Because Ishmael was "of the royal offspring." So through Eliakim, his grandfather, Ishmael had royal connections and was one of the "principal men of the king." (Jer. 41:1) Hence, this official associate of deposed King Zedekiah could resent it that Gedaliah was made governor despite his not being "of the royal offspring." So Ammonite King Baalis, who had rejoiced at Jerusalem's destruction, made Ishmael his tool in putting Gedaliah out of the way.—Ps. 83:7, 8; Jer. 40:14.

¹² Despite the warning of Johanan the son of Kareah, Gedaliah hosted Ishmael and his 10 associates at a meal in the new governmental city of Mizpah, some miles north of the ruins of Jerusalem. Though some Babylonian soldiers were present, Ishmael and his band took by surprise all those at the meal and nearby and foully murdered them all. (Jer. 41:2, 3) Still others fell victim to Ishmael and his treacherous band. This occurred in the seventh lunar month, Tishri, the month that was usually marked by the celebration of the booths for seven days. The people of Mizpah now inclined to follow this usurper of power as his captives. However, when Johanan the son of Kareah put in appearance and opposed Ishmael, then Ishmael and eight of his men made their escape to the land of Ammon, which had not yet been subjected by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.—Jer. 41:10-15; 49:1-5.

¹³ Because of what had happened to the provisional government set up by the Babylonians, Johanan and the people felt that they had reason to fear the new world power, the Babylonian Empire, which Jehovah God was using as his executioner in

9. Why was there a question as to which way the returnees and the poor of the land of Judah would go?

10. Why was the religious condition that confronted the "poor of the land" there in the land of Judah a deplorable one?

11. Why did Ammonite King Baalis consider Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to be a good tool in putting Gedaliah, the Jewish governor, out of the way?

12. How did Ishmael carry out his foul play, and yet why was he finally obliged to flee?

13. At the request of Johanan and his followers, what message did Jehovah inspire Jeremiah to give to them? With what reaction?

the Middle East. In which way were they now to go? Formally Johanan and his chiefs approach Jeremiah, who had been accurate in prophesying Jerusalem's ruin. They promised that, whether Jehovah's message by Jeremiah turned out to be to their liking or not, they would follow it. Ten days after their consulting Jeremiah Jehovah's message came through him. They should not yield to fear, but should remain in the land in subjection to Babylon. But if they faithlessly moved south into Egypt, they would there be overtaken by the victorious sword of the king of Babylon, and by famine and by pestilence. Except for a small remnant, they would perish in the doomed land of Egypt. They would not return in peace to the province of Judah after the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire. Did Johanan and his followers heed this divine message? No, indeed! They branded it a falsehood. They called Jeremiah a liar.—Jer. 42:1-43:3.

¹⁴ Yet who was the liar, if not each one of them, for they had vowed to follow the message imparted to them by Jeremiah even if it was not to their liking? They were already on their way southward to Egypt, and now they were determined to keep pushing ahead until they got into the land of the Nile. They did not want to submit to domination by the Third World Power, that of Babylon. Formerly Egypt had been their ally against the expanding world power of Babylon. So now that the land of Judah had come under Babylon's domination, they were determined that no one should be left in the land to offer submission to Babylon. The advocates of submission to Babylon, namely, Jeremiah and his secretary Baruch, were not to be left behind. So they dragged these servants of Jehovah with them. Without their aiming

to time it that way, but just about the time when the land of Judah should be celebrating the festival of ingathering, or of booths, with rejoicing, on Tishri 15-21, 607 B.C.E., those rebels against Jehovah's will left the land just as he had foretold, desolate of resident man and domestic animal.—Jer. 43:4-7.

¹⁵ Never can the will of Almighty God be successfully blocked. Never can his word of prophecy be proved inaccurate. With the exit of the insubordinate Jews from the land of Judah, the foretold 70 years of desolation of the land without resident Israelite and domesticated beast started off. Then, also, the symbolic "seven times" about which Jehovah caused King Nebuchadnezzar to dream and the prophet Daniel to offer an explanation began to run their course of 2,520 years. (Dan. 4:13-27; Luke 21:24) So it was not accidental that World War I erupted upon a peaceful world, to mark the end of those "seven times" in the lunar month of Tishri in 1914 C.E. Truly, then, events of Jeremiah's day did have a tie-in with our times. The meaning of those events is of deep concern to us now!

¹⁶ After the religion as organized by the Law-defying Jews at Jerusalem fell in 607 B.C.E., did those Jews who fled into Egypt avoid what they detested? Did they choose the best way, the right way? Hardly so, if they became a horrifying spectacle of what happens to religious people who refuse to obey Jehovah's Word. Jeremiah, although forced to reside in Egypt, did not stop his prophesying down there. Jehovah's spirit continued to move Jeremiah to prophesy, yes, to the unbelieving Jewish refugees and against their chosen land of residence. His

15. How did those events of Jeremiah's day tie in with the affairs of our own day and prove of concern to us?

16. Why did the fleeing of those unbelieving Jews down to Egypt not turn out to be the right way, and for what does the course of those Jews cause us to look ahead?

14. Who proved to be the ones not holding to their word, and why did the festival of ingathering not get to be celebrated in 607 B.C.E.?

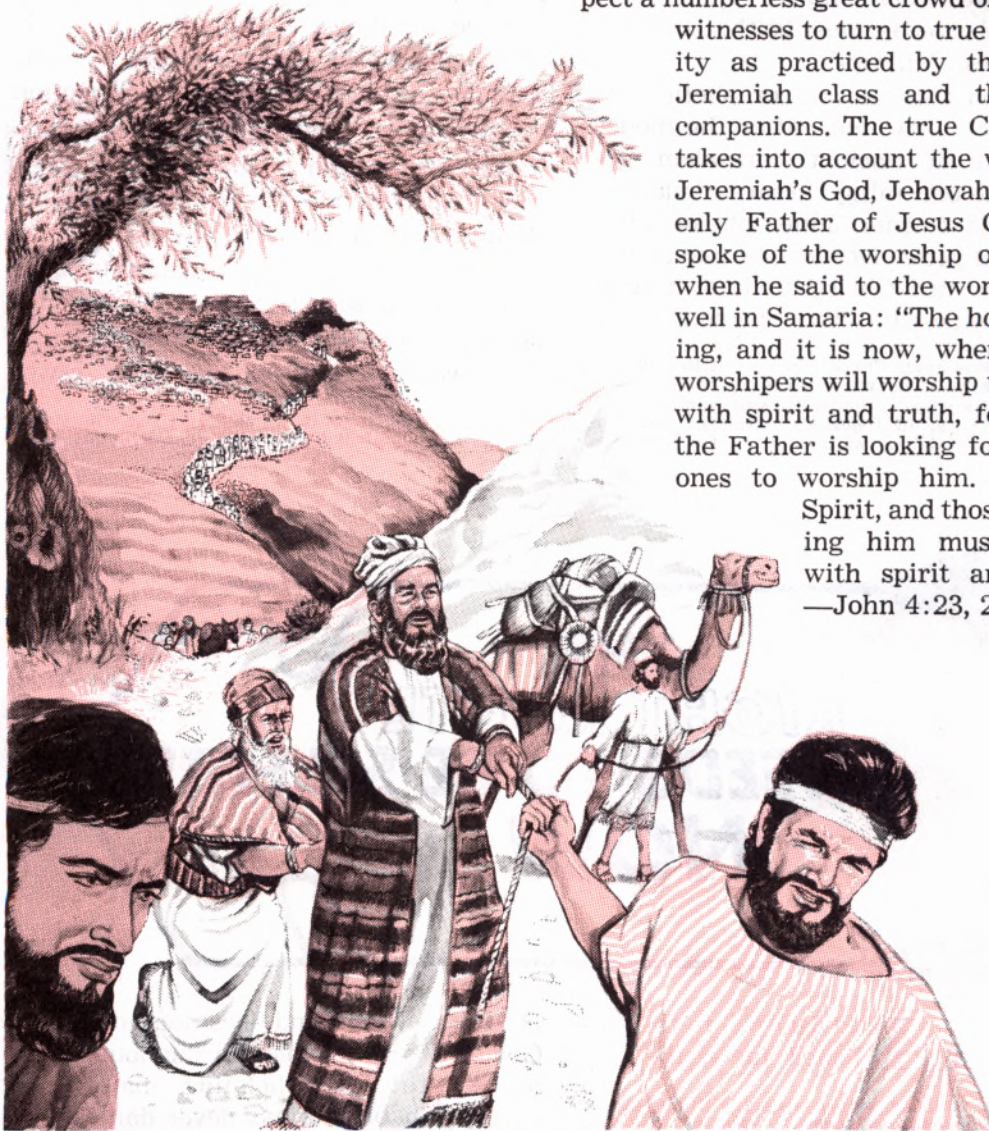
inspired writings survive till this critical time. They serve as a warning to the modern counterparts of those rebellious Jews of Jeremiah's day. In view of this, what may we expect in the days just ahead?

¹⁷ We are to expect the destruction of the most influential section of Organized

17. What action may we not expect on the part of surviving eyewitnesses of Christendom's destruction, and why not?

Religion, namely, Christendom with all its babel of religious sects and denominations. This will occur at Jehovah's unchangeable time. Therefore, the question is, When that does occur, then to which course will all witnesses of that astonishing occurrence commit themselves? According to the pattern set in 607 B.C.E. by Ishmael and Johanan and their followers who refused to heed Jehovah's counsel, we may not expect a numberless great crowd of such eye-

witnesses to turn to true Christianity as practiced by the modern Jeremiah class and their loyal companions. The true Christianity takes into account the worship of Jeremiah's God, Jehovah, the heavenly Father of Jesus Christ. He spoke of the worship of Jehovah when he said to the woman at the well in Samaria: "The hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him. God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth."
—John 4:23, 24.



Let us not be like the law-defying Jews of Jeremiah's time

¹⁸ Even a Christian cannot brush aside the worship of Jehovah as God. In Revelation 1:5 the Son of God called himself "Jesus Christ, 'The Faithful Witness.'" When on earth as a man he was a Jew, an Israelite, to whose nation the words of Isaiah 43:10 were written: "'You are my witnesses,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'even my servant whom I have chosen.'" Jesus demonstrated that he was a faithful and true witness of Jehovah God. His genuine disciples today must be the same kind of witnesses, Jehovah's.

¹⁹ We can refer to no prophetic Bible scriptures to show that, after the modern counterpart of ancient Jerusalem goes down in the oncoming "great tribulation," unnumbered former adherents of Christendom will get converted and line up with those persecuted Christians known as Jehovah's Witnesses. Many persons might

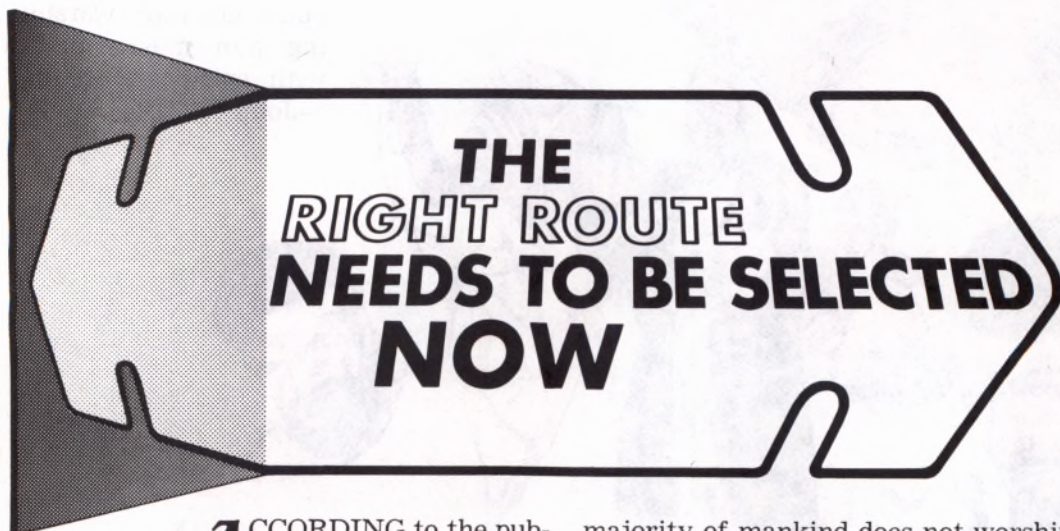
18. Of whom was Jesus Christ when on earth a witness, and who now must be witnesses like him?

19. After Christendom's downfall, will surviving eye-witnesses flock over to Jehovah's Witnesses, and what hope do other religious systems offer for survivors?

wail over what advantages they have lost due to the fiery destruction of materialistic Christendom, like those merchantmen whom Revelation, chapter 18, pictures as wailing over the burning down of Babylon the Great. They had lost self-enriching business with her. Possibly some religiously minded persons might flock to whatever non-Christian religions outlive Christendom for a short while. Such will just be going into another religious system that is doomed, for they all belong to Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. All parts of her are slated for destruction!

²⁰ Where or in which way will survivors of the destruction of Babylon the Great then go? What do the inspired prophetic Scriptures indicate? Will they go, can they go, to the side of those pictured by Jeremiah and his secretary Baruch? The prophetic events during the final days of those worshipers of Jehovah give answer.

20. How can we know in which way those who survive the destruction of Babylon the Great will go?



ACCORDING to the published facts, the vast

1, 2. (a) What kind of world does the Bible predict there will be shortly as regards worship? (b) Why is now the urgent time to make a decision as to one's course?

majority of mankind does not worship the God of the Holy Bible. Throughout all past history the overwhelming majority of earth's inhabitants has never done so. Organized Religion of Christendom claims to

do so. A few other religious systems may also claim to do so by at least holding to part of the Bible. But when all those professing a religion are destroyed or pressured into giving up their form of worship, will it make much of a difference? Or what kind of world will this be? It will be the kind of world that the Bible predicts will shortly arrive, an unreligious world of brief existence.

² However, it will more openly than ever worship "the god of this system of things," and the Bible that identifies this "god" says that he is Jehovah's great adversary, Satan the Devil. (2 Cor. 4:4) Jesus Christ called him the "prince" or "ruler of this world." (John 12:31; 16:11) When, before long, the whole world is forced over to the worship of this counterfeit "god," what will a person who is now appalled at such an idea do? What will he have the religious strength to do? Advisedly, now is the urgent time to make a decision!

³ Joel 3:14 foretells: "Crowds, crowds are in the low plain of the decision, for the day of Jehovah is near in the low plain of decision." *The Living Bible* has a fuller reading of Joel 3:14 and says: "Multitudes, multitudes waiting in the valley for the verdict of their doom! For the Day of the Lord is near, in the Valley of Judgment." *The Bible in Living English*, by Byington, calls it "Decision Vale." The prophet Joel completed his book about 820 B.C.E. This was more than 200 years before Jehovah executed his "decision" typically upon the nations of that ancient time.

⁴ Jehovah set us a good example. He made his decision in advance and publicly declared it. We today, in a time no less critical, each need to make a personal decision ahead of the coming world catastrophe. To have the idea that at that time a

person can suddenly reverse the course persisted in and make the right decision and thus escape sharing in the calamity is a dangerous self-deception. An exemplary man who acted right 18 years in advance of the international calamity about which he was advised in 625 B.C.E. was Baruch the son of Neriah. 625 B.C.E. was the fourth year of the reign of the third last king of doomed Jerusalem. His name was Jehoiakim the son of Josiah. He came to the throne in 628 B.C.E., after his younger brother, Jehoahaz, was dethroned by Pharaoh Nechoh of Egypt and taken down to Egypt.

⁵ After Jehoiakim had reigned for three years in subjection to Egypt, the prophet-priest Jeremiah received a message from Jehovah for his secretary, Baruch the son of Neriah. It was now the fourth year for King Jehoiakim. That was a critical year, for in that year (625 B.C.E.) Nebuchadnezzar the son of Nabopolassar became king of Babylon. The king of Jerusalem would now have to reckon with the ruler of the Third World Power, Babylon, the conqueror of the Assyrian Empire. Here let us read Jeremiah 45:1-3:

⁶ "The word that Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah when he wrote in a book these words from the mouth of Jeremiah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, saying: 'This is what Jehovah the God of Israel has said concerning you, O Baruch, "You have said: '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.' " " "

⁷ How long before this Baruch had served as Jeremiah's secretary we do not know, but he still had at least 18 years more in which to be the prophet's companion.

3. How long ahead of time did Jehovah make his decision before executing it upon the nations?

4. (a) In this regard, how did Jehovah set us a good example? (b) How did Baruch the son of Neriah set us a good example?

5, 6. (a) Why was it a critical year when Jehovah's word came through Jeremiah for Baruch? (b) According to Jeremiah 45:1-3, how was Baruch then feeling?

7. How may Baruch have felt at seeing the worsening condition of Jerusalem, and what effect may Jeremiah's repeated messages of doom have had upon Baruch?

What "pain" he may have felt at seeing the worsening condition of the kingdom of Judah, we cannot find out; but now, besides that, he had to record the grievous message of doom as dictated by Jeremiah. He would feel like Jeremiah when this prophet wrote the book "Lamentations"



God's "day of vengeance" is not the time to seek "great things" for oneself

after Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. by the king of Babylon. Jeremiah's persistent, repeated prophesying of doom may have wearied Baruch.

⁸ Baruch had no prospect of a "resting-place" for himself. Jehovah noted the inward inclination of Baruch and told Jeremiah to say to him: "This is what Jehovah has said: '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.'" —Jer. 45:4, 5.

8. To Baruch, what did Jehovah now disclose to be his purpose, but what was Baruch seeking for himself?

⁹ Baruch knew what "great things" he was seeking for himself, although Jehovah did not state them to him. Evidently Jehovah did not approve of them, and so he should stop seeking them. Why?

¹⁰ It was because of Jehovah's immediate purpose. In that very year he had raised up Nebuchadnezzar as king of Babylon, and this was the one whom he purposed to use as his executioner against Baruch's people. Particularly from the days of King David (1077-1037 B.C.E.), Jehovah had built up the kingdom of Israel, but now, by means of Nebuchadnezzar, he was about to tear down that royal government, to continue out of action for 2,520 years, or until 1914 of our own century. Back in 1473 B.C.E., Jehovah had planted the nation of Israel in the Promised Land, but now, after more than 800 years, he was about to uproot it. For 70

years the land of the kingdom of Judah was to lie empty of Jew and domestic animal, while its people were in exile in the land of Nebuchadnezzar. In view of such impending things, was it the appropriate time for a man who knew of Jehovah's purpose as proclaimed by Jeremiah to be seeking "great things" of a personal kind for himself? Not at all!

¹¹ That is why Jehovah told him to stop seeking such things. What if Baruch kept on seeking selfish things? Could he then

9, 10. Why did Jehovah have reason to disapprove of Baruch's seeking "great things" for himself at that time?

11. What depended upon Baruch's making the right decision, and that now?

have any heart harmony with the message that he was being used to write down and to proclaim? No! Some sort of break between him and Jehovah's prophet Jeremiah would certainly follow. If Baruch wanted to keep in heart harmony with Jeremiah and his message, then he would have to **stifle selfish ambition**. There were 18 years yet to pass till the foretold calamity, and yet it was now necessary for Baruch to make a decision. His very life, his "soul," depended upon his making the right decision, yes, sticking to it. This he had to do if he wanted to keep his ties unbroken.

¹² How like Baruch's critical situation is that of us informed persons of today! Particularly so from the year 1914 onward, for since then Jehovah's Witnesses have preached that Christendom, the modern antitype of unfaithful Jerusalem, would be destroyed by one greater than Nebuchadnezzar, the now reigning heavenly King, Jesus Christ. So it would be most inadvisable for anyone in covenant relationship with God to be seeking "great things" for himself in this crumbling system of things at such a crucial time as now. It would show a failure to appreciate that we are living in the "time of the end." It would show a lack of faith and confidence in the correctness and timeliness of the message published by the Jeremiah class concerning the doom of this old system of things. A person's life, his "soul," is now at stake! Jehovah is now about to do his work of tearing down and uprooting, by means of an agent mightier than Nebuchadnezzar, Jesus Christ. Do we want to be executed with the modern-time antitype of apostate Jerusalem, Christendom? If not, then we must make our decision while there is yet time, to do what Jehovah told Jeremiah's secretary Baruch to do, and that is to stop seeking "great things" in this world.

12. As in Baruch's case, why is it now advisable for us to stop any seeking of "great things" for ourselves in this world?

¹³ Let us individually live in harmony with the message proclaimed by the Jeremiah class. Let us lay off from selfish ambition, not setting our affections on transitory things of this doomed system of things. This calls for us to share courageously with the Jeremiah class in warn-



**Let us never be neglectful as to
"the mission of Jehovah"**

ing of Jehovah's coming "day of vengeance." A divided heart is not the thing for us to have now.—Isa. 61:1, 2.

¹⁴ What is the reward for doing this? It is set out in what Jeremiah was told to say to Baruch: "'For here I am bringing in a calamity upon all flesh,' is the utterance

13. Now is the time for us to share with the Jeremiah class in doing what?

14, 15. (a) As a reward for obedience, what was Baruch to have as a "spoil" for himself? (b) Did it work out that way?

of Jehovah, 'and I will give you your soul as a spoil in all the places to which you may go.'—Jer. 45:5b.

¹⁵ It really worked out that way for Baruch. This proves that he made the right decision without undue delay. This is verified in an earlier chapter, at Jeremiah 43: 5-7, which tells of what happened after Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. We read: The fearful surviving Jews in their flight from the land of Judah down to Egypt took along "Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah. And they finally came into the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of Jehovah; and they came gradually as far as Tahpanhes," in northern Egypt. Yet after that Jeremiah kept on prophesying to those disobedient Jews.—Jer. 43:8-44:30.

¹⁶ Not for long did those self-willed Jews elude the domination of the Babylonian World Power, for in time Nebuchadnezzar added Egypt to the territory of his empire. If Jeremiah and Baruch survived to witness this takeover by Babylon, they would not become victims of Nebuchadnezzar's wrath. He had reason to remember them kindly. Baruch would continue to have his "soul" as a spoil in vindication of Jehovah's promise at Jeremiah 45:5. Then he could fully appreciate how wise and right-minded he had been in breaking off from the ill-timed course of seeking "great things" for himself.

¹⁷ Can we today draw real benefit from Baruch's obedient submission to Jehovah's corrective counsel? Yes! No matter how closely connected we may be with the Jeremiah class, we do the divinely approved thing by not grasping at "great things" for ourselves during these last days of Christendom. Our "soul," our life, as a person, is of far more value than "great things"

doomed to pass away with this wicked world, stripping everyone down to his bare "soul." To be alive then as a "soul" under divine approval will be surpassingly more precious than now enjoying for a while any perishable things of Christendom and all Organized Religion.

AVOIDING A CURSE FOR NOT USING THE "SWORD"

¹⁸ Baruch and Jeremiah grieved over the destruction of Jerusalem and the depopulating of her land. But pagan nations nearby or roundabout felt extreme pleasure at such a calamity to the covenant people of Jehovah. (Ps. 83:6-8; 137:7) Egypt, of course, was not altogether pleased, for she was glad to have Judah and Jerusalem subject to her and in alliance with her. Besides, the kingdom of Judah had served as a buffer zone between her and the threatening world power, Babylon. Yet Egypt had made a discreditable record for herself with regard to Judah and her capital, Jerusalem, where "Jehovah's throne" had been occupied by kings of David's royal line. The ugly hatred of the nations toward Jehovah's covenant people did not go unnoticed by him, for the worship of him was involved.

¹⁹ So Jehovah's "day of vengeance" was not over when he used the king of Babylon as his instrument to overthrow the kingdom of Judah. The cup of national disaster that had been put to the lips of Judah and Jerusalem deserved to be handed on to those ill-willed nations for them to be overthrown as haters of Jehovah.

²⁰ So Jehovah inspired Jeremiah to round out his prophesying by foretelling the violent overthrow of such evil nations as Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Kedar and even Elam. (Jer. 46:1-49:39;

16. If Baruch survived till the king of Babylon overthrew Egypt, what could he expect from the conqueror?

17. What benefit can we draw from Baruch's obedient action as an illustration of what to do?

18, 19. Why was Jehovah's "day of vengeance" not over with the calamity upon Judah and Jerusalem? 20. (a) What did Jehovah inspire Jeremiah to do with regard to those ill-willed nations? (b) With regard to whom was Jeremiah 48:10 pronounced, and did they prove deserving of the curse?

25:15-33) The Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar were the ones whom Jehovah purposed to use in wielding the "sword" of execution against those nations that defied the true God. It was therefore with regard to those executorial forces that Jehovah inspired Jeremiah to say: "Cursed be the one that is carrying out the mission of Jehovah neglectfully; and cursed be the one that is holding back his sword from blood!" (Jer. 48:10) Neither the Babylonians nor their king Nebuchadnezzar came under that curse for failing to carry out their "mission" from God thoroughly.

²¹ However, what about us today? Could we come under a like curse for neglecting our mission, for holding back with reference to the "sword"? True, we know that neither Jeremiah nor Baruch wielded a metallic sword against those enemy nations. That was not their mission. Such a mission was given to the Babylonians under their newly enthroned emperor, Nebuchadnezzar. The Jeremiah class of today as Jehovah's Witnesses will not lift up a violent hand against Christendom, the anti-type of apostate Jerusalem and her realm. Christendom's onetime political associates and other godless elements will get rid of her without any tenderness, just like the surviving nations that were glad to get rid of Jerusalem and her kingdom as their neighbors.—Rev. 17:12-18.

²² However, what will the wiping out of Christendom and all other parts of the world empire of false religion leave behind on the earthly scene? Unreligious political forces, to take over control of all human affairs! They will do so with high hopes of success and feeling relieved at being no longer dictated to by Organized Religion.

21. (a) Did Jeremiah and Baruch become "cursed" for not using the metallic "sword"? (b) Will Jehovah's Witnesses be the ones to get rid of Christendom, or who will be?

22. Who will not share the high hopes of the overthrowers of all Organized Religion, and what will be the attitude of these to the new ruling powers?

(Compare Ezekiel, chapter 23.) But such God-defying hopes will not be shared by the Jeremiah class and its God-fearing companions, even though these may show relative subjection to the new ruling powers as the new "superior authorities."—Rom. 13:1, 2.

²³ Jehovah's "day of vengeance" will then already have begun, but it will not be over at the destruction of Organized Religion, the world empire of false religion. It must continue on until full divine "vengeance" has been poured out on all opposers of Jehovah's universal sovereignty. But first they will try to make the Jeremiah class and their loyal companions conform unreservedly to the godless system of things, just as Johanan and his followers took Jeremiah and Baruch into custody and forcibly marched them down to Egypt. Failing in this, they will make an all-out attack upon those uncompromising worshipers of Jehovah. Like the international hordes under Gog of the land of Magog, they will try to invade the spiritual paradise of Jehovah's remnant and their inseparable companions. Thus aiming at absolute world control, they will show themselves worthy of having Jehovah's vengeance blaze out against them.—Ezek. 38:1-39:20.

²⁴ Then what? Revelation 19:11-21 shows that Jesus Christ, a conqueror greater than King Nebuchadnezzar, will ride with angelic armies to a counterattack. They will not become cursed because of carrying out their mission from Jehovah neglectfully. They will deserve no curse because of holding back the executorial "sword" from enemy blood. (Jer. 48:10) They will execute Jehovah's vengeance upon the aggressive nations. For doing this they will be blessed with glorious victory, to Jehovah's eternal vindication.

23. What will then cause the remainder of Jehovah's "day of vengeance" to be fulfilled?

24. Who will then counterattack, and will they deservedly be "cursed" for negligence or holding back?

²⁵ Since the year 1914 we have been in "the time of the end." (Dan. 12:4) So now the Jeremiah class and their dedicated companions must call the world's attention to the threatening "sword," the executorial instrument that Jehovah will use during the oncoming "great tribulation." (Matt. 24:21) They must imitate Jeremiah, who, after he was forcibly dragged away from the land of Judah, proclaimed the threatening "sword" of King Nebuchadnezzar against the land to which he was dragged, Egypt, also Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and other enemy lands. Even now before the outbreak of the "great tribulation" they are under divine orders to "proclaim . . . the day of vengeance on the part of our God" against Organized Religion and all worldly nations. (Jer. 46:1-49:39) Their "mission" is to sound out the warning message: "Jehovah has a day of vengeance, a year of retributions for the legal case over Zion."—Isa. 34:8.

²⁶ Now Jesus' prophetic words at Luke 21:22 apply: "These are days for meting out justice, that all the things written may be fulfilled." Now is the time especially for the Jeremiah class to take to heart Jehovah's words to Ezekiel, who began prophesying in Babylon in 613 B.C.E., seven years before Jeremiah was carried off unwillingly down to Egypt:

²⁷ "Now as regards the watchman, in case he sees the sword coming and he actually does not blow the horn and the people itself gets no warning at all and a sword comes and takes away from them soul, for its own error it itself must be taken away, but its blood I shall ask back from the hand of the watchman himself.' Now as regards you, O son of man, a watchman is what I have made you to the

house of Israel, and at my mouth you must hear the word and give them warning from me. When I say to someone wicked, 'O wicked one, you will positively die!' but you actually do not speak out to warn the wicked one from his way, he himself as a wicked one will die in his own error, but his blood I shall ask back at your own hand. But as regards you, in case you actually warn someone wicked from his way for him to turn back from it but he actually does not turn back from his way, he himself will die in his own error, whereas you yourself will certainly deliver your own soul."—Ezek. 33:6-9; compare Ezekiel 9:2-10.

²⁸ The Jeremiah class of today and their cooperative companions have no desire to become bloodguilty in such a way. But that is possible for them. If, out of fear of man, they should hold back from warning all peoples about the "sword" of Jehovah's "day of vengeance" and thus fail in carrying out their "mission," they would make themselves deserving of his curse. For them, this would signify a failure to survive, because of their delinquency.

²⁹ When, in the fast approaching "great tribulation," the "sword" of divine vengeance strikes down all Organized Religion, the people who have not heeded Jehovah's "watchman," the Jeremiah class, will seek refuge with the doomed political elements—this to their sure destruction in the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon. (Rev. 16:14, 16) To avoid going in that way along with them, the right route needs to be selected now while the right route is still open. In it life seekers will never need to change their course.

28. What is the desire of the Jeremiah class and their companions in this regard, but what is possible to occur, and what would this signify for them?

29. To avoid going in the way of the heedless people after Organized Religion is destroyed, what must life seekers now select?

(The concluding article of this series on Jeremiah's prophecy will be published later.)

25. How must Jehovah's Witnesses then imitate Jeremiah after he was dragged down to the land against which he had prophesied?

26, 27. What words of Jehovah to Ezekiel as a watchman must the Jeremiah class now take to heart?

the book of *Ecclesiastes* —a lesson in true values

WHAT is the best way to expend time and energy? Would it be beneficial to make pleasure activities your main goal? Should you strive to accumulate material wealth or to achieve a celebrated reputation? What pursuits in life are of the greatest value?

Fine guidance on this matter can be found in the Bible book of Ecclesiastes. Therein are found "the words of the congregator, the son of David the king in Jerusalem." (Eccl. 1:1, 12) Evidently "the congregator" is King Solomon, who became internationally famous for wisdom. The book of Ecclesiastes contains his counsel both on things that are worthless and on those that are of true value.

"EVERYTHING IS VANITY"

Ecclesiastes begins with these words: "The greatest vanity!" the congregator has said, 'the greatest vanity! Everything is vanity!' What profit does a man have in all his hard work at which he works hard under the sun?" (Eccl. 1:2, 3) The Hebrew word for "vanity" literally means "breath." It indicates something that lacks firmness, stability and permanence. "The greatest vanity" well describes human affairs.

Next the congregator mentions repetitious cycles in nature. Generations of people continually come and go, the sun keeps rising and setting, winds ever circle about and rivers constantly empty into the sea but never fill it. (Eccl. 1:4-7) After reflecting on this, the wise king observed: "All things are wearisome; no one is able to speak of it. The eye is not satisfied at

seeing, neither is the ear filled from hearing. That which has come to be, that is what will come to be; and that which has been done, that is what will be done; and so there is nothing new under the sun." —Eccl. 1:8, 9.

The consideration of all these natural cycles appeared to Solomon as "wearisome." It is, of course, true that the immensity and complexity of these cycles are such that a man could exhaust his entire life and never be able to comprehend the full sum of these. His vocabulary could never adequately describe it all in full detail. But we remember that Solomon is here dealing with the futility that imperfect humans face. So we can also appreciate how wearying it can be to man to contemplate the relentless repetition of these never-ending cycles and then compare this with his own short life-span. For the one lacking divine wisdom, his temporariness and his inability to gain permanence produce a sense of futility and often cause him to search vainly for something different, new—only to find that, in the final analysis, it is the 'same old story.' This too is wearisome.

Knowing this can help us to avoid wasting much time, effort and money trying to find fulfillment and happiness through sensual gratification. The quest for new things and experiences may bring a measure of enjoyment, but it never fully satisfies. And finally all ends up in Sheol, where "there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom," for the dead "are conscious of nothing at all."—Eccl. 9:5, 10.

AN EXPERIMENT WITH LUXURY

King Solomon relates an interesting experiment with luxurious living. He made for himself paradisaic surroundings and investigated every sort of pleasurable activity. (Eccl. 2:3-9) "Anything that my eyes asked for I did not keep away from them," he writes. (Eccl. 2:10a) To some extent the king enjoyed the experiment with luxury. He points out: "I did not hold back my heart from any sort of rejoicing, for my heart was joyful because of all my hard work, and this came to be my portion from all my hard work."—Eccl. 2:10b.

But as to finding real fulfillment and genuine happiness in this way, the congregator admits: "And I, even I, turned toward all the works of mine that my hands had done and toward the hard work that I had worked hard to accomplish, and, look! everything was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing of advantage under the sun."—Eccl. 2:11.

WEALTH AND FAME

You may be acquainted with individuals who work day and night to acquire a comfortable "nest egg" of material riches. For such people the book of Ecclesiastes contains this important lesson: "A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver, neither any lover of wealth with income. This too is vanity." (Eccl. 5:10) One of the vain aspects of pursuing riches is set forth in the next verse: "When good things become many, those eating them certainly become many. And what advantage is there to the grand owner of them, except looking at them with his eyes?"—Eccl. 5:11.

Even when a person becomes "the grand owner" of abundant riches, he remains unsatisfied. True wisdom would have been of greater advantage to him. (Eccl. 7:12) Moreover, the more a person's possessions increase, the more there is need of hired help to care for them. Since the rich man must feed and care for servants, as riches

multiply there is a corresponding increase in "those eating them." A work by Greek writer Xenophon includes these comments of a man who had once been poor but had become wealthy:

"Do you think, Sacian, that I live with the more pleasure the more I possess? Do you not know, that I neither eat, nor drink, nor sleep, with a particle more pleasure now than when I was poor? But, by having this abundance, I gain merely this, that I have to guard more, to distribute more to others, and to have the trouble of taking care of the more; for a great many domestics now demand of me their food, their drink, and their clothes; some are in want of physicians; one comes and brings me sheep that have been torn by wolves, or oxen that have been killed by falling over a precipice, or tells me of a distemper that has fallen on the cattle; so that I seem to myself, in possessing abundance, to have more afflictions than I had before in possessing but little. . . . If to possess riches were as pleasant as to obtain them, the rich would very much exceed the poor in happiness. But it is obligatory on him that possesses the abundance to expend abundance."

The book of Ecclesiastes discusses a tragic circumstance that frequently befalls persons who are determined to be rich: "I myself returned that I might see the vanity under the sun: There exists one, but not a second one; also no son or brother does he have, but there is no end to all his hard work. Also, his eyes themselves are not satisfied with riches: 'And for whom am I working hard and causing my soul to lack in good things?' This too is vanity, and it is a calamitous occupation."—Eccl. 4:7, 8.

In the quest for riches, all too often people sacrifice human relationships, both in and outside the family. How pitiful is the miser who in pursuit of material goods isolates himself! He believes it advantageous not to have family or friends, since these would require some expenditure of money. Anyone inclined to think that way should ask himself: "For whom am I work-

ing hard and causing my soul to lack in good things?" No matter how vast the holdings of a wealthy person, "his eyes themselves are not satisfied with riches." Aware of this, Solomon writes:

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their hard work. For if one of them should fall, the other one can raise his partner up. But how will it be with just the one who falls when there is not another to raise him up? Moreover, if two lie down together, they also will certainly get warm; but how can just one keep warm? And if somebody could overpower one alone, two together could make a stand against him. And a threefold cord cannot quickly be torn in two."—Eccl. 4:9-12.

These words teach an important lesson. Human relationships are more rewarding than possessions. Genuine concern for and efforts to assist one's fellowman are far more valuable than gold, silver or any other inanimate object.

OPPRESSION AND INJUSTICE

The book of Ecclesiastes frankly acknowledges that mankind has suffered much oppression: "And I myself returned that I might see all the acts of oppression that are being done under the sun, and, look! the tears of those being oppressed, but they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, so that they had no comforter." (Eccl. 4:1) When the oppressed seek relief from persons in power, often injustice prevails. Solomon observes: "And I have further seen under the sun the place of justice where there was wickedness and the place of righteousness where wickedness was."—Eccl. 3:16.

How should people react to widespread oppression and injustice? They must first come to appreciate this inspired statement: "That which is made crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot possibly be counted." (Eccl. 1:15) Some sincerely motivated individuals have

spent a lifetime trying to produce righteous conditions on earth, but without success. The Word of God makes it plain that only God's kingdom can eliminate wickedness from mankind. (Dan. 2:44; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1-5) No amount of human effort can straighten out the innumerable "crooked" aspects of man's behavior.

Since this is so, the congregator provides another helpful guideline: "I say: 'Keep the very order of the king, and that out of regard for the oath of God. Do not hurry yourself, that you may go out from before him. Do not stand in a bad thing. For all that he delights to do he will do, because the word of the king is the power of control; and who may say to him: "What are you doing?"' "—Eccl. 8:2-4.

Ecclesiastes does not advocate rebellion and efforts to overthrow existing governments. The course of wisdom is to remain obediently subject to the governmental "superior authorities." (Rom. 13:1-7) In rare instances, desire to meet God's approval might move someone to refrain from performing certain commands by officials. (Dan. 3:12, 16-18) However, where official decrees or requests do not require violating God's law, it is the course of wisdom to "keep the very order of the king."

Developing this thought further, the congregator states: "He that is keeping the commandment will not know any calamitous thing, and the wise heart will know both time and judgment. For there exists a time and judgment even for every affair, because the calamity of mankind is abundant upon them. For there is no one knowing what will come to be, because who can tell him just how it will come to be?" (Eccl. 8:5-7) Even where rulership is harsh and arbitrary, the wise individual will not rise in revolt. He realizes that there is a "time" or season when something will happen to change things for the better. But since he does not know "just

how" that change will occur, the prudent course for the present is for him to go about his business, using sound judgment in dealing with unpleasant aspects of daily life.—Compare Ecclesiastes 3:1-13.

COPING WITH THE UNEXPECTED

Another reason why many human endeavors prove to be vain is mentioned at Ecclesiastes 9:11: "I returned to see under the sun that the swift do not have the race, nor the mighty ones the battle, nor do the wise also have the food, nor do the understanding ones also have the riches, nor do even those having knowledge have the favor; *because time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all.*"

It would seem that qualities such as swiftness, mightiness and wisdom would cause people to prosper in every undertaking. But often things work out unexpectedly. Though unforeseen circumstances occasionally are favorable, frequently they come in the form of accidents, sicknesses or other calamities. And in death "there is no superiority of the man over the beast, for everything is vanity."—Eccl. 3:19-21.

In view of this, the wise Bible writer recommends especially two things: (1) Work diligently from day to day; (2) "see good" from your hard work by enjoying what you have right now. Words

to this effect are found at Ecclesiastes 5:18-20:

"Look! The best thing that I myself have seen, which is pretty, is that one should eat and drink and see good for all his hard work with which he works hard under the sun for the number of the days of his life that the true God has given him, for that is his portion. Also every man to whom the true God has given riches and material possessions, he has even empowered him to eat from it and to carry off his portion and to rejoice in his hard work. This is the gift of God. For not often will he remember the days of his life, because the true God is preoccupying him with the rejoicing of his heart."

While there are much oppression, injustice and other bad aspects to human life today, the wise person does not allow these to dampen his joy over things that are going right. Rather, he is determined to "carry off his portion" of present blessings by rejoicing in what he has, even though it may be little.

Space does not permit a more extensive discussion here of wisdom found in the book of Ecclesiastes. But it is hoped that the few examples set out above will motivate you to study the entire book carefully. Doing so will aid you to avoid wasting time and energy on things that are profitless and to direct your life and resources toward what is truly worth while.

Even Birds 'Know Their Time'

A SAD state of affairs existed among the Israelites in the time of Jeremiah. Their course contrasted unfavorably with that of migratory birds. We read: "Even the stork in the heavens—it well knows its appointed times; and the turtledove and the swift and the bulbul—they observe well the time of each one's coming in. But as for my people, they have not come to know the judgment of Jehovah."—Jer. 8:7.

While migratory birds such as the stork, tur-

tledove, swift and bulbul observe the time of their coming and going, the Israelites showed no regard for the judgment of Jehovah. In the case of migratory birds, their coming and going are essential for life. Likewise, Israel's welfare and prosperity depended upon complying with Jehovah's judgment. But the Israelites failed in this and, therefore, did not even show the good sense characteristic of unreasoning birds that observe the time of their migratory flights.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● "The most recent social plague," is what the Brazilian news magazine "Veja" calls a wave of lynchings in Brazil. Near Rio de Janeiro, a furious mob put to death a farmer and his foreman accused of a crime. Within a few days, several robbers

Justice by Lynching?

and rapists were massacred by infuriated crowds. Some say that people no longer believe that justice will be served through the legal order, and so take the law into their own hands.

However, when taxi drivers in south Brazil hanged a young man whom they thought had murdered a colleague, they later found to their dismay that he was innocent.

While Christians recognize the human incapacity to end crime, they continue 'in subjection to the governmental authorities.' (Rom. 13:1) They do not take justice into their own hands. Rather, they look forward patiently to the time when God's kingdom will wipe out wickedness and introduce true justice earth wide.—Ps. 37:9, 10; Isa. 32:1.

● "Listen to the songs your youngsters hear," columnist Michele Landsberg, writing in the Toronto "Star," advises parents. She notes that most popular rock and disco music "relies almost exclusively on themes of drug use and grossly explicit macho sex."

"Drowning in a Swamp of Pop Porn"

Hence the term "pop porn," or popular pornographic music. She declared that today's children were "drowning in a swamp of pop porn." And another writer called such music "red light rock," since the words were so vulgar that they could be likened to the language used by prostitutes.

Landsberg also said: "I can tell you that the commonplace vocabulary of teenage music is the four-letter word (all of them) and that the common theme is either sneering abuse of women or the hysterical, grovelling pleas from women begging for sexual attack."

Aside from the desire of commercial interests to make money, there is a more sinister hand behind this enormous campaign to cor-

rupt the world's youth. The Bible informs us that the Devil knows "he has a short period of time," and therefore "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (Rev. 12:12; 1 Pet. 5:8) Knowing that this world is in its "last days," he tries to corrupt as many of mankind as he can, just as he did in the days before the global flood.—Gen. 6:1-12; 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

● Roman Catholic theologian Andrew M. Greeley, discussing the "assertion that Catholicism is a religion of

The Broad Road—to Where?

rules and you have to keep all the rules to be a Catholic," answers: "It isn't so, and it never has been." He observes: "You can break all kinds of rules and

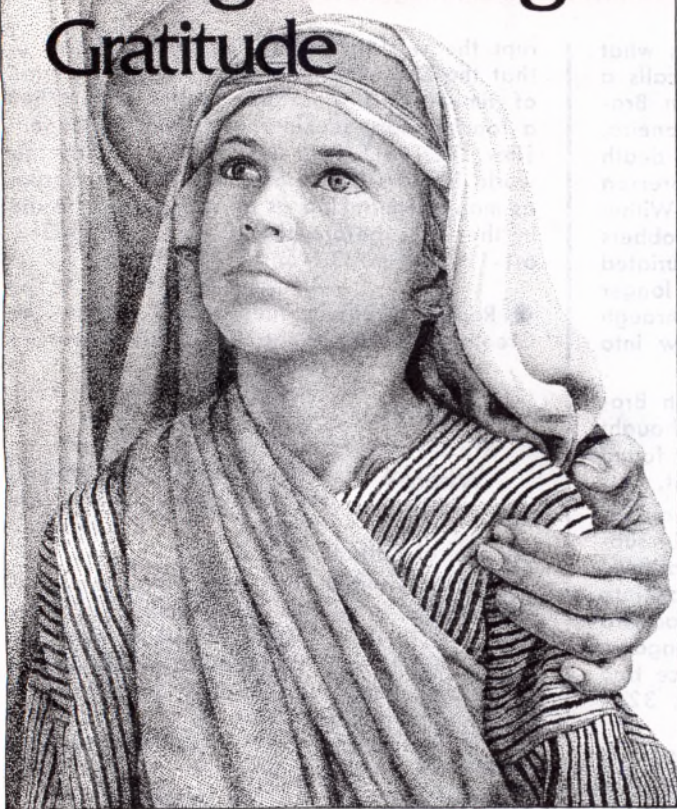
still be a Catholic."

As an example, he says: "One may disapprove of premarital promiscuity, as I do. One may think it is sinful, which it may easily be. But it does not therefore follow that those who approve of such behavior, by their approval, lose their claim to be members of the church, nor do those who actually engage in such behavior get thrown out." Greeley then stated: "The genius of Catholicism has always been to draw a broad boundary and to include as many people as possible within the sheepfold."

But is this philosophy Catholic "genius" or Scriptural foolishness? Jesus answers: "Enter by the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who enter that way. How narrow the gate and close the way that leads to life! And few there are who find it."—Matt. 7:13, 14, "Catholic Confraternity."

Until such persons change their conduct, God's view is reflected in the following command: "You should not associate with a brother Christian who is leading an immoral life, or is a usurer, or idolatrous, or a slanderer, or a drunkard, or is dishonest; you should not even eat a meal with people like that. . . . You must drive out this evil-doer from among you."—1 Cor. 5:11, 13, Catholic "Jerusalem Bible."

A King Who Forgot Gratitude



JEHOSHASH was a helpless infant when his grandmother Athaliah took action to seize the throne of the kingdom of Judah. She had no affection for him. This ambitious woman wanted to have all her grandsons killed, as they stood in the way of her reigning as queen. If it had not been for the quick action of Jehoshabeath, the wife of high priest Jehoiada, Jehoash would have been murdered with the rest of the royal male offspring.

Jehoshabeath stole the infant away from among the boys that were to be executed. For six years, she and her husband kept Jehoash hidden in the temple precincts. All during this time Athaliah ruled as queen. Then, in the seventh year, Jehoiada anointed this rightful heir to the throne as

king and brought about execution of the usurper Athaliah. Surely Jehoash had reason for being deeply grateful to his aunt and uncle. They had shared in preserving him alive and in paving the way for his assuming royal authority.—2 Chron. 22: 10-12; 23:11-15.

RULES WELL UNDER JEHOIADA'S GUIDANCE

Under the guidance of Jehoia-da, the young king prospered. One of the outstanding projects undertaken in his reign was the repairing of Jehovah's temple. By that time the structure was over 150 years old and had suffered serious neglect during the rule of Athaliah's husband Jehoram and her son Ahaziah, as well as her own reign. Her wickedness evidently had influenced her sons to such an extent that they broke into the temple, doubtless to plunder it.—2 Chron. 24:7.

In view of the state into which the temple had come, considerable money was needed to care for the repair work. At first, efforts to raise funds did not meet with success. The Levites who were entrusted with this responsibility did not respond wholeheartedly. However, when a change was made in the arrangement for collecting and administering funds, the people cooperated and the work prospered.—2 Ki. 12:4-6; 2 Chron. 24:5, 6, 8-14.

COMES TO BE AN INGRATE

After the death of Jehoiada, Jehoash did not remain a faithful servant of Jehovah God. He allowed himself to come under the influence of idolatrous princes. As a result, the Baal worship that had been stopped at the direction of Jehoiada was

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revived. Jehovah kept sending prophets to call the people to their senses, encouraging them to repent. But neither the king nor his princes paid any attention.—2 Chron. 24:17-19.

Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, was divinely inspired to proclaim: "This is what the true God has said, 'Why are you overstepping the commandments of Jehovah, so that you cannot prove successful? Because you have left Jehovah, he will, in turn, leave you.'"—2 Chron. 24:20.

Did Jehoash respond appreciatively to the word of Jehovah through his cousin? To the contrary, he did not even consider the kindness that had been rendered to him by his cousin's father Jehoiada. Jehoash gave the command for Zechariah to be stoned to death in the temple courtyard. When at the point of dying, Zechariah cried out: "Let Jehovah see to it and ask it back."—2 Chron. 24:21, 22.

Centuries later Jesus Christ evidently referred to this incident, saying: "The wisdom of God also said, 'I will send forth to them prophets and apostles, and they will kill and persecute some of them, so that the blood of all the prophets spilled from the founding of the world may be required from this generation, from the blood of Abel down to the blood of Zechariah, who was slain between the altar and the house.'"—Luke 11:49-51.

Retribution did catch up with Jehoash

just as it did later with the unfaithful generation of Jews in the first century C.E. Jehovah God withdrew his blessing and protection from this unappreciative king. A small Syrian military force under the command of Hazael successfully invaded Judah, forcing Jehoash to hand over treasures from the sanctuary. When the Syrian army withdrew, the king was a sick and broken man. Finally, two of his own servants assassinated him.—2 Ki. 12:17-21; 2 Chron. 24:23-27.

How different life could have been for Jehoash if he had remained an appreciative servant of Jehovah and had continued to experience divine favor and protection! Life can also be different for us, provided we maintain appreciation for God's righteous requirements. A spirit of ingratitude can bring only ruin, as it did in the case of Jehoash. May we, therefore, strive to maintain keen appreciation for divine direction.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

April 6: After Destruction of Organized Religion, Which Way? Page 13. Songs to Be Used: 30, 80.

April 13: The Right Route Needs to Be Selected Now. Page 18. Songs to Be Used: 66, 76.

How Their Marriage Problems Were Solved



Marital problems affect millions today. Often at the roots of these difficulties are the thoughtless or even cruel acts of one mate or the other. But many have found solutions to their marriage problems. For instance, note how this happened in the case of a couple in eastern Europe.

For years, Stefan often got drunk, brutally beat his wife and squandered his money betting on race horses. Despite the hardships his wife then endured, she continued to live with him and sustained him financially. But then Stefan began studying the Bible and eventually became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Although his entire way of life had changed for the better, his wife then sought a divorce.—1 Cor. 6:9-11.

In court, when the judge requested some reason for the divorce, this woman could say nothing bad about the current conduct of her husband. Consequently, the marriage was not dissolved. In time, the woman opened her heart to the truth and after eight months of Bible study she symbolized her dedication to God by undergoing water baptism. Today, this couple find happiness in their united worship of the merciful God, Jehovah.

Applied Christianity produces better husbands, wives and children. And the Bible provides aid in solving problems. It also gives those who accept its message a true and living hope that results in happiness.

