JUNE 15, 1981

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

Faith

IS IT PRACTICAL TODAY?

TESTIMONY FROM THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

THE WATCHTOWER®
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

June 15, 1981
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A WATCHTOWER provides a vantage point from which the watchman can observe and warn of approaching danger. This magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses since 1879, serves a similar purpose. It keeps watch on world events in these critical times and calls attention to God's warning of his vengeance soon to be executed on those ruining the earth. It comforts all peoples with the hope that God's kingdom by Jesus Christ is about to bring in a global paradise of peace. It encourages all to exercise faith in the ransoming power of Jesus' shed blood, and points to the joyous prospect of everlasting life on earth under the sovereignty of the true God, Jehovah. "The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom" is nonpolitical, and adheres to the Bible as authority.

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WHERE HAS FAITH GONE?

THE celebrated British journalist and editor Malcolm Muggeridge said not long ago:

"It becomes increasingly clear to me that the crisis which western civilization is going through is due essentially to a shortage of faith. . . . There is an increasing acceptance of the humanistic idea that there is no God, that people are in charge of their own destiny."

In past years, the majority of persons would admit to having faith in God and being concerned about his will. But that has changed drastically. Many individuals now feel that the advances of science in our century have made faith in God outmoded or unrealistic. Others have noted the flourishing of wickedness and have decided that either God does not care or he does not exist. As Muggeridge observed, they believe that they must rely on themselves, making their own way in life without faith in God or in his ways.

But such persons may be missing more than faith. How so? Well, if it is established that faith is practical today, they are also missing the practical benefits that *come from* the having of faith.

WHAT IS SUCH FAITH?

The word "faith" is used in various ways today. For instance, you might hear someone say, 'I have faith that my automobile will start despite the extreme temperature.' However, in considering the question 'Is faith practical today?' we mean faith in God and in the value of his guidance.

Some persons who claim to have such faith are confusing it with a rather placid sentimentality, a sort of 'faith in faith.' They feel that it is good to believe in something, and so they have a mild emotional sense that God should exist. Such tepid faith has little effect on their life, readily evaporating when a real test occurs. So we can see why such faith is impractical.

However, the faith in God that the Bible encourages is quite different. It is "the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld."—Heb. 11:1.

The Greek word there translated "assured expectation" conveys the idea of something that underlies or guarantees what is expected. So this Biblical faith is not a mere vague feeling or an unfounded hope; real assurance is involved. The Greek word rendered "evident demonstration" has the thought of bringing forth evidence, especially evidence that demonstrates something other than what might appear to be so. Consequently, even if many persons say that there is no God, the faith in him that we are discussing is directly related to solid evidence.

Where do you stand on this? Do you have assurance, supported by convincing evidence, that God exists? Taking the matter a step further, Is it really practical to have such faith and to guide your life accordingly? So, is faith practical today?

BASIS FOR AN ASSURED FAITH

SOME persons who consider faith to be impractical have never thought deeply about whether there is a solid basis for faith. Have you?

If you wanted to investigate the matter, where would you begin and what evidence would bear on it? Well, you could examine many things about the world around you and locate pertinent facts.

THE VERY LARGE—THE VERY SMALL

It would be fair to say: You could study the very large—the seemingly endless universe of outer space. Or you could peer at the very small—even microscopic parts of us and our world. In either case, you could find reason for faith in the Creator. —Gen. 1:1; 2:1-4.

Some 3,000 years ago, in the Middle East, a man named Elihu said: "Look up at the sky and then consider." (Job 35:5, *The New English Bible*) He felt that evidence of a Creator was observable in the heavens above. Of course, with his unaided eye Elihu would have been able to detect less than 5,000 of the more than 100,000,000,000 stars in our Milky Way galaxy. He could not have known that there are thousands of millions of galaxies, each with its billions of stars. But if he could have known that, as we do now, do you think that would have weakened his faith in God? Or, would this knowledge have strengthened that faith? Somewhat later, the psalmist David said: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling."—Ps. 19:1.

Now scientists have probed the solar system with

space vehicles, peered into outer space with visual telescopes and listened to the sounds from the distant reaches of the universe with radio telescopes. This increased knowledge has given added reasons for faith in God.

Physicist Wernher von Braun, former director of a space flight center for NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) of the U.S.A., wrote: "The materialists of the nineteenth century and their Marxist heirs of the twentieth, tried to tell us that, as science gives us more knowledge about the creation, we could live without faith in a Creator. Yet so far, with every new answer, we have discovered new questions. *The better we understand . . . the master plan for the galaxies, the more reason we have found to marvel at the wonder of God's creation.*"

That same conclusion can be reached if you turn from the immense universe and examine minute aspects of our own bodies. David was moved to exclaim of God: "You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb. . . . all you do is strange and wonderful." (Ps. 139: 13, 14, *Today's English Version*) Over his years as a neurosurgeon, Professor Robert J. White, M.D., has had occasion to examine the human brain very closely. He relates:

"My experiences with my patients, and in my neurological research trying to unravel the mysteries of the brain, have put me more than ever in awe of the brain. And I am left with no choice but to acknowledge the existence of a Superior Intellect, responsible for the design and development of the incredible brain-mind relationship—something far beyond man's capacity to understand."

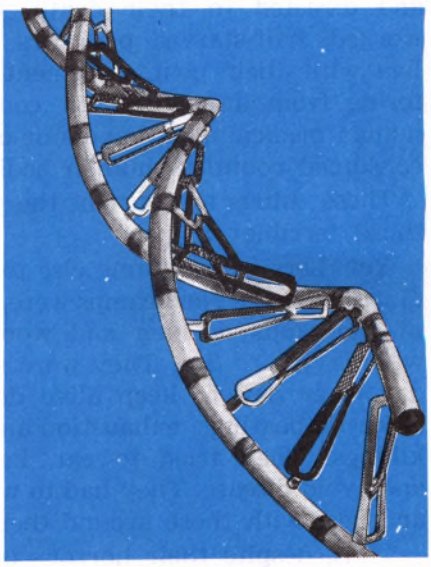
If you were in position to investigate even down into the very makeup of the human cell, you would find ample reason for faith in the Creator. The cell is the basic component of every living thing on earth. You have some 100,000,000,000,000 tiny cells making up your body. But each one is amazingly intricate and well designed.

For instance, in each of your body cells you have tens of thousands of genes and the much publicized DNA, which tells the cell how to function and reproduce. It determined the color of your hair, how fast you grew and countless other details. Ask yourself: How is it that all this information could be contained in the DNA of each of my cells?

In his book *Whence and Wherefore* (1978), Dr. Zev Zahavy tells of a discussion that took place in a biochemistry class at Cornell University's Graduate School of Medical Sciences. The professor was discussing "the programmed molecules of the DNA." We read:

"The class was comprised of young students who grew up in the era of computer technology, and, therefore, were quite conversant with the necessary role of the programmer in formulating a computerized program. The mention of 'programmed molecules' prompted an alert inquiry from one of the students.

" 'If the RNA and DNA structures are programmed to perform and produce in accordance



Part of a DNA molecule

with their designated patterns,' he asked, 'from whence come the programs themselves?'

"The professor responded with a whimsical smile, 'Why from the Generator of Diversity, of course.'

"The puzzled student quizzically exclaimed, 'The Generator of Diversity? Who is that?'

" 'Well, I guess He is better known by His initials,' came the genial mentor's rejoinder."

The professor meant, of course, the letters G O D.

Yes, an investigation of the very large or the very small aspects of creation provides a solid basis for an assured faith in God. You may still wonder, though, Is it *practical* to have such faith in this day and age?

Faith IS PRACTICAL!

TESTIMONY FROM THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

CONCENTRATION camps—What comes to your mind?

You may recall pictures of frightened people being driven from boxcars and directed to their death. Or, overworked, half-starved prisoners forced to live with their own excrement and suffering from disease. Or, it could be inhuman medical experiments or ovens that consumed countless human bodies.

These things are part of the picture of those terrible camps.

Yet there is something else to consider. Horrible as the Nazi camps were, hundreds of thousands of men and women there were trying *to live*. They were struggling day after day to keep alive despite the sickness, beatings, exhaustion and random killings. They tried to eat, keep warm and avoid disease. They had to work, sleep and deal with those around them.

Thus, despite their horror—or perhaps because of it—the Nazi concentration camps are a place for us to look for evidence as to the real practicality of faith. Though we personally may never face life in such camps, we can benefit from lessons involving them.

MANY LOST FAITH

One prominent effect of the camps was loss of faith. Writer Philip Yancy explains: "Some survivors lost their faith in God. Jews, especially, were susceptible: raised to believe that they had been chosen people, they suddenly discovered that, as one Jew poignantly expressed, 'Hitler is the only one who has kept his promises.' "

Elie Wiesel describes the effect of witnessing a young boy's hanging. The SS assembled the prisoners in front of the gallows. As the boy died slowly, a prisoner cried, "Where is God now?" Wiesel says, "And I heard a voice within me answer him 'Where is He? Here He is—He is hanging here on this gallows . . . ' "

Many who claimed to be Christians lost faith too. In *The Christian Century,* Harry J. Cargas put into these words how many former churchgoers felt: "The Holo-

caust is, in my judgment, the greatest tragedy for Christians since the crucifixion. In the first instance, Jesus died; in the latter, Christianity may be said to have died. . . . Can one be a Christian today, given the death camps which, in major part, were conceived, built and operated by a people who called themselves Christians . . . ?"

However, there was a group whose faith was not destroyed. Jehovah's Witnesses understood from the Bible that God was not causing the wickedness of the camps nor the suffering that has plagued mankind for centuries. On the contrary, these things grieve Him and prove that humans cannot direct their steps independent of him. (Jer. 10:23; Eccl. 8:9) He has promised in his Word that at a set point he will eliminate wickedness from the earth. He also will undo the damage that those with faith have experienced, even being able to raise them to life again.—Rev. 21:4; see also the chapter "Wickedness—Why Does God Permit It?" in the book *Happiness—How to Find It.**

FAITH AMONG WOMEN

Let us examine, for example, the effects of the concentration camps on women.

In his autobiography *Commandant of Auschwitz,* Rudolf Hoess observed: "The women's camp, tightly crammed from the very beginning, meant psychological destruction for the mass of the female prisoners, and this led sooner or later to their physical collapse. From every point of view, and at all times, the worst conditions prevailed in the women's camp."

Of course, conditions varied somewhat from camp to camp and at different times during the war. Yet Hoess remarked: "When the women had reached the bottom, they would let themselves go completely. They would stumble about like ghosts, . . . until the day came when they quietly passed away." Contributing to this was the conduct of some prisoners who were given authority. According to Hoess, "they far surpassed their male equivalents in toughness, squalor, vindictiveness, and depravity."

But Hoess adds: "A welcome contrast were the female Jehovah's Witnesses, who were nicknamed 'Bible bees' or 'Bible worms.' Unfortunately there were too few of them."

How did these female Witnesses of Jehovah hold up amidst the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps? How was their faith affected? Firsthand information was published in the book *Under Two Dictators* (1949), by Margarete Buber.

She and her husband were prominent members of the German Communist party in the early 1930's. After being ordered to Moscow, they were arrested for "political deviations." Though still believing in the theory of Communism, Margarete Buber was sent to a Siberian camp. Later she was handed over to the Nazis and for five years served in the infamous Ravensbrueck concentration camp for women.

During part of that time, she was a Block Senior, a prisoner in charge of a block or barracks of other prisoners. Most of those in her block were Jehovah's Witnesses (Bible Students). Margarete Buber's account provides eyewitness information from a political prisoner who was not herself one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Her account is confirmed by Gertrude Poetzinger, one of Jehovah's Witnesses who was a prisoner in Ravensbrueck for over four years and who serves today with her husband at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. The following is a condensation of portions of the book, in Margarete Buber's own words and used with her permission.

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. (1980).

UNDER TWO DICTATORS

Every newcomer in a concentration camp goes through a terrible period in which she is shaken to the core, no matter how strong her physique, how calm her nerves. And the sufferings of the newcomers became worse and worse each year in Ravensbrueck, and in consequence the death rate was highest among them. According to character, it would take weeks, months, or even years, before a prisoner resigned herself to her fate and adapted her being to existence in a camp. It is in this period that the character of the individual changes. Gradually the interest for the outside world and for the other prisoners declines.

I think that nothing is more demoralizing than suffering, excessive suffering coupled with humiliation such as comes to men and women in concentration camps. When the SS struck, you dared not strike back. When the SS bullied and insulted, you had to keep your mouth shut and never answer back. You had lost all human rights—all, all without exception. You were just a living being with a number to distinguish you from the other unfortunates around you.

I am not thinking here of those prisoners who occupied some post and were able to maltreat those in their charge. I mean the ordinary women prisoners. If one seemed to get a trifle more food, a slightly larger piece of bread, a slightly bigger portion of margarine or sausage, immediately there were hateful scenes of anger and resentment.

From the time we first tumbled out of our bunks to the time we had to line up outside for the roll call there was three quarters of an hour in which to wash, dress, tidy lockers and eat our "breakfast." That would not be too easy in the best of circumstances, but think what it meant in a hut with 100 other women all rushing around intent on doing the same! The air was blue with bad language and abuse.

[That is a partial description of what her life was like in Ravensbrueck. But then the author was appointed Block Senior in Block 3, which at the time housed the Bible Students.]

I took up my duties that afternoon at Block 3. There was a very different atmosphere here. The place was silent and smelled of cleaning powder, disinfectant and cabbage soup. Two hundred and seventy women sat at the tables. As soon as I went into the room, a tall, blonde woman rose, led me to a seat and served me with a bowl of cabbage soup. I hardly knew what to do.

Wherever I looked along the tables there were the same modest smiling faces. All of them had their hair tied at the back in a tight bun, and they sat there in perfect order and ate their food as though they were all on the same string. Most of them seemed to be peasant women, and their lean faces were brown and wrinkled from the sun and the wind. Many of these women had been in prison and concentration camp for years.

There were 275 prisoners—all Bible Students. All of them were model prisoners and

Gertrude Poetzinger in 1944. She was among the 275 of Jehovah's Witnesses imprisoned at Ravensbrueck

all of them knew the camp rules and regulations inside out and obeyed them to the letter. One locker looked exactly like the other, and all of them were models of cleanliness and neatness. All the towels hung on the locker doors in exactly the same regulation fashion; every bowl, plate, cup, and so forth, was clean and highly polished. The stools were scrubbed spotlessly clean and always neatly stacked when not in use. Dust was removed everywhere, even from the beams across the hut, for our hut had no ceiling and we looked up straight into the roof. I was told that some of the SS overseers went around with white gloves, passing their fingers over ledges and locker tops and even climbing onto the tables to find out whether the beams were dustless.

Lavatories and washroom were equally clean. But the culminating point of all this neatness and cleanliness was the dormitories, each containing 140 beds. The bed-building here was an astonishing achievement. Straw sacks and pillows were like boxes. The blankets were all carefully folded in exactly the same way and exactly the same size, and all laid out on the beds in exactly the same pattern. On every bunk was a card bearing the name and number of the prisoners who slept in it, and on the door was a carefully drawn plan of the dormitory showing each bunk and exactly who slept in it, so that anyone inspecting could tell at once where everyone was.

While I was Hut Senior among the Asocials,* the whole day had been occupied with some duty or other and disturbed with some new fear. With the Bible Students my life ran very smoothly. Everything went like clockwork. In the mornings, when everyone was intent on getting her jobs done before the roll call, no one spoke a loud word. In other blocks the Block Seniors and Hut Seniors had to shout themselves hoarse before they could get their charges out into the open and into line, but here the whole procedure went off silently and without a word from me, and the same was true of everything else—the distribution of food, lights out, and all the rest of the prisoners' day.

My chief task with the Bible Students was to make their lives as tolerable as possible, to ward off the chicanery of the SS Block Leader.

Gertrude Poetzinger today. She serves at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses

Nothing was ever stolen in Block 3. There was no lying and no tale bearing. Each of the women was not only highly conscientious personally, but held herself responsible for the well-being of the group as a whole. I had not been there very long before they realized that I was their friend.

Once this relationship had been established and I was quite confident that none of them would ever betray me, there were many things I could do for them; for instance, I saved the older and physically weaker prisoners from standing for hours at the roll call with all sorts of excuses and tricks. I could not have done that with the Asocials, for those who were better able to stand the strain would have betrayed me to the SS in their resentment at the idea that anyone was being favoured.

The Bible Students formed the only homogeneous block among the prisoners at Ravensbrueck. When I first went to Block 3 I had only the vaguest idea about their religious convictions and why Hitler disliked them. Dis-

* The Asocials were prostitutes, vagrants, pickpockets, alcoholics and other "shiftless elements."

like is a mild word to describe his attitude toward them; he denounced them as enemies of the State and persecuted them ruthlessly.

It was not long before they realized that I was a very unlikely convert, but they continued to show me their sympathy and never ceased to hope that one day I might "see the light." As far as I could make out they believed that the whole of humanity, with the exception of Jehovah's Witnesses, was soon to be cast into everlasting darkness when the world came to an end. Good was to triumph finally over Evil. Nation would no longer lift up sword against nation, the leopard would lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and no one would hurt or destroy in all His holy mountain. And there would be no more dying and everyone—the survivors—would live happily ever after and there would be no end to their felicity.

This simple and satisfactory belief lent them strength and made them able to stand the long years of concentration-camp life and all the indignities and humiliations and still retain their human dignity. They were given cause to prove, and they proved, that death had no terrors for them. They could die for their beliefs without shrinking.

They took the Sixth Commandment seriously and in consequence they were determined opponents of all wars and all military service. Their constancy in this respect cost many of the male Witnesses their life. The women of the sect also refused to perform any work that in their opinion was calculated to further the war effort.

Their sense of duty and their feeling of responsibility were unshakable; they were industrious, honest and obedient. The Witnesses were, so to speak, "voluntary prisoners," for all they had to do in order to secure their immediate release was sign the special Bible Students' form that read: "I declare herewith that from this day on I no longer consider myself a Bible Student and that I will do nothing to further the interests of the International Association of Bible Students."

Before I became their Block Senior, they suffered much from the fact that [the notorious former Block Senior] Kaethe Knoll did her utmost to prevent them from engaging in religious discussion with one another. To stop them from talking about it all and comparing notes—"studying the Bible," in short—was a kind of Chinese torture, and Kaethe Knoll had applied it with malicious zeal.

I had been their Block Senior for some time before I discovered that my "Bible Worms," as they were known in the camp, possessed Bibles and Bible Students literature. They began to bring them in, hidden in pails and floor cloths, and so on, when they came in from work. When I discovered it I suggested that it would be less dangerous if they hid them somewhere in the block, and this suggestion was enthusiastically adopted. After that Bible study went on quite openly in the block in the evenings and on Sundays. And in bed at night, before the SS women came around with their dogs, they would sing their hymns softly. My job was to see that they had ample warning of danger and an opportunity to hide away their forbidden literature.

I was running no small risk. I was Block Senior and responsible for everything that went on. It was the "Golden Age" of my life in concentration camp—post-Armageddon so to speak—but how I managed to survive inspection after inspection headed by that brute Koegel without landing in Punishment Block or Bunkers I don't know to this day.

But there was a still more dangerous game I played. When a prisoner felt ill she had to report through me to the medical post. The acid test was the thermometer. According to its reading, the sick woman would be sent into the sick-bay, be permitted to do "inside work," or be sent out mercilessly to her ordinary labours. Now, among the "Witnesses" there were quite a number of older women who, although they had no fever, were just so weak that work was really beyond them. The only way to spare them and let them have a day off from time to time was for me to give false reports of the numbers in the gangs, and this I did. What would have happened to me if this had been discovered I hesitate to think. It was made more difficult by the fact that we were the Inspection Block [the barracks to which visiting Nazi officials were brought. The author thus describes such an unannounced visit:]

I would report in the appropriate subaltern voice:

"Block Senior Margarete Buber, No. 4,208. Report obediently Block No. 3 occupied by 275 Bible Students and three Politicals, of whom 260 are at work, eight have hut duties and seven permits for inside work."

Koegel would stare at me with his watery blue eyes, his clean-shaven jowls twitching, and then he would grunt something. Then I would go ahead on the routine inspection, opening one door after the other, and the first three lockers. And as we approached the prisoners properly and legitimately present, I would snarl "Achtung!" whereupon they would all spring up like jacks-in-the-box. All the visitors, whether male or female, SA, SS, or what-not, would invariably be impressed by the shining tin and aluminum. Koegel was usually the only one to put questions to the prisoners. "Why were you arrested?" and invariably the answer would come: "Because I am a Witness of Jehovah." That would be all the questioning, for Koegel knew from experience that these incorrigible Bible Students never missed an opportunity for a demonstration [of their being witnesses]. After that the visitors would look into the dormitory, and invariably there would be loud exclamations at the spotless order they found there.

Although the SS Senior Supervisor Frau Langefeld favoured and protected the "Witnesses," one of the leading overseers, a woman named Zimmer, regarded them as her "bête noire." Frau Zimmer was satisfied with nothing; not even the most exemplary bed met with approval in her eyes, and she never missed an opportunity to abuse and bully the Witnesses.

[To disrupt the Witnesses' peace and Christian unity, the authorities put about 100 Asocials in the block.]

It was as though the wolves had come down on the fold. Denunciation, theft and brawling became part and parcel of our daily lives. The Asocials immediately began to denounce the "Witnesses" for Bible studies and religious discussions; they stole everything they could lay hands on; and, feeling themselves the representatives of authority, conducted themselves generally in a thoroughly aggressive and provocative fashion. And how sad it was for me! But to the credit of my "Witnesses" be it said that they rallied to me in my difficulties and supported me in every possible way. Thanks to them, we managed to struggle through for six months—as long as the scourge lasted—without serious trouble.

I did my best to isolate the troublemakers. I kept the "Witnesses" at separate tables so that they could discuss their affairs during meals without the danger of denunciation, and at night I put the Asocials in the top bunks and the "Witnesses" below. However, as it transpired, the authorities—the prime mover in the scheme was Frau Zimmer—must have picked us out all the notorious bed wetters in the camp, and night after night it rained down on the innocents in the bunks beneath.

One day our old enemy, Frau Zimmer, came in to survey her handiwork. She immediately spotted my separation of the sheep from the goats and turned on me indignantly.

"You needn't think I'm blind," she declared. "I know perfectly well you shield and protect the Bible-punchers here. Don't you dare separate the Bible Worms and the Asocials, do you hear?"

Well, that was it; I had to mix them all up and hope for the best. It was at this point that Jehovah intervened. The Bible Students accepted the Asocials like long-lost sisters: Were they hungry? Were they! Would they like an extra piece of bread? Would they! And so it went on. I watched this Christian charity in operation with mixed feelings, but it worked. The Asocials were softened up with kindness and friendliness, and then a campaign began to show them the light. In quite a short space of time there were quite a number of Asocials —a Gypsy, a Pole, a Jewess and a Political— who presented themselves at the SS office, declaring that henceforth they wished to be regarded as Jehovah's Witnesses and demanding the lilac triangle for their sleeves. When it got too bad, the SS just stormed and raved at the converts and threw them out. In the end the SS got so fed up that they removed the Asocials from our block and peace descended again. I breathed a sigh of relief, and the "Witnesses" held a prayer meeting to render thanks to Jehovah.

FAITH IS PRACTICAL FOR YOU

It is tragic that anyone, for any reason, had to face the horror of the Nazi concentration camps. Yet it did occur. What can we learn from it?

The account in *Under Two Dictators* testifies to the faith that those Christian women had. It certainly was not a faith of convenience. Yet we cannot escape noticing the practical benefits resulting from their living by such strong faith in God, as they awaited the time when God will eliminate all wickedness from the earth.

Their faith gave them standards. It helped them to maintain mental and moral balance. Their health was not undermined by worry, nor their strength sapped by despair. Thus, their faith helped them to keep living day by day.

Psychologist Bruno Bettelheim observed Jehovah's Witnesses firsthand in the camps. He wrote that they "not only showed unusual heights of human dignity and moral behavior, but *seemed protected against the same camp experience that soon destroyed persons* considered very well integrated by my psychoanalytic friends and myself."—*The Informed Heart* (italics added).

The Dungeon Democracy adds: "They were an object of mockery for some, but ignored it and kept their dignity of men when the others contemptuously bartered their own for supremacy in the tooth-and-claw struggle for survival."

Even if you never experience suffering anywhere near as great, can you not see that such faith can aid you? As with all persons today you, too, face daily problems and pressures. But faith in God will help you to live a more secure life.

Faith in God and his Word will also prove practical in your dealings with other people. For example, when you live in accord with deep faith others will likely treat you with more fairness and respect. Does that sound unlikely in today's dog-eat-dog world? Well, consider Bettelheim's comment about the Witnesses in camp: "Even though they were the only group of prisoners who never abused or mistreated other prisoners (on the contrary, they were usually quite courteous to fellow prisoners), SS officers preferred them as orderlies because of their work habits, skills, and unassuming attitudes."

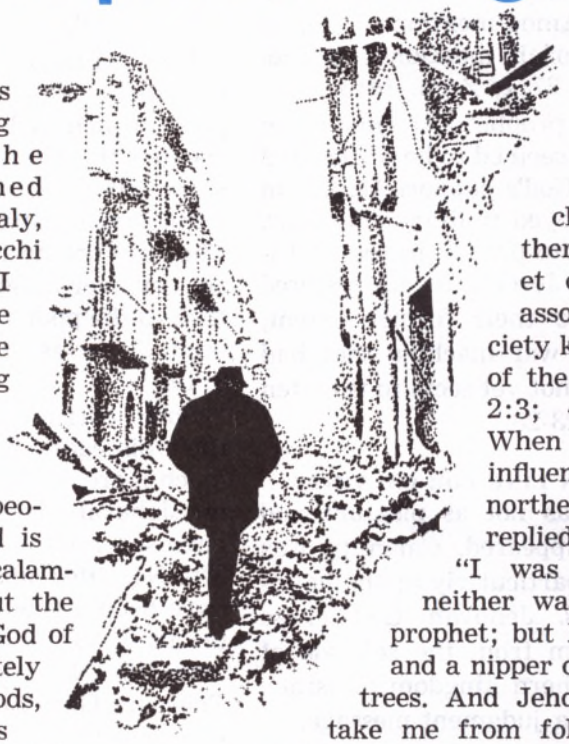
It is similar today. Because of their faith and God's spirit, Jehovah's Witnesses still strive to be friendly, mild, honest and hard working. (Gal. 5:23; Rom. 12:16-18, 21; Jas. 3:13; Eph. 4:28) Thus they are often valued as employees. Frequently, they have found it relatively easy to get a job and are retained when others are laid off, or they are promoted quickly to positions of trust.

In many other ways, too, faith can prove to be practical. It can help youths to be happier, with more purpose in life. It is practical as to family life and matters involving sex. It can bring you better health and longer life.

But what many might view as the ultimate evidence that faith truly is practical is highlighted by the words at Hebrews 11:6. The apostle Paul there wrote: "Without faith it is impossible to please [God] well, for he that approaches God must believe that he is and that *he becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him.*"

Millions of Jehovah's Witnesses are, in faith, looking forward to God's promised reward of life in peace, righteousness and happiness on earth. (2 Pet. 3:13) We urge you to find out from them more about that reward and about how faith can now, and forever, be practical in your life.

Calamities and disasters—Amos provides insight



WHILE workers were removing bodies from the earthquake-demolished church in Balvano, Italy, priest Salvatore Pagliocchi lamented: "How can I explain to these people that God decided to take their loved ones during a Mass?"—Liverpool *Daily Post,* November 25, 1980.

Have you noted that people often feel that God is responsible for today's calamities and disasters? But the Bible reveals that the God of love is not deliberately causing the many floods, forest fires, earthquakes and other such calamities today. (1 John 4:8) Often these are freak effects of the earth's natural forces. Man, though, must accept some of the responsibility, for he builds towns on flood plains or on mountainsides in earthquake-prone areas.

Yet calamities, including earthquakes with great loss of life, were foretold in the Bible for our time. While not personally causing these things, God foresaw their coming. The small Bible book of Amos provides insight into God's ability to foresee coming disasters and offers us some timely warnings that we should consider.

Amos was a Hebrew living in Tekoa, a small town some 10 miles (16 km) south of Jerusalem. He might have seemed a most unlikely candidate to be a prophet and to deliver a judgment message. Why? Some men could claim that their father had been a prophet or that they had associated with a society known as "the sons of the prophets." (2 Ki. 2:3; 4:1) Not Amos. When challenged by an influential priest in the northern kingdom, Amos replied:

"I was not a prophet, neither was I the son of a prophet; but I was a herdsman and a nipper of figs of sycamore trees. And Jehovah proceeded to take me from following the flock, and Jehovah went on to say to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' "—Amos 7:14, 15.

So Amos was not a wealthy owner of herds or fields. He was a mere worker, caring for sheep on the grazing grounds of Judea and doing seasonal work puncturing an inferior type of fig to make them sweeter. Yet, even if Amos' background was not impressive, his message, delivered under the guidance of God's spirit, certainly was.

He prophesied sometime between the years 829 and 803 B.C.E., during the period when Jeroboam II ruled in the northern kingdom of Israel and Uzziah was king in Judah to the south. Amos said that the vision occurred "two years be-

fore the earthquake." (Amos 1:1) Historian Josephus says that there was an earthquake when Uzziah impiously tried to offer incense in the Holy of Jehovah's temple. But it seems that it was earlier in Uzziah's reign when there occurred the earthquake that Amos mentioned, one so severe that Zechariah mentioned it too. —2 Chron. 26:16–27:1; Zech. 14:5.

Amos became a prophet at a time when things might have seemed to be settled and going well. With God's support Uzziah in the south had enjoyed military successes. Security appeared to prevail in the northern kingdom, too. Jeroboam had restored Israel's borders to their former extent, and the Assyrian war machine that had affected Syria did not yet seem to threaten Israel.—2 Ki. 14:23-28.

CORRUPT AND IN LINE FOR CALAMITY

However, all was not as pleasant and promising as it appeared. Calamity was ahead for Israel, particularly at the hands of the Assyrians. Jehovah God chose Amos, sending him from the solitude of Judea to the northern kingdom of Israel, there to proclaim a judgment message.

As you read the short book of Amos, you can perceive some of the conditions existing in Israel that gave rise to Jehovah's sending of Amos. You could summarize the situation as: Prosperity and dissipation.

The carefree external prosperity of many in Israel marked them for judgment. The rich lived in idle luxury. There were summer houses and winter houses, some built of expensive hewn stones. Archaeological discoveries have confirmed Amos' report that the wealthy had ivory inlays or decorations on their ornate couches. They downed fancy wine, not by the cupful but by the bowlful, and self-indulgently pampered themselves with the choicest of oils and food.—Amos 3:12, 15; 5:11; 6:4, 6.

How did these wealthy Israelites get and keep their riches? Through injustice, oppression and evil practices. They selfishly cheated the poor, giving a short measure when selling grain (poor quality or refuse grain at that) and using deceptive weights. They did not hesitate to sell the poor into slavery over minor debts; nor did they return to the poor needed garments that had been given as a pledge.—Amos 2:6, 8; 8:4-6.

Such corruption was merely part of their disregard for God's way. There was much more. With contemptuous disrespect for Jehovah, both father and son would have sex relations with the same woman. The Nazirites' abstinence from wine must have been a rebuke for the sensuous, luxurious ways of the rich; so these tried to make the Nazirites break their integrity. The pure God thus hated the hypocritical tithing, sacrifices and ritual feasts of the rich.—Amos 2:7, 11, 12; 4:4, 5; 5:21.

God replied to Israel's moral and religious decay by sending Amos' message of impending calamity. But Amos also had words of comfort and hope.

AMOS' CALAMITOUS MESSAGE

The book opens with judgments *against* surrounding nations. Damascus (Syria), Gaza (Philistia), Tyre, Edom, Ammon and Moab have mistreated God's people, sometimes in ways that violated normal human conscience. The preview of judgment includes Judah. What is the point? If all these surrounding nations face judgment, how could Israel, whose guilt is aggravated by disregard for God's past acts

of care, hope to escape?—Amos 1:1–2:16.

Every effect has a cause, and the cause of Amos' prophesying is Jehovah; Amos would be afraid not to prophesy. (Amos 3:1-8) Though not mentioning Assyria, Amos assures the Israelites that an adversary will come against their pleasure-loving nation. (Amos 3:9-15) Israel did not respond to God's past reproofs. So Amos warns: "Get ready to meet your God." Yes, they must face up to their errors and change. If they will not, the Creator will see that calamity comes. —Amos 4:1-13.

But the Israelites will not respond to the kind appeals to "search for Jehovah, and keep living." They will not "hate what is bad, and love what is good." So the frightful "day of Jehovah" is sure. Through Amos, God foretells that they will go into exile. That came true; the Assyrians later overran them and carried away captives. (2 Ki. 17:1-6) Israel ignored Amos' rebuke and thus had to experience the thorough destruction that he predicted.—Amos 5:1–6:14.

With a series of descriptive pronouncements, Amos shows that Israel's end nears. Desolation could be like the devouring of a swarm of locusts, or that caused by a fire that consumes even the water. In those two cases Amos intercedes. But the next vision is final. As a builder could check a wall's straightness with a plummet, so God determines that Israel is no longer upright but is deserving of desolation. Amaziah, a priest of calf worship, accuses Amos of treason and orders him back to Judah. But Amos stands fast, even foretelling judgment for Amaziah and his family.—Amos 7:1-17.

Fruit is gathered at the end of the season; similarly, Israel's end is near. Jehovah, swearing by himself, will call him to account. When the execution of that judgment comes, Israelites will look for some word from God in heaven, but it will be too late. No one will escape by hiding, even in Carmel's caves.—Amos 8:1–9:7.

God will shake the land as if Israel were not a nation dedicated to him. But hope is not lost! Although the sinners who say "The calamity will not come near" would meet their end, yet some of Jacob's offspring would be preserved. And they were. Persons from Israel and from Judah returned from captivity in 537 B.C.E. —Amos 9:8-10, 13-15.

Of greater comfort, Amos foretells the rebuilding of the "booth of David." In 49 C.E. the disciple James quoted this part of Amos' prophecy. By then there was an anointed prospective king in David's line, Jesus Christ. The gathering of Christian disciples, Jews and Gentiles, to be corulers with Jesus was the marvelous fulfillment of the words at Amos 9:11, 12. —Acts 15:13-18.

CALAMITIES IN OUR TIME

Just as Amos was able to foretell what was to come for Israel, Jesus Christ was able to predict international developments of our time. While neither the loving God Jehovah, nor his Son, is causing such calamities, the wars, food shortages and earthquakes occurring since World War I are fulfilling Jesus' prophecy about the "conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 24:3-12) In fact, after the November 1980 disaster near Naples, Italy, Robert I. Tilling, chief of the U.S. Geological Survey's Office of Geochemistry and Geophysics reported: "There are some suggestions that both volcanoes and earthquakes worldwide are on the increase."

We certainly have good reason to heed Jesus' warning to be on the alert, not becoming preoccupied with luxurious living, as were the Israelites in Amos' day. The evidence proves that the "end" of the present wicked system of things will soon come. So we should "keep on the watch." —Matt. 24:14, 36-44; Amos 5:14.

Will sincerity alone please God?

TERRIBLE things have been done in the name of religion. Look at Stephen here, a disciple of Jesus Christ. He is being murdered!

Stephen's murderers are very religious men. One of them is Saul, the man watching the garments. (Acts 7:58-60) He later said: "I was making greater progress in Judaism than many of my own age." Rather than making him a better person, however, Saul said that his religion was responsible for his "persecuting the congregation of God."—Gal. 1:13, 14.

Saul persecuted Christians in Jerusalem by invading their homes, dragging them out and putting them into prison. (Acts 8:3) But he did not stop at that. He also started out for Damascus to arrest Christians there. —Acts 9:1, 2.

On his way, however, a remarkable thing happens.

As you can see, a light from the sky flashes around Saul and he falls to the ground. A voice says: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"

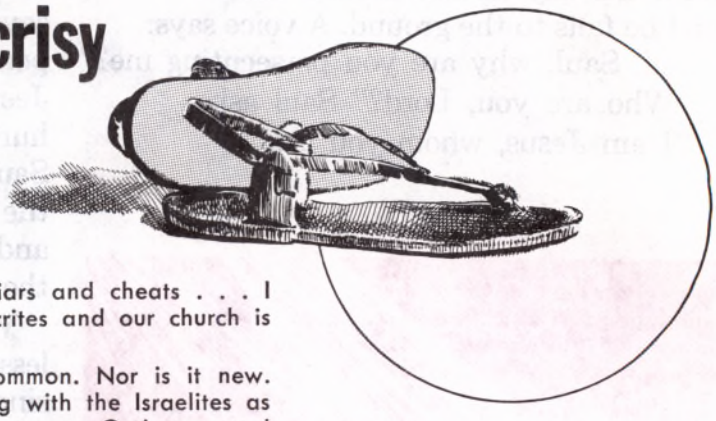
"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asks.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," comes the answer. (Acts 9:3-5) Jesus says this because when Saul persecutes Jesus' followers, Jesus feels as if he is being hurt himself. Soon afterward Saul becomes a member of the Christian congregation and, in time, is known as the apostle Paul.

We can learn an important lesson from this. Saul was sincere, believing that he was pleasing God by persecuting Christians. (Acts 22:3, 4; John 16:2) But that did not make what he *did* right. He needed to change his religion to gain God's approval. Later he wrote of others who were sincere, but who were not pleasing God. What was their problem?

Paul explains: "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God; but *not according to accurate knowledge*." (Rom. 10:2) Yes, along with sincerity, an accurate knowledge of God's Word is needed. If one does not know the truth of matters, one may do terrible things. So how important it is that we gain a correct knowledge of God's purposes! —1 Tim. 1:13; John 17:3.

Religious hypocrisy



THE Palm Beach, Florida, "Post-Times" printed a letter from a young lad. It read:

"I hate going to church because I see people there who I know are drunkards, gossips, liars and cheats . . . I don't have any respect for hypocrites and our church is full of them."—May 27, 1979.

Religious hypocrisy is not uncommon. Nor is it new. Even back when God was dealing with the Israelites as a people, at times hypocrisy was common. God expressed his view of it through the prophet Amos,* which is also His view of the various forms of religious hypocrisy today.

Through Amos God said: "Hear this, you men snapping at someone poor, even in order to cause the meek ones of the earth to cease, saying, 'How long will it be before the new moon passes and we may sell cereals? Also, the sabbath, and we may offer grain for sale; in order to make the ephah [the container for measuring out an ephah of grain] small and to make the shekel [the shekel weight used for weighing items when buying] great and to falsify the scales of deception; in order to buy lowly people for mere silver and someone poor for the price of a pair of sandals, and that we may sell mere refuse of grain?' "—Amos 8:4-6.

So these Israelites scrupulously observed the festival of the new moon and the weekly sabbath by refraining from all business activities. But they could not wait until these days of rest were over to resume their lawless practices. Their dishonesty brought ruin to the lowly and afflicted. Thus they caused the meek ones "to cease." These wicked men would callously defraud the poor by using false weights and measures. The poor would, therefore, become destitute and would be forced to sell themselves into slavery, and these selfish men would buy them. A poor man might not be able to pay for a pair of sandals, and for this his creditor might sell him into slavery. Not only was cheating done in the amount of grain that was sold but also as regards the quality of the cereals. The commodity sold was "mere refuse."

The actions of the unfaithful Israelites did not escape the notice of Jehovah God. He detested their religious hypocrisy. Through his prophet, he decreed: "Jehovah has sworn by the Superiority of Jacob [that is, by himself, as he could swear by none greater; compare Hebrews 6:13], 'Never will I forget all their works. Will it not be on this account that the land will be agitated, and every inhabitant in it will have to mourn; and it will, all of it, certainly come up just like the Nile and be tossed and sink down like the Nile of Egypt?' "—Amos 8:7, 8.

These words made it clear that the Most High would not forget the record of shameful works that stood against unfaithful Israelites. Under the weight of his judgment, the land would be in a state of agitation and the inhabitants would mourn. Thus the land would, in effect, rise and fall as does the Nile when it overflows its banks and then recedes.

Jehovah God has not changed his view of religious hypocrisy. His approved servants are those only whose works are in full harmony with his Word. (Jas. 1:25-27) That is why we should make sure that we are indeed living upright lives from God's standpoint.

* The book of Amos is discussed on pages 13-15.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

The Pope and the Bomb

● Pope John Paul II's historic visit to Japan last February was climaxed by "an 'Appeal for Peace' issued from the site of the first atomic bombing in history nearly 36 years ago," reported Japan's "Mainichi Daily News." From Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park, and in an emotional tone, the pontiff appealed "to the heads of state and of government, to those who hold political and economic power . . . [to] promise our fellow human beings that we will work untiringly for disarmament and the banishing of all nuclear weapons. . . . Remember Hiroshima."

Some might also "remember" that 31 years earlier, a dispatch from Rome, appearing in New York "Times" of February 3, 1950, under the headline "Vatican Approves Decision on Bomb," reported: "The Vatican, through its official newspaper, 'Osservatore Romano,' assured the United States Government and people today that it fully understood the reasons why President Truman had decided to approve the construction of a hydrogen superbomb." Earlier, Pope Pius XII had told the U.S. Senate Military Appropriations Subcommittee that Western law "can hardly hope to prevail . . . unless it has the backing of a reasonable force."—New York "Times," Nov. 18, 1949.

What are we to make out of such conflicting statements from two "infallible" spokesmen? Are they 'tickling the ears' of their listeners?—2 Tim. 4:3.

Legal Warning on Disco Danger

● Drug trafficking, immorality and violence have been well documented at the disco scene. Now the danger of violence is officially recorded in England, setting a legal precedent. Under the heading "Violence at discotheque" the journal "Justice of the Peace" recently reported a case in which a man "of previous good character" was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment following a disco brawl. The Court of Appeal (Criminal Division) upheld the sentence as "right in principle and in no way excessive." Why? Because "violence was spreading, and it should be clearly known that when violence occurred in places such as the present [a disco], where violence was likely to escalate, there would be an immediate prison sentence of substantial length, however good the defendant's record and background, and whatever mitigating circumstances there were."

The lesson for Christians? Keep clear of such places! Not only can "bad associations spoil useful habits" but the "superior authorities" have the God-given right to penalize those who engage in violence and wrongdoing. "For it is not without purpose that it [the legal authority] bears the sword; for it is God's minister, an avenger to express wrath upon the one practicing what is bad." —Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:33.

'Sin Against Own Body'

● "The sexual revolution of the past 25 years has produced an increase in the number of women who are unable to have babies," reports "The Press" of New Zealand. It quotes Britain's leading expert on venereal disease, Dr. Robert Catterall, as saying: "The adverse biological effects of sexual freedom on women and their babies are a disappointing development in the second half of the 20th century."

The doctor reports that rates of male and female infertility "have both risen sharply in parallel with the soaring rate of venereal disease," and each year, in England and Wales alone, about 11,000 women are treated for pelvic inflammatory disease, the most important cause of female infertility. Many of these women can no longer conceive even when antibiotics are given. In others the infection may be transmitted to their babies at birth.

Ignoring the sound advice of God's Word, modern man is reaping according to what he has sown—"corruption from his flesh." (Gal. 6:8) Appropriate, indeed, is the warning: "Avoid immorality. Any other sin a man commits does not affect his body; but the man who is guilty of sexual immorality sins against his own body."—1 Cor. 6:18, "Today's English Version."

"Welcome One Another"

"Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."—Rom. 15:7, Revised Standard Version; The Living Bible.

WELCOME into the United Nations organization has been given to 154 nations till now. Its member nations do not all have the same political ideology. They even have hostile attitudes, but in the U.N. they try to be "friendly enemies." They seem to grasp the truth of what an American journalist-poet said: "United—we stand. Divided—we fall." The U.N. claims to be an organization for world peace and security. Still, after all these years since World War II ended in 1945, it has not produced what American politician Wendell Wilkie said, "One world, one government." So the outbreak of World War III with nuclear weapons is feared more and more.

[2] Even in a nation belonging to the U.N., its citizens may not welcome all other fellow citizens into their social group. Prejudices control matters. The rich do not welcome the poor. Members of one religion do not welcome persons of another religion. Adherents of one political party refuse to welcome those of an opposing political party. Highly educated persons consider those of little or no education as beneath their notice. A person's own skin color may militate against him in the case of those of another skin color. Racial extractions may make a difference. There is no general, uniform acceptance of an individual on the basis of his being a fellow member of one big human family. Hence, personal dislikes and hostilities determine where a person can gain admission.

[3] Christendom is no exception to all of that, even though it is supposed to be a society of Christian nations. Because they are Christian in name only, they have repeatedly violated what is prophesied in Isaiah 2:4: "They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore." In Christendom persons who are Christian in name only will patriotically fight for their own national attachments even to their own death or that of their opponents. They find no solid reason for rejoicing in the United Nations organization, even though back in December of 1918 the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America called the then proposed League of Nations "the political expression of the kingdom of God on earth." Certainly the United Nations organization has not proved to be an expression of God's kingdom by means of Christ.

1. (a) How many have been welcomed as members into the United Nations organization? (b) What has it failed to produce, and so what is constantly feared?
2. Even within a nation, what things may militate against one citizen as to being welcomed by fellow citizens?
3. (a) How has Christendom not been any exception to the above things? (b) Has the U.N. proved to be any better than the League of Nations in being an expression of God's kingdom by Christ?

[4] However, the above-quoted words about nations not lifting up sword against one another and not learning war anymore are being fulfilled in those who are true imitators of Jesus Christ. This peaceful Son of God quoted many times from the prophecies of Isaiah that were written long aforetime. He did so for the instruction of his followers. One of such followers, the apostle Paul, wrote to the disciples of Christ in Rome in the first century and reminded them: "For all the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope."—Rom. 15:4.

4. What did Paul, as one who quoted from Isaiah's prophecies, say about 'the things written aforetime'?

[5] In fulfillment of things written aforetime in the Holy Scriptures, Jesus Christ endured reproach and persecution even to a disgraceful death on a stake like a political criminal. In his endurance to that extreme he became a perfect example for his disciples that would strengthen them to endure faithfully to the end.

[6] Because of his steadfastly enduring to

5. With regard to endurance, who furnished the finest example for Paul and fellow Christians?
6. (a) What shows that, on the stake, Jesus held on to his hope, and how was he strengthened to endure? (b) As in Jesus' case, what is true of his followers as to hope and endurance?

the finish of his earthly course Jesus held on to his God-given hope. Hence, he could say to the sympathetic thief who was impaled alongside him: "Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) During those grueling hours on the torture stake, Jesus experienced much comfort by calling to mind the things "written aforetime" that referred to him, and he was thus strengthened mightily. No less so, his devoted followers who suffer the reproaches heaped upon Jehovah God and Jesus Christ keep a firm grip on their Scripturally inspired hope for the future. They too are tremendously comforted by the Scriptures "written aforetime." Their hope, based on the most reliable Scriptures, "does not lead to disappointment."—Rom. 5:5.

[7] The thing for us to do is to have the frame of mind that Jesus Christ had during all his sufferings in an enemy world. In line with this the apostle Paul framed this prayer: "Now may the God who supplies endurance and comfort grant you to have among yourselves the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had, that with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 15:5, 6) By building up such a mental attitude in imitation of our Exemplar, Jesus Christ, we will keep in unity as a congregation of his disciples. The same mental attitude in a group leads to similar expressions. Thus it seems as if "one mouth" were speaking for the entire congregation with greater force and impressiveness. This is most fitting. Never can too much stress be laid upon glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ unitedly. There should be a blending of our voices with regard to the One who is to be glorified. Otherwise the hearer would become confused as to the message to be conveyed.

7. Whose mental attitude should the whole congregation have, and how does this affect their glorifying God?

A WELCOME THAT IS CHRISTLIKE

[8] In many organizations or societies of this system of things a disposition may exist on the part of many not to welcome newcomers because of national or racial prejudices. Differences as to the amount of education may play their part, or there may be religious differences. Back in ancient Rome of the first century C.E. there might have been natural reasons for such divisive things.

[9] The apostle Paul had not yet reached Rome, that cosmopolitan imperial city, but in hope of getting there shortly he wrote his inspired letter to the congregation there. After calling attention to the approachableness of Jesus Christ as the perfect example, Paul went on to say: "Therefore welcome one another, just as the Christ also welcomed us, with glory to God in view." (Rom. 15:7) For one thing, "all those who are in Rome as God's beloved ones, called to be holy ones," included natural circumcised Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles or non-Jews, freemen and slaves. (Rom. 1:7; 3:1-6; Phil. 4:22) So among those Roman Christians there were differences of religious background and social standing, all of this producing varieties of viewpoints and conscientious feelings. This could have resulted also in preferences of one's associations.

[10] Brushing all of that aside, Paul exhorted them all to "welcome one another," doing so warmly, cordially, sincerely, in genuine appreciation of a fellow Christian, a fellow believer. There was a perfect pattern to be followed in that regard, for Paul says to do so "just as the Christ also welcomed us." When he was on earth, did not Jesus say: "The one that comes to me

8. What might have tended to affect the unity of the congregation in Rome to which Paul wrote his letter?
9. Of whom was the Roman congregation then composed, and what might have produced differences in individual preferences of associations?
10. How did Jesus set the pattern as to the way in which we should welcome one another, and what did his doing so have in view?

I will by no means drive away"? (John 6:37) Yes! As a perfect man, he could have held us at a distance because of our imperfections and sinfulness. But he did not do so. Why not? Paul states the reason, by adding the words: "With glory to God in view." Welcoming all believers in him, Christ brought glory to God, for it magnified God's largeheartedness and his desire for all humans to be saved through the ransom sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ. It was just as Jesus himself said: "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."—John 3:16.

[11] Likewise, when we, as imitators of Jesus Christ, welcome all seekers into the congregation despite race, color, former religious membership, social standing or secular education, this works for God's glory. It gives all those thus welcomed a right viewpoint toward Jehovah God. Showing his willingness to receive all true believers into the congregation of which he was the spiritual Head, the resurrected Jesus told his disciples in "Galilee of the nations" what to do, saying: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you."—Isa. 9:1; Matt. 28:16-20.

[12] When we welcome all comers without distinction, it is quite a stimulus to us to remember that we are doing so "with glory to God in view." It moves the welcomed ones to appreciate the warmhearted generosity of God and to glorify him themselves. When we go outside the walls of our meeting places and go from door to door to proclaim the good news of God's kingdom to all whom we meet, we demonstrate that we "welcome one another, just as the Christ also welcomed us, with glory to God in view." This course results in glory to the God of whom we are witnesses regardless of whether those upon whom we call appreciate the Kingdom message or not. Those who welcome the Kingdom message will finally join in glorifying the God who sent his Kingdom messengers to them. Those who do not welcome our God-given message of salvation will at some future time realize that Jehovah God had thought of them and had sent his faithful witnesses to them, leaving them no reason to find fault with God. (Ezek. 33:33) God thus stays free of accusation with respect to their blood.

11. Why does such a warm welcome to newcomers lead to the glorifying of God, and so what did the risen Jesus tell his disciples in Galilee to do?

12. (a) Having God's glory in view when we welcome others serves as what to us? (b) How does our going from door to door counteract any accusing of God of bloodguilt?

FROM CARPENTER TO "MINISTER"

[13] Who, though, had the first opportunity to benefit from God's provision? It was the people through whom we got the Holy Bible. They were the natural Jews. Well, then, was not God showing partiality, especially when we remember that the non-Jews far outnumbered the circumcised Jews even 1,900 years ago? On the surface of things it might seem so. But God had to make a start somewhere, and he made a start with those to whom he had made special promises through their forefathers, namely, the circumcised Jews. However, the final benefits of God's pursuit of this course were not to be confined strictly to the natural Jews or Hebrews. So is there just basis for complaining about that? None at all!

[14] Let us never forget that God had made unbreakable promises to deserving men with regard to their natural descendants,

13. Why can God not be accused of partiality for giving the first opportunities to a people less populous than the rest of the world?

14. Hence, the Son of God from heaven was obliged to become a man of what sort, and what welcome was he given by those of his own sort?

the Jews. Accordingly the Son of God had to come down from heaven in order to carry out those promises of his heavenly Father. This obliged him to be born as a member of an internationally hated race, the people with whom God made a national covenant. Yet, even as a Jew, the Son of God was not made welcome by the majority of fellow Jews, just as a writer of the earthly history of the Son of God says: "He came to his own home, but his own people did not take him in."—John 1:11.

15 So to the Christian congregation in Rome, not all of whom were natural Jews, the Jewish apostle Paul wrote: "For I say that Christ actually became a minister of those who are circumcised in behalf of God's truthfulness, so as to verify the promises He made to their forefathers, and that the nations might glorify God for his mercy." (Rom. 15:8, 9a) At Nazareth in Galilee, in the home of his adoptive father, the circumcised Jew Joseph, the growing Jesus learned to become a carpenter. By birth into the tribe of Judah Jesus did not belong to the priestly family or to the tribe of temple Levites. Naturally he could not enter the ranks of the temple servants at Jerusalem. But did Jesus the Son of God come to earth merely to serve and die as a carpenter? No! So in his becoming a "minister of those who are circumcised" much more is meant than his becoming a carpenter like his foster father Joseph.

16 Had Jesus gone no farther in life than his carpenter work in Nazareth, he certainly would not have carried out his foretold ministry. So his heavenly Father, Jehovah God, started him off in something different, that he might be a "minister of those who are circumcised," not just of the townspeople of Nazareth, but of the whole nation. Accordingly, at the age of 30 he gave up the carpenter's trade for good.

17 What kind of work did Jesus undertake after getting baptized by John the Baptizer, a Levite, and being baptized with God's holy spirit? Was it a service inferior to that of the temple priests and Levites, who were real "ministers" of God at Jerusalem? Certainly everyone acquainted with the facts will admit that he took up an official service, a "ministry," and not merely a religious profession. Just as the English Revised Version of the Bible words it: "Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises given unto the fathers." (Rom. 15:8; also the *Authorized* or *King James Version*) He was undeniably performing a national service, occupying a ministerial office, not by man's appointment but by that of God, the Universal Sovereign. What Jesus did after his change of occupation on earth was vastly more important than the religious service of the Jewish high priest at Jerusalem.

18 Just as Jesus Christ could not perform any religious service in the temple at Jerusalem and thus compete with the priests and the Levites there, he could not, and, of course, would not, perform religious services in any temple of the non-Jewish nations, in Rome, Athens, or elsewhere. Yet he was obliged to become a "minister of those who are circumcised" for the sake of God's truthfulness. How so? Because he had to "verify the promises [God] made to their forefathers," Hebrews, not Gentiles. For example, their 'forefather' Abraham had many sons by

15. What kind of work did Jesus do at Nazareth, and in doing this was he serving as a "minister of those who are circumcised"?
16. In order to serve more than the townspeople of Nazareth as a carpenter, what did Jesus proceed to do?
17. How are we to compare the work of Jesus after he was baptized and anointed with the service of the Jewish high priest at the temple?
18. Though not recognized as a "minister" by any earthly nation, why was it "of those who are circumcised" that Jesus became a "minister"?

three women, but God chose Abraham's only son by his first wife, Sarah, to receive the Abrahamic promise, namely, Isaac. In turn, Isaac had twin sons, but God chose the younger twin, Jacob, who was later called Israel, to transmit the Abrahamic promise concerning the "seed" by means of whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. In time the 12 sons of Jacob produced the 12 tribes of Israel, with whom, as a nation, God made his national covenant through the prophet Moses as the mediator.

[19] Later, after the nation of Israel chose to have a human king as the visible representative of Jehovah, He made His royal promise to King David of the tribe of Judah. Hence, the promised Messiah, or Christ, had to come in David's family. This accounts for it that Jesus was born in David's hometown of Bethlehem, as David's heir through birth from the Judean virgin, Mary. Heavenly angels welcomed him into the earth. Thus the Son of God from heaven could not escape being born a Jew. The unbreakable promises of God his Father had to be confirmed or vindicated. God was not letting himself be proved a liar.

[20] Jesus was very glad to cooperate with his heavenly Father. Hence, he "actually became a minister of those who are circumcised." He was circumcised like one of them. For three and a half years after Jesus' death and resurrection special favor was shown to the circumcised Jews. Yet a welcome into Jehovah's theocratic organization awaited uncircumcised Gentiles, or non-Jews. This was to be in confirmation of Jehovah's inviolable promises to men.

19. Why was Jesus not born into the tribe of Levi, and who welcomed him into the earth, and where?

20. Though Jesus became one of "those who are circumcised," what awaited people of the non-Jewish nations, and why?

"Be Glad, You Nations, With His People"

WHO are "his people" with whom all nations are called upon to "be glad"? (Rom. 15:10) It has not proved to be the Jewish people. The natural Jews who still try to keep the law of Moses have been hated and persecuted during the 1,900-year period since the year 70 C.E., the year of the destruction of ancient Jerusalem by the Roman legions under General Titus. Oddly, not even the natural Jews themselves have rejoiced with "his people," Jehovah's people. At the close of an inspired song sung in the year 1473 B.C.E., the Jewish prophet Moses was the one who sang out: "Be glad, you nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and

1. Why have the Jews who still keep the law of Moses not proved to be "his people" with whom the nations are called upon to "be glad"?

he will pay back vengeance to his adversaries and will indeed make atonement for the ground of his people."—Deut. 32:43.

[2] When Paul made and applied his quotation from those words of Moses, about 56 C.E., Jesus had died, been resurrected and ascended to heaven long before, in 33 C.E. So from Pentecost of that year onward, "his people," Jehovah's people, were the dedicated, baptized, spirit-begotten disciples of Jesus Christ. Some years later, about 60-61 C.E., Paul wrote to members of Jehovah's "people" at Colossae and said: "Thanking the Father [Jehovah] who rendered you suitable for your participation in the inheritance of the holy ones in the light. He delivered us from the authority of the darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." (Col. 1:12, 13) Such a transfer began on the Jewish day of Pentecost (Sivan 6) of 33 C.E., after Jesus returned to heaven.

[3] On that day, by means of his glorified royal Son Jesus Christ, the heavenly Fa-

2. When did the transfer of Jesus' followers from "the authority of the darkness . . . into the kingdom of the Son of his love" start taking place?

3. By that transfer into the spiritual kingdom of God's beloved Son, what did they become in behalf of the King?

Roman centurion Cornelius and his family and friends at Caesarea benefited from the ministry of Peter

ther poured out his holy spirit first on the waiting disciples, about 120 of them at Jerusalem. Thus they were transferred from under the authority of worldly darkness into the spiritual kingdom of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ, "the light of the world." (John 8:12) That spiritual kingdom was set up by Jehovah God, and in it Jesus Christ as the spiritual King served as Jehovah's minister of state. In carrying out this ministry he uses his spirit-begotten disciples on earth as "ambassadors substituting for Christ." (2 Cor. 5:20) According to the *English Revised Version,* they are "ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ." Such "ambassadors" have indeed a ministry, a government service.

[4] It is with such ambassadors that all the nations not made up of spiritual Israelites are to "be glad." Over what? The Christian ambassadorial minister Paul answers when he writes to the congregation in Rome and says: "Christ actually became a minister of those who are circumcised [the natural Jews] in behalf of God's truthfulness, so as to verify the promises He made to their forefathers, and that the nations might glorify God for his mercy." (Rom. 15:8, 9a) What was God's mercy to the Gentile "nations"?

[5] Back there in the first century C.E., God's "mercy" was this: Jehovah God allowed the uncircumcised Gentiles (or, people of the nations) to come in under the "promises" that he had made to the forefathers of the circumcised Jews. In the case of uncircumcised non-Jews, this began in the year 36 C.E., when the Roman centurion Cornelius and his family and friends at Caesarea accepted the ministry of the apostle Peter and were anointed with God's holy spirit and got baptized. (Acts, chap. 10) Whether Cornelius and his family left Caesarea and returned to Italy to become members of the congregation at Rome, which was up till then composed of circumcised Jewish believers and possibly Jewish "proselytes," we do not know. (Acts 2:1-10) But from then on God showed "mercy" to the believing, baptized Gentiles by admitting them into the spiritual "kingdom" of his beloved Son, despite their uncircumcision.

[6] In this way the "nations," whether circumcised Samaritans, circumcised Egyptians, or uncircumcised non-Jews, were favored with becoming members of the 'seed of Abraham,' by means of whom all the families of the earth will have to bless themselves. (Gen. 12:3; 22:15-18; Gal. 3:3-29) Although at present these are in the spiritual kingdom of the Son of God's love, all those proving faithful to their earthly death will be resurrected into the heavenly kingdom of God. There they will reign with Christ for 1,000 years, to bless all the families of the earth. (Rev. 20:4-6) In the meantime, while yet in the flesh on earth, they have the "ministry" that comes upon them as "ambassadors substituting for Christ," engaging in "the ministry of the word" about Jehovah's kingdom by Christ. On this account they cannot consistently become ministers of the political governments of this Devil-controlled world.—Acts 6:4.

MAKING PUBLIC ACKNOWLEDGMENT AMONG NATIONS

[7] The Kingdom "ambassadors" take a strictly neutral stand toward worldly conflicts. They know that "the times of the Gentiles," or "the appointed times of the

4. (a) God's "people" with whom the nations are to "be glad" is made up therefore of whom? (b) Over what are the Gentile nations to glorify God?

5. (a) What was that "mercy" of God toward the uncircumcised Gentiles? (b) When and with whom did that "mercy" begin, with admission into what?

6. (a) In Paul's day God's "mercy" consisted in letting the nations become members of what? (b) Why can these partakers of God's "mercy" not take part in the ministries of worldly governments?

7. What stand do these "ambassadors" take toward the conflicts of this world, and why do they keep rejoicing and invite others to join them in this?

nations," ended in the early fall of the year 1914, during the third month of World War I. (Luke 21:24; compare *AV*) At that time the lease of the Gentile nations for exercising world domination ran out. Such worldly nations, including those of Christendom, stubbornly refuse to recognize that fact. So they oppose and persecute the Christian witnesses of Jehovah who call attention to that fact. All such persecution is just as was foretold in Bible prophecies. In spite of it all, the "ambassadors" of God's established kingdom keep on rejoicing. They invite the people of all the nations to rejoice with them and to join with them in announcing the kingdom that he has laid on the shoulder of Jesus Christ.

[8] From the spring of 1935 (May) a "great crowd" of people of all the nations began to be glad with the spirit-anointed "people" of Jehovah, who were heirs of his heavenly kingdom. Gladdened persons who make up that "great crowd" of all nationalities are keenly interested in becoming earthly subjects of God's millennial kingdom by Christ. (Rev. 7:9-17; 22:17) They clearly discern that at the close of the Gentile Times in 1914 "the kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever." (Rev. 11:15) They appreciate that they are living in the time of crossing over from the doomed political governments of this world to the millennial kingdom of God's Messiah or Christ. They would very much like to live through this transition period and, without dying, enter into that new order on earth, under that Messianic kingdom. This would be a great "mercy" on the part of Jehovah God toward them.

[9] Yes, it has even been an unusual "mercy" on Jehovah's part that "this good news of the kingdom" has been "preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations," and that it has come their way. (Matt. 24:14) From the spring of 1935 those making up the "great crowd" have availed themselves of God's "mercy" and have responded to the invitation to dedicate themselves to Jehovah God through Christ and have symbolized their dedication by baptism in water. Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats, as recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, shows that they must do good to his chosen ones, his spiritual brothers, now during this "conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 24:3, 31) This includes their helping Christ's spiritual "brothers" in preaching "this good news of the kingdom" down till the oncoming "great tribulation," the like of which has never occurred before. (Matt. 24:14-22) Because of cooperating with the remnant of "ambassadors substituting for Christ," they enter into a new status.

[10] The "great crowd" of sheeplike ones who are gathered to Christ's right side of approval serve in the capacity of envoys for Christ in the sacred service of his

8. (a) Since when has a "great crowd" of all nationalities been gathered to the side of God's established kingdom? (b) What do they clearly discern and what merciful experience would they like to enjoy?

9. (a) Those making up the international "great crowd" have acted on what invitation, and how have they symbolized this? (b) As sheeplike ones, how have they done good to Christ's spiritual "brothers" during this conclusion of the system of things?

10. Into what new status have the "great crowd" entered, and what service have they rendered with the "ambassadors substituting for Christ"?

In Coming Issues

- **The God of Love Hates a Divorcing**
- **The Judgment Day of the Gods**
- **Can Death Be Defeated?**

kingdom. A "ministry" is laid upon them to serve in the interests of a royal government, "the kingdom of the heavens." By the magnificent service that they render with the Kingdom "ambassadors," they show their gratitude to Jehovah God.

THE GLADNESS OF THE NATIONS FORETOLD

[11] The apostle Paul quotes from the psalmist, King David, when he tells how the nations will come to "glorify God for his mercy," as Paul goes on to say: "Just as it is written: 'That is why I will openly acknowledge you among the nations and to your name I will make melody.'" (Ps. 18:49; 2 Sam. 22:50; Rom. 15:9b) The inspired psalmist described who the One was to whose name he would make melody, when he added the closing words: "The One doing great acts of salvation for his king and exercising loving-kindness to his anointed one, to David and to his seed for time indefinite."—2 Sam. 22:51.

[12] The Greater David, namely, Jesus Christ, did not do much thanking and lauding of Jehovah God among the Gentile nations when he was here on earth as a perfect man. He did do some Kingdom preaching among the Samaritans and to a Syrophoenician woman whose daughter he delivered from a demon. Also, much of his preaching was done in what Isaiah 9:1 calls "Galilee of the nations." Up there he made the headquarters for his Kingdom preaching campaign at Capernaum, situated beside the Sea of Galilee. (Matt. 4:12-15) After his resurrection from the dead it was up in "Galilee of the nations" that he said to his disciples as "ambassadors substituting for Christ": "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you."—Matt. 28:19, 20.

[13] Some days after the resurrected Jesus gave his baptized disciples that commission, there came the day of Pentecost of 33 C.E. In the early morning of that day the glorified Jesus channeled the holy spirit of Jehovah God upon about 120 disciples at Jerusalem. As a result of their preaching that day, about 3,000 Jews and Jewish proselytes accepted the Kingdom tidings and got baptized in water. Afterward these recipients of the holy spirit joined in the ambassadorial work as substitutes for Christ. After persecution broke out in Jerusalem some began 'openly acknowledging' Jehovah among the Samaritans and still later among uncircumcised Gentiles of Roman nationality and others. As they heard Jehovah being openly acknowledged and lauded among them, people of all nationalities could call upon his name through Christ for merciful salvation.

[14] The apostle Paul quotes more prophecy in support of his argument, saying: "And again he says: 'Be glad, you nations, with his people.'" (Rom. 15:10; Deut. 32:43) How, though, could people of all nations become glad with Jehovah's "people" unless they heard about him? So those belonging to "his people" had to preach his Messianic kingdom to them.—Rom. 10:13-15.

[15] The apostle Paul offers more Scriptural support by telling what Jehovah said by His inspired mouthpiece: "And again: 'Praise Jehovah, all you nations, and let

11. Who is the One to whose name David said he would make melody, and how does he describe this one?
12. (a) How did Jesus, when a man on earth, "openly acknowledge" Jehovah among the nations? (b) In what province did the resurrected Jesus tell his disciples what to do as his "ambassadors"?
13. (a) On what day and how were the waiting disciples in Jerusalem commissioned for their ambassadorial ministry? (b) Where did they begin publicly to "acknowledge" Jehovah among the nations?
14. What did the apostle Paul next quote from Deuteronomy 32:43, and so what did those belonging to Jehovah's people have to do in that behalf?
15. By what action and by whom must Paul's quotation from Psalm 117:1 be followed up so that nations may respond?

all the peoples praise him.'" (Rom. 15:11; Ps. 117:1) Yes, it is easy to say that, but how can all nations, peoples and clans do it unless we tell them about Jehovah and explain why he should be praised? Consequently, international preaching about his kingdom by Christ needs to be done. This is the "ministry" that is assigned to the remnant of Kingdom heirs and the "great crowd" of their companion workers.—Rev. 7:9-17.

[16] The apostle Paul quotes a fourth witness in support of his argument, saying: "And again Isaiah says: 'There will be the root of Jesse, and there will be one arising to rule nations; on him nations will rest their hope.'" (Rom. 15:12; Isa. 11:10) Jesse of Bethlehem was the father of David, whom God appointed to be king over the 12 tribes of Israel. David himself could not be a "root" of life to his fleshly father. So the real "root of Jesse" had to be Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem and in the royal tribe of Judah, Jesse's own tribe. Jesus will become a life-giving "root" to his earthly forefather Jesse by resurrecting him and his son David from the dead during his millennial reign.—Rev. 22:16.

[17] David did "rule nations" after he subdued the non-Jewish nations that had been left in the Promised Land. However, David has now been dead since 1037 B.C.E., and people of the nations cannot rest their hope in him. Happily they can rest their hope in the presently reigning Greater David, Jesus Christ, "the root and the offspring of David." (Rev. 22:16) Their resting their hope in him, the antitypical David, will not prove to be in vain, or to be misplaced.

[18] Since 1935 hundreds of thousands of the "great crowd" that comes out of all nations, tribes, peoples and languages have rested their hope in the Ruler who will not disappoint them. They prove this by obeying his command to preach "this good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matt. 24:14) Hope for all the people of the nations that have died since the invasion of death-dealing sin among mankind rests upon the now ruling heavenly King, Jesus Christ. Already since he was enthroned at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914, he governs believing, hopeful persons of all the nations. He will yet rule over many, many more after resurrecting all the ransomed ones of humankind.

[19] Is there reason, then, for persons of all nations to "be glad" with Jehovah's "people," the spiritual Israelites? Yes, all the reason in the world! How fitting here is the lovely benediction with which Paul closes his quotations from prophecy! For he says: "May the God who gives hope fill you with all joy and peace by your believing, that you may abound in hope with power of holy spirit." (Rom. 15:13) Beyond all gainsaying that inspired prayer is being fulfilled upon all the Christian witnesses of Jehovah in all quarters of the globe. The coming true of Bible prophecies indicates that our all-glorious hope nears realization. "Be glad"!

16. How is Paul's quotation from Isaiah 11:10 regarding the "root of Jesse" to be fulfilled?
17. Who, then, is the "root of Jesse" on whom the nations can rest their hope?
18. Who of all the nations have already rested their hope in that promised Governor, and whom does he already govern?
19. Is there reason, then, for believers of all nationalities to abound in hope as time goes on? and to be glad?

"He that is showing insight in a matter will find good, and happy is he that is trusting in Jehovah."—Prov. 16:20.

QUESTIONS from READERS

● How many Passovers occurred during Jesus' earthly ministry?

The combined evidence of the Gospels is that there were four Passover celebrations and that Jesus' ministry was thus three and a half years long.

No one of the Gospels specifically mentions four Passovers. In fact, Matthew, Mark and Luke (often called the Synoptic Gospels) do not mention any Passover except the final one at which Jesus died. It thus is necessary, as in other matters, to combine the details provided by all the Gospel accounts.

John 2:13 refers to a Passover near the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Since he was baptized in the fall of 29 C.E., the Passover of John 2:13 must have been in the spring of 30 C.E. John's Gospel also mentions a Passover at John 6:4 and the final one Jesus attended before he died. (John 13:1) But there is good reason to hold that there was yet another Passover, coming between those mentioned in John 2:13 and John 6:4. How so?

After the Passover in 30 C.E., Jesus preached in Judea for a time and then headed north to Galilee, doing so when there were yet four months till harvesttime. (John 4:35) Though John, in chapter four, introduces only the start of Jesus' lengthy Galilean ministry, we read at John 5:1: "After these things there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem." What festival was that?

As an aid in determining what festival this was, we can note that all the Gospels relate the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000 persons at Bethsaida. (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15) Both the reference in John 6:4 to an approaching Passover and Mark's mention that the grass was green indicate that this miracle occurred in the springtime. But the accounts by Matthew, Mark and Luke place this miracle deep into Jesus' Galilean ministry, on his third tour of the region. The Synoptic Gospels relate too many events for all of them to have occurred in less than a year between the beginning of the Galilean ministry and the Passover of John 6:4.

In the article "Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ," Harold W. Hoehner observes: "One problem with an addition of a year between the Passovers of John 2:13 and 6:4 is that there is no mention of an additional Passover by John. This is an argument from silence and [it is noteworthy that] not all the feasts are mentioned in John, for example the Feast of Pentecost. Also, the Synoptic accounts require another year between the Passovers of 2:13 and 6:4."—Published in *Bibliotheca Sacra,* Volume 131, April-June 1974, pages 147-162.

However, if the festival mentioned at John 5:1 was itself a Passover, there would have been time for the events. Furthermore, some manuscripts at John 5:1 speak of it as "*the* festival," which would likely mean the Passover. And the Passover was a festival for which Jews were required by the Mosaic law to go up to Jerusalem, as John 5:1 says Jesus did.

This indicates, then, that the earthly ministry of Jesus involved not three but four Passovers. Concerning various theories about the length of Jesus' ministry, Harold W. Hoehner adds: "The three-year ministry of Jesus from the first Passover to the passion Passover is the most viable option. Of course, since Jesus' baptism and public ministry preceded the first Passover, the total length of His ministry would be about three and a half years." And this is exactly the length indicated by Daniel's prophecy of "seventy weeks" of years.—Dan. 9:24-27.

Regarding the final 'week of years,' Daniel wrote: "He ["Messiah the Leader"] must keep the covenant in force for the many [circumcised Jews and proselytes] for one week [of seven years]; and at the half of the week [after three and a half years] he will cause sacrifice and gift offering to cease [by means of his death that fulfilled the Law]." (Dan. 9:27) Accordingly, Jesus was baptized and anointed with God's spirit as the Messiah in 29 C.E. He died in the spring of 33 C.E., after a ministry of three and a half years.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

July 19: "Welcome One Another." Page 20. Songs to Be Used: 85, 36.

July 26: "Be Glad, You Nations, with His People." Page 25. Songs to Be Used: 58, 6.