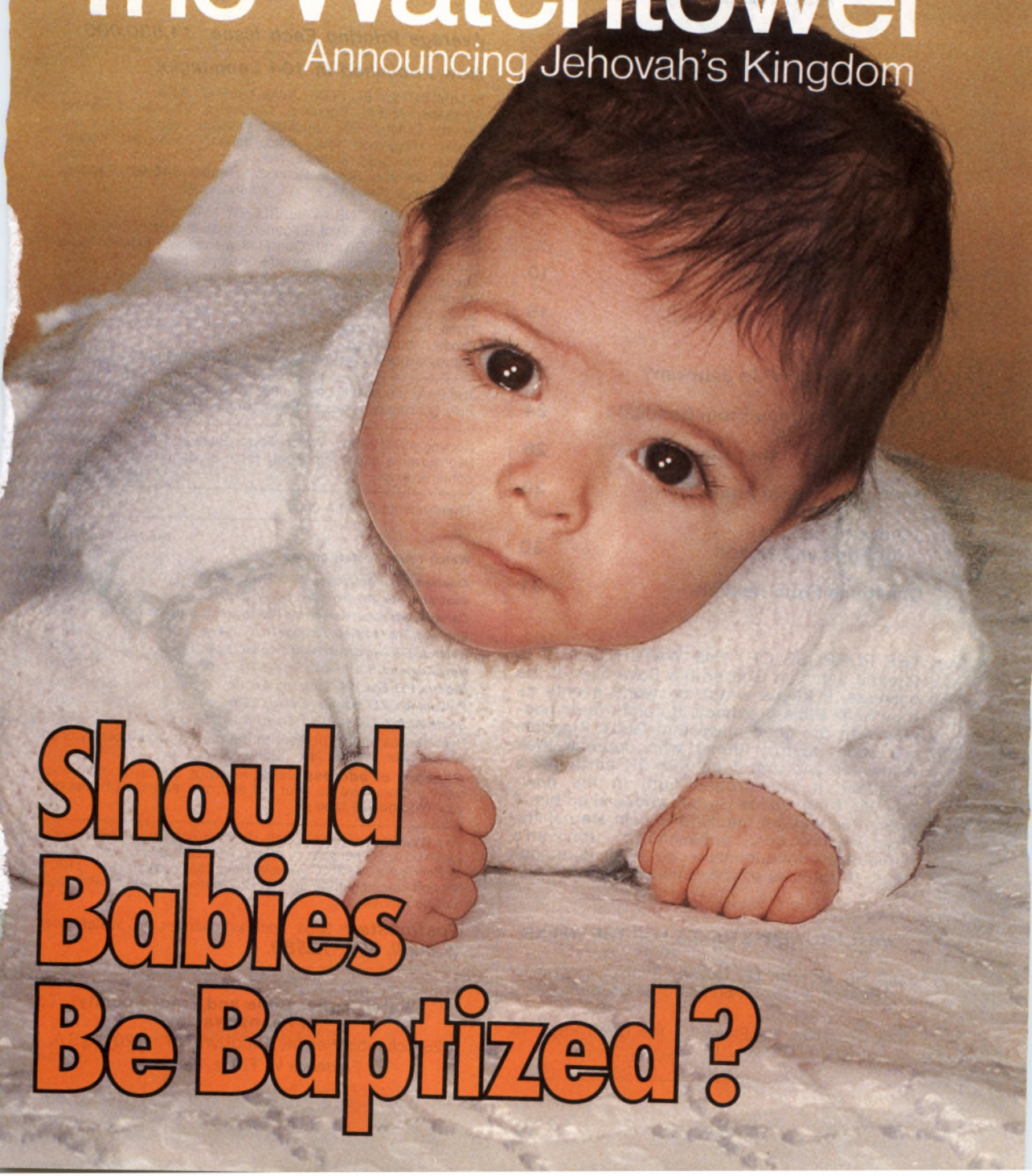


March 15, 1986

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**Should
Babies
Be Baptized?**

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THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER" is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. "The Watchtower," published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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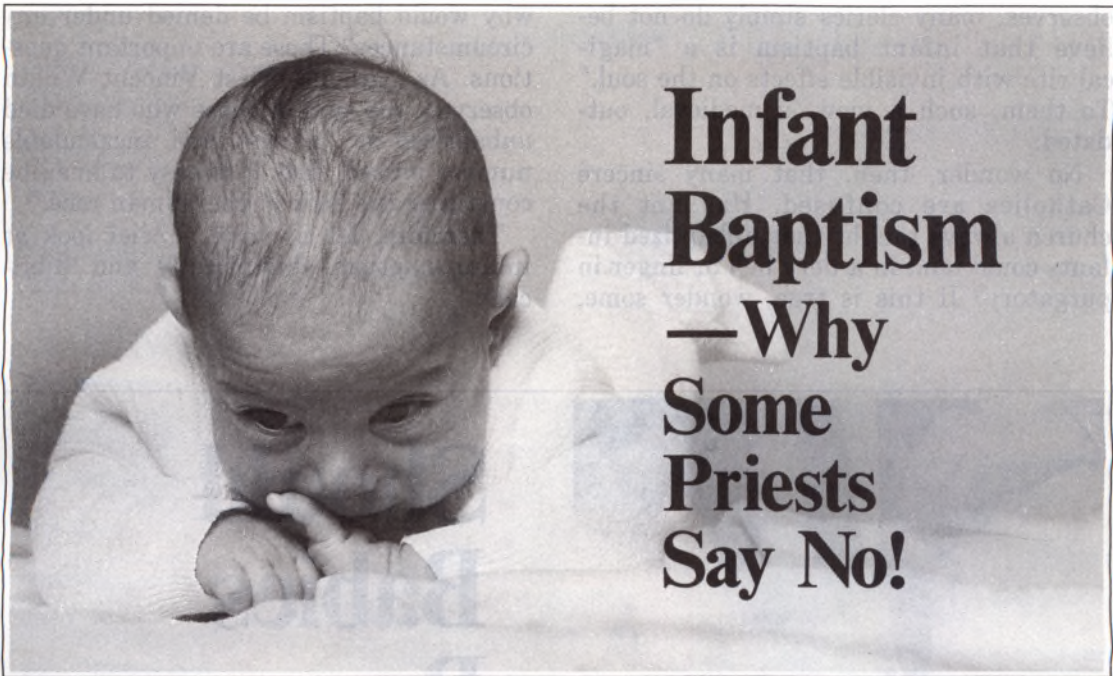
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Infant Baptism —Why Some Priests Say No!

ALAN and Sonia simply wanted their baby to be baptized. It therefore came as a shock when their Anglican priest not only refused to perform the rite but also added this piece of advice: "Do it yourself." The reason? Neither Alan nor Sonia were regular churchgoers.—*The Christian Century*, June 3-10, 1981.

Quite a few couples have recently experienced such rejection—a clear signal that some churches are changing their view of infant baptism. Consider the Roman Catholic Church. Following the Vatican II council, the church revised its infant baptism rites. Yes, the church is still baptizing babies, but now the parents must first give assurances that they will bring up the child as a Catholic. Decreed the Vatican: "If these assurances are not really serious, there can be grounds for delaying the sacrament; and if they are certainly nonexistent, the sacrament should even be refused."—*L'Osservatore Romano*, "In-

struction on Infant Baptism," December 1, 1980.

This is a far cry from the days when, according to Catholic priest Joseph M. Champlin, "zealous missionaries [would] baptize pagan babies abandoned along the road," and priests "admonished parents not to delay an infant's Baptism over a month under pain of mortal sin."

What is behind such changed attitudes? For one thing, church leaders now recognize that baptism does not make a Christian. Sagging church attendance and a general lack of devotion among baptized Catholics have become a real source of concern. "Why should the church compound the problem by baptizing children who are practically guaranteed to be non-practicing adults?" argues an article in *U.S. Catholic*.

The new hard line on baptism, though, also exposes a serious rift among theologians. As Catholic writer Joseph Martos

observes, many clerics simply do not believe that infant baptism is a “magical rite with invisible effects on the soul.” To them, such a view is medieval, outdated.

No wonder, then, that many sincere Catholics are confused. Has not the church always taught that unbaptized infants could land in a fiery hell or linger in purgatory? If this is true, wonder some,

why would baptism be denied under *any* circumstances? These are important questions. As Catholic priest Vincent Wilkin observed, the sum of those who have died unbaptized is “a vast and incalculable number indeed, that it is easy to imagine constitute the bulk of the human race.”

Therefore, let us take a brief look at infant baptism—historically and Biblically.



Should Babies Be Baptized?

The infant hardly looks like a sinner. Yet washing away sin is what this age-old rite is all about. The godfather thrice renounces Satan and his works. A priest then takes a small vessel and gently pours water upon the forehead of the child three times, saying, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

FOR nearly two millennia infants have been baptized in a ceremony like this. Parents may describe it as a deeply moving experience. However, does the practice find its origin in God’s Word? Catholic theologians admit that it does not.—See the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 2, page 69.

Read the Bible book of Acts for yourself,

and you will quickly see that among early Christians, baptism was for those capable of ‘hearing and receiving words’ with understanding and of ‘doing penance.’ (Acts 2:14, 22, 38, 41, *Douay Version*) Hardly things an infant could do! True, the Bible does speak of whole households, such as that of Cornelius, being baptized.* But even then, baptism was for those “hearing the word”—not for infants.—Acts 10:44-47.

*At times the term “household” in the Bible obviously excludes infants. For example, Titus 1:11 speaks of apostates “subverting entire households.”—See also 1 Samuel 1:21, 22.

A Tradition of God or of Men?

Unable to point to a Biblical precedent, the Vatican says, "The practice of baptizing infants is considered a rule of immemorial tradition." But was this tradition laid down by Jesus Christ? No, for infant baptism did not catch on until quite some time after the death of the apostles. At the end of the second century, church father Tertullian argued, "Let [children] become Christians when they have become able to know Christ."

The apostle Paul warned, however, that eventually there would come a time "when people will not tolerate sound doctrine." (2 Timothy 4:3, *The New American Bible*) After the apostles died and were no longer able to 'act as a restraint,' unscriptural practices began to creep into Christian worship. (2 Thessalonians 2:6) Among them was infant baptism. But infant baptism did not become the rule until the fifth century. At that time a fierce debate took place that forever changed Christendom.

It started when a British monk named Pelagius made a trip to Rome. Appalled at the corruption he saw there among so-called Christians, the cleric set out to spur men on to "more moral effort." Man could not blame his weaknesses on 'original sin,' said Pelagius. "Everything good and everything evil . . . is *done by us*, not *born with us*." Pelagian doctrine quickly became the talk of Christendom.

But not for long. Church leaders viewed this abandonment of 'original sin' as heresy. And Pelagius unwittingly played right into their hands by favoring what was by then a popular custom—infant baptism. A bishop named Augustine saw this as a glaring inconsistency. 'If infants must be baptized,' argued Augustine, 'what of those unbaptized?' The seemingly logical conclusion was that such ones would suffer the fires of hell because they were unbaptized. This point appar-

ently established, Augustine struck the fatal blow: Since unbaptized infants indeed suffered damnation, what else could account for this but 'original sin'?

Pelagian doctrine collapsed. A church council at Carthage subsequently declared Pelagius' teachings heresy. 'Original sin' became as much a part of Catholicism as the confessional. And the church was now steered in the course of promoting mass conversions—often forced—to save people from the 'fires of hell.' Infant baptism went from being a popular custom to an official instrument of salvation, an instrument Protestantism would inherit.

'At the Border of Hell'

Augustine's doctrine raised some embarrassingly difficult questions: How could a God of love cause innocent babies to suffer in hell? Would unbaptized babies receive the same punishment as hardened sinners? Coming up with answers has not been easy for theologians. Says Catholic priest Vincent Wilkin: "Some have committed unbaptized infants to the full fury of the flames of hell, others believed they were not consumed by the flames but merely heated to a temperature of real discomfort; others would make the discomfort the very tiniest possible in hell . . . Some would place them in a terrestrial paradise."*

The most popular theory of all, though, has proved to be that the souls of unbaptized infants are housed in limbo. This word literally means "border" (such as the border, or hem, of a garment) and describes a region that supposedly stands on the borders of hell. For theologians, limbo is a very convenient notion. It at least modifies the horrifying specter of suffering infants.

* Augustine himself suggested that unbaptized infants "will be involved in the mildest condemnation of all."

But like any man-made theory, limbo has its problems. Why is it not mentioned in Scripture? Can babies get out of limbo? And why should innocent babies have to go there in the first place? Understandably, the church makes a point of saying that limbo "is not official Catholic teaching."*—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

The Debate Heats Up Again

For centuries Catholics basically held to the Augustinian viewpoint and 'limbo proofed' their children by baptism. However, since the 1950's there has been a dramatic revival of the infant-baptism debate. Catholic scholars have begun expressing serious doubts that the practice is Biblical. Others admit that they can accept neither Augustine's hellfire notions nor limbo.

At first, though, conservative church leaders refused to budge. In 1951 Pope Pius XII made a speech to a group of midwives. Reaffirming the belief that "the state of grace at the moment of death is absolutely necessary for salvation," he encouraged the midwives to perform the baptism rite themselves if it appeared likely that a newborn child was going to die. "Do not, then, fail in performing this charitable service," he urged. Similarly, in 1958 the Vatican issued a stiff warning that "infants are to be baptized as soon as possible."

Nevertheless, controversy erupted again following the famous Vatican II council. In a surprise move, the church tried to straddle conservative and liberal positions. 'Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation,' said the council. Curiously, though, salvation was also possi-

* When an 18th-century church synod tried to declare limbo "a Pelagian fable," Pope Pius VI issued a papal bull condemning the synod as heretical. Though short of fully endorsing limbo, the papal bull kept the theory alive.

ble for those "who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ."*

As a follow-up, the church then revised the infant baptism rite. Among other things, priests now had the option of refusing baptism if the child's parents failed to promise to raise him as a Catholic. Had the church finally moved away from Augustine's doctrine? Some thought so and began to question the need for infant baptism.

Then the Vatican issued its "Instruction on Infant Baptism," which stated: "The Church . . . knows no other way apart from baptism for ensuring children's entry into eternal happiness." Bishops were ordered to "bring back to the traditional practice those who . . . have departed from it." But what of babies who die unbaptized? "The Church can only entrust them to God's mercy."

Infant Baptism and Your Child

Doubtless, many sincere Catholics are genuinely perplexed by all of this. Still, some may feel that, Catholic doctrine notwithstanding, baptism at least gives a child a good start religiously. But does it? One Catholic mother said: "I have two very young children, both baptized as infants, and I don't see one shred of grace in them, quite the opposite really."

Baptizing a small child does not help him develop in faith. In fact, it violates Jesus' command: "Go therefore and make disciples [or, "make learners"] . . . baptizing them." (Matthew 28:19) Baptism is meaningless unless one is old enough to be a disciple. True, there is an "immemorial tradition" for infant baptism. But did not

* Catholic theologian Tad Guzie called the new position of the church "a rather ludicrous sacramental schizophrenia in which water baptism is an essential first stage of salvation for infants, but the final stage of a larger process for anyone else."

Highlights of the History of Infant Baptism

<i>Date (C.E.)</i>	<i>Event</i>
c. 193	Tertullian argues for adult baptism
253	Council of Carthage declares that 'babies should be baptized immediately'
412-417	Debate between Pelagius and Augustine regarding 'original sin'
417	Council of Carthage condemns Pelagian view as heresy. Infant baptism becomes a fixture in Catholicism
1201, 1208	Pope Innocent III writes in favor of infant baptism
1545-1563	Council of Trent pronounces "anathema" upon anyone denying infant baptism
1794	Papal bull <i>Auctorem Fidei</i> condemns Jansenist Synod, which called limbo a heresy
1951	Pope Pius XII stresses necessity of infant baptism by encouraging midwives to perform the rite in emergencies
1958	Vatican decrees 'infants are to be baptized as soon as possible'
1963-1965	Second Vatican Council decrees salvation possible without baptism. Orders infant baptism rite revised
1980	Vatican reinforces custom of infant baptism, saying it 'knows no other way for children to enter eternal happiness'

Jesus condemn those who 'made the word of God invalid because of their tradition'? —Matthew 15:6.

Consequently, the Bible encourages parents to train their children in spiritual matters "from infancy." (2 Timothy 3: 14-17) Jehovah's Witnesses thus take seriously the Bible's admonition to bring up their children "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah." (Ephesians 6:4) Often this is done by carrying on a regular program of family Bible study. Such parents teach their children to attend and participate in Christian meetings. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) They encourage their youngsters to make "public declaration" of their faith. (Romans 10:10) In time, their children may be moved to make their own dedication to

Jehovah God and to symbolize it by water baptism. This is Scriptural and is far more meaningful and satisfying than is watching a formalistic rite performed on an uncomprehending infant.

If a Christian's child should die before baptism, parents need not fear that he burns in hell or lingers in limbo. The Bible teaches that the dead are unconscious. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) Parents can thus take comfort in Jesus' promise that "the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out" with the prospect of life in a restored Paradise. (John 5:28, 29; Luke 23:43) This Bible-based hope is of far more comfort than are changeable—and confusing—human traditions.

More Miracles in Capernaum

THE Sabbath after Jesus called his first four disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—they all go to a local synagogue in Capernaum. There Jesus begins to teach, and the people are astounded because he teaches them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

On this Sabbath a demonized man is present. After a while, he shouts with a loud voice: "What have we to do with you, Jesus you Nazarene? Did you come to destroy us? I know exactly who you are, the Holy One of God."

The demon controlling the man is actually one of Satan's angels. Rebuking the demon, Jesus says: "Be silent, and come on out of him!"

Well, the demon throws the man into a convulsion and yells at the top of its voice. But it comes out of the man without hurting him. Everyone is simply astonished! "What is this?" they ask. "He authoritatively orders even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." The news about this spreads throughout the surrounding area.

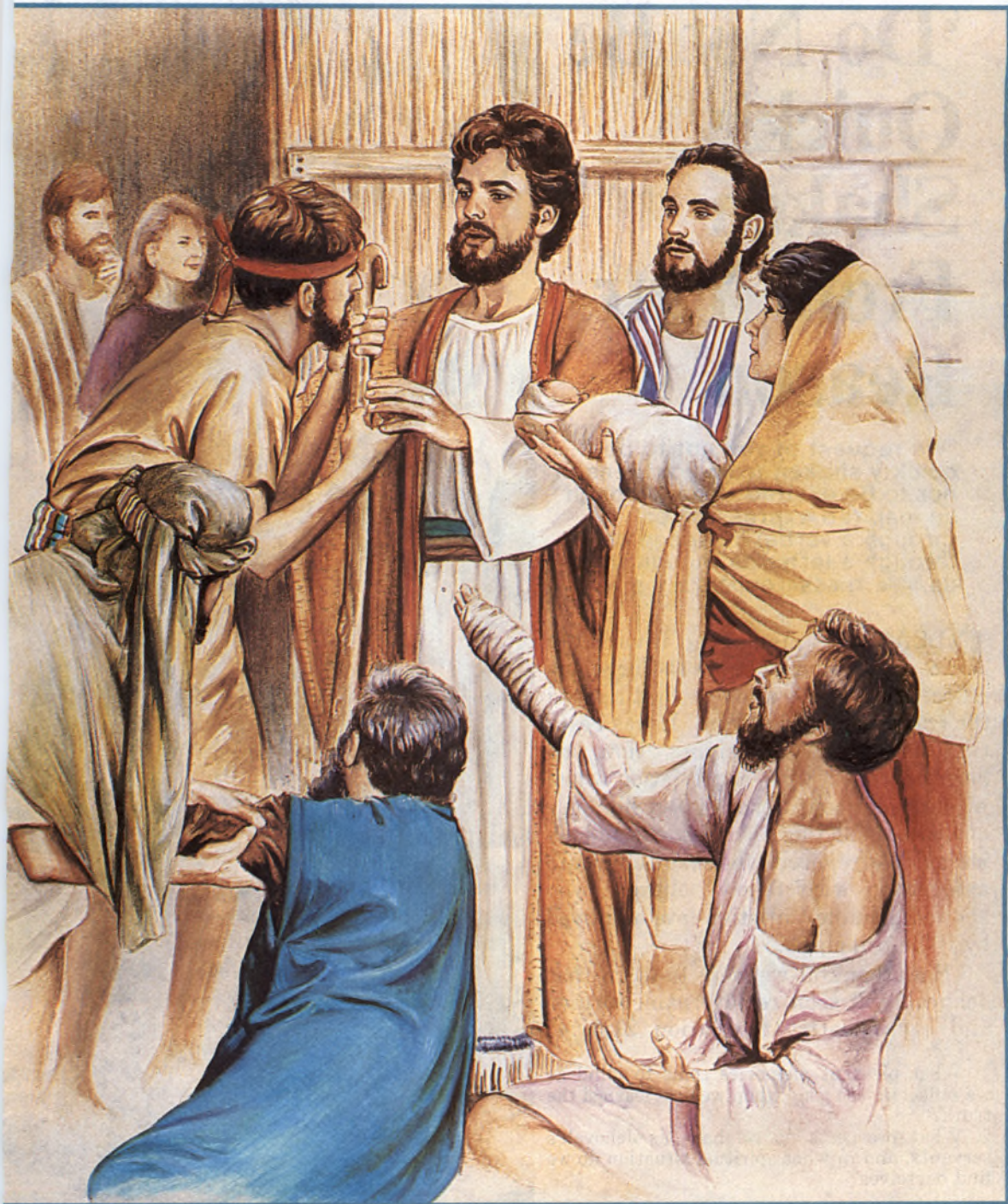


Leaving the synagogue, Jesus and his disciples go to the home of Simon, or Peter. There Peter's mother-in-law is very sick with a high fever. 'Please help her,' they beg. So Jesus goes over, takes her by the hand, and raises her up. Right away she is cured and begins to prepare a meal for them!

Later, when the sun has set, people from all over start coming to Peter's house with their sick ones. Soon the whole city is gathered at the door! And Jesus cures all their sick ones, no matter what their diseases are. He even frees the demon-possessed. As they come out, the demons that he expels shout: "You are the Son of God." But Jesus rebukes them and does not allow them to speak because they know he is the Christ. **Mark 1:21-34; Luke 4:31-41; Matthew 8:14-17.**



- ♦ What happens in the synagogue on the Sabbath after Jesus calls his four disciples?
- ♦ Where does Jesus go when leaving the synagogue, and what miracle does he perform there?
- ♦ What happens later that same evening?



'Do Not Be Quickly Shaken From Your Reason'

"We request of you not to be quickly shaken from your reason nor to be excited either through an inspired expression or through a verbal message or through a letter as though from us."—2 THESSALONIANS 2:1, 2.

PLEASANT memories invariably come to mind when we as Christians reflect on the time when we first learned the truth from God's Word. It was beautiful, reasonable, satisfying. How our hearts swelled with appreciation when we learned about Jehovah and his lofty qualities, including his great love and his mercy! We rejoiced when we came into association with fellow believers who showed genuine Christian love and lived by Bible principles.

² How thankful we were to learn that Jehovah will soon remove pain, sorrow, and even death. (Revelation 21:3, 4)

1. What pleasant memories come to mind as we reflect on the time when we first learned the truth?

2. What prospects do we have as Jehovah's servants, and in what spiritual situation do we find ourselves?



Imagine, living forever on a paradise earth, with perfect health and complete happiness! It was almost too good to be true. But it was true. It was backed by God's Word. It was thrilling! Undoubtedly, we felt just like Jesus' disciples when he appeared to them after his resurrection. They said to one another: "Were not our hearts burning as he was speaking to us on the road, as he was fully opening up the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32) Yes, on learning the truth and dedicating our lives to Jehovah, we found ourselves in a spiritual paradise. What a blessing!

³ But being in Jehovah's spiritual paradise is not something we can take for granted. We came into this paradise voluntarily; we can walk right out (or be put out) if we go into unbelief or willfully violate Jehovah's righteous laws. Of course, this will not happen if we keep strong the 'love we had at first,' if we continue to appreciate all of Jehovah's provisions to keep us spiritually strong. (Revelation 2:4) But the Devil and other opposers of true worship are skilled in deception. We should never forget that they stand ever ready to break our integrity if they can. Their propaganda is designed to weaken our faith, to cool our love for God, to sow doubts in our minds—yes, to make the spiritual paradise appear to be no paradise at all.

⁴ To borrow from a proverbial saying, we could come to the point where we would find it difficult, perhaps even impossible, to see the forest of the spiritual paradise because of looking so closely at the imperfect human trees now in it. The

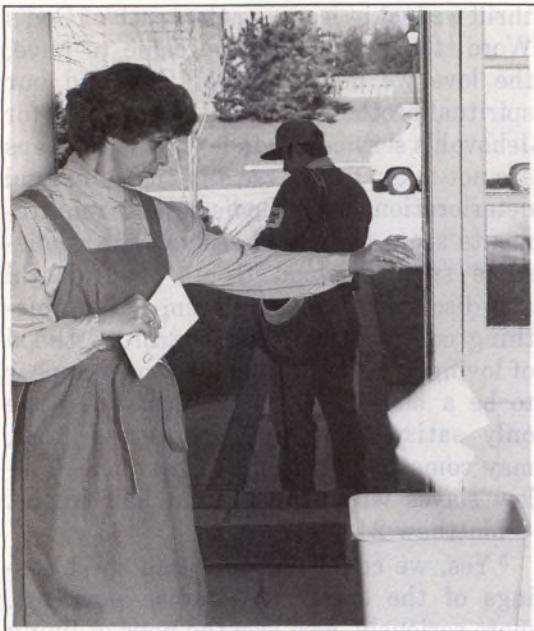
3. How do the Devil and other opposers seek to deprive us of the benefits of Jehovah's spiritual paradise?

4. What can result if we permit our faith to grow weak and allow serious doubts to develop?

thrill we had in learning the truth of God's Word, the grand hope we came to have, the love we developed for God and our spiritual brothers, and the zeal we had for Jehovah's service can fade. If drastic steps are not taken to reverse any such spiritual deterioration, soon God's loving requirements seem to be oppressive. The wholesome spiritual food from "the faithful and discreet slave" may seem to be something contemptible, and the brotherhood of loving servants of Jehovah may appear to be a household of enemies. Then the only satisfaction, of a perverted kind, may come in beginning to beat one's fellow slaves with slander and half-truths. —Matthew 24:45-51.

⁵ Yes, we could not only lose the blessings of the spiritual paradise now but, more seriously, also lose the hope of living eternally in the earthly Paradise. And we could lose out for the same reason that Adam and Eve lost the Paradise of Eden. They had everything they needed to be perfectly happy and could have lived forever. But independence—actually a different teaching—was more important to them than were obedience to Jehovah and the blessings of Eden. Eve was deceived. While Adam was not deceived, he let the force of circumstances, including the strong influence of his wife, cause him to sin also. Therefore, they were put out of Paradise, to live a miserable life until their death. They lost the prospect of everlasting life for themselves and brought an inheritance of sin and death upon their offspring. (Genesis 3:1-7, 14-19, 24; 1 Timothy 2:14; Romans 5:12) What a terrible price to pay for their so-called independence!

5. How could one's loss become comparable to what Adam and Eve lost in being driven out of Eden's Paradise?



**Do you wisely destroy
apostate material?**

⁶ The apostle Paul expressed this concern: "I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3) Paul found it necessary to write regarding some erroneous teachings that were circulating in his day. In his second letter to the congregation at Thessalonica, he wrote: "We request of you *not to be quickly shaken from your reason* nor to be excited either through an inspired expression or through a verbal message or through a letter as though from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here. Let no one seduce you in any manner."—2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.

6. (a) What concern did Paul express regarding some in the Corinthian congregation? (b) How was this same concern reflected in what was written to the congregation in Thessalonica?

Have No Dealings With Apostates

⁷ Now, what will you do if you are confronted with apostate teaching—subtle reasonings—claiming that what you believe as one of Jehovah's Witnesses is not the truth? For example, what will you do if you receive a letter or some literature, open it, and see right away that it is from an apostate? Will curiosity cause you to read it, just to see what he has to say? You may even reason: 'It won't affect me; I'm too strong in the truth. And, besides, if we have the truth, we have nothing to fear. The truth will stand the test.' In thinking this way, some have fed their minds upon apostate reasoning and have fallen prey to serious questioning and doubt. (Compare James 1:5-8.) So remember the warning at 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall."

⁸ With loving help from caring brothers, some having doubts sown by apostates have recovered after a period of spiritual turmoil and trauma. But this pain could have been avoided. At Proverbs 11:9 we are told: "By his mouth the one who is an apostate brings his fellowman to ruin, but by knowledge are the righteous rescued." Jude told fellow Christians to "continue showing mercy to some that have doubts; save them by snatching them out of the fire." (Jude 22, 23) Paul advised the overseer Timothy to instruct "with mildness those not favorably disposed; as perhaps God may give them repentance leading to an accurate knowledge of truth, and they may come back to their proper senses out from the snare of the Devil, seeing that they have been caught alive by him for the will of that one."—2 Timothy 2:25, 26.

7. (a) What questions arise if apostate literature is received by mail? (b) As regards safeguarding oneself from the influence of apostates, why is overconfidence dangerous?

8. What assistance is needed by some who have been overcome by doubts?

⁹ Tragically, others have gone into complete darkness, even going back to Christendom's erroneous teachings. The apostle Peter wrote about the tragic outcome for some who first walked in the truth but then turned aside. He said: "Certainly if, after having escaped from the defilements of the world by an accurate knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they get involved again with these very things and are overcome, the final conditions have become worse for them than the first." Peter said they are like the dog that returns to its vomit and the bathed sow that turns back to wallowing in the mire. —2 Peter 2:20-22.

¹⁰ When a fellow human tells us, 'Do not read this' or, 'Do not listen to that,' we may be tempted to ignore his advice. But remember, in this case *Jehovah* is the One who tells us in his Word what to do. And what does he say about apostates? "Avoid them" (Romans 16:17, 18); "quit mixing in company with" them (1 Corinthians 5:11); and "never receive [them] into your homes or say a greeting to [them]" (2 John 9, 10). These are emphatic words, clear directions. If, out of curiosity, we were to read the literature of a known apostate, would that not be the same as inviting this enemy of true worship right into our home to sit down with us and relate his apostate ideas?

¹¹ Let us illustrate matters in this way: Suppose your teenage son received some pornographic material in the mail. What would you do? If he was inclined to read it out of curiosity, would you say: 'Yes, son,

9. What is the tragic outcome for those who abandon true worship?

10. (a) What does *Jehovah* say about listening to apostates? (b) Reading apostate literature would amount to doing what?

11, 12. (a) What illustration is given to help us appreciate that we cannot innocently read apostate literature? (b) How can this be applied to *Jehovah's* concern for his people?

go ahead and read it. It won't hurt you. From infancy we've taught you that immorality is bad. Besides, you need to know what's going on in the world in order to see that it's truly bad? Would you reason that way? Absolutely not! Rather, you would surely point out the dangers of reading pornographic literature and would require that it be destroyed. Why? Because no matter how strong a person may be in the truth, if he feeds his mind on the perverted ideas found in such literature, his mind and heart will be affected. A lingering wrong desire planted in the recesses of the heart can eventually create a perverted sexual appetite. The result? James says that when wrong desire becomes fertile, it gives birth to sin, and sin leads to death. (James 1:15) So why start the chain reaction?

¹² Well, if we would act so decisively to protect our children from exposure to pornography, should we not expect that our loving heavenly Father would similarly warn us and protect us from spiritual fornication, including apostasy? He says, *Keep away from it!*

¹³ But suppose we are preaching the good news and people raise questions or objections similar to those raised by opposers? Of course, if a person is not sincere and merely wishes to argue, usually it is best to excuse ourselves and go to the next door. But if someone sincerely asks about certain claims of apostates, what can be done? First, we can ask what, exactly, has caused the concern. It may be only one or two points. Then we can stick to these and answer from the Scriptures, from the Society's publications, and from what we truthfully know about the subject. We need not conclude that we have

13. What can be done if challenging questions, based on what apostates have said or written, are raised while we are sharing in the preaching work?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ How might we lose the benefits of Jehovah's spiritual paradise?
- ☐ Why is reading apostate publications similar to reading pornographic literature?
- ☐ What can be done if we are asked about certain claims of apostates?
- ☐ Why are apostate teachings like gangrene?

to read a book or a pamphlet that is filled with slander and half-truths in order to refute the false claims and teachings of opposers.

Confidence in Jehovah

¹⁴ As we go forward, building faith and keeping busy in Kingdom service, we can confidently put our trust in Jehovah, knowing that, as our loving heavenly Father, he wants the very best for us. God teaches us; he warns us. He does this through his Word and by means of clear direction provided by his visible organization. If we were to ask a loving parent for bread and fish, he would not give us a stone or a serpent. Neither will God fool us or deceive us. (Matthew 7:7-11) Yet, God will not completely shield us from temptations or even deceptive lies and devilish propaganda. He says of himself: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk." (Isaiah 48:17) Yes, Jehovah 'teaches us to benefit ourselves.' He tells us to keep separate from apostates and their teaching, and this for our own protection. It means our life.

14. What loving concern does our heavenly Father have for us, and why can we put our complete confidence in him?

¹⁵ The apostle Paul warned fellow Christian elders: "From among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:30) If we keep listening to subtle arguments and specious reasoning, "twisted things" can sound as though they were straight. The longer Eve looked at the forbidden fruit and listened to the twisted reasoning of the Devil, the more she was convinced that he was right. Paul warned: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ." (Colossians 2:8) The apostle also indicated that "by smooth talk and complimentary speech [apostates] seduce the hearts of guileless ones." (Romans 16:17, 18; compare 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.) Of course, the fact that a few are drawn away by that kind of propaganda does not mean that we have to follow them. Nevertheless, we need to be continually alert.

¹⁶ The Devil's tactics have not changed since Eden. He uses subtle questioning and an appeal to self-interest. Peter wrote: "There will also be false teachers among you. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects . . . Also, with covetousness they will exploit you with counterfeit words." (2 Peter 2:1-3) Something counterfeit is designed to look or sound genuine. At 2 Timothy 2:14-19, Paul stressed the importance of using Jehovah's Word to set matters straight but warned of the need to avoid apostates, whose 'empty speeches violate what is

15. What warnings did the apostle Paul give regarding some who would try to draw away disciples?

16. Application of what Scriptural warnings will help us to withstand Satan's efforts to deceive and lead people away from true worship?

holy,' for, said he, "their word will spread like gangrene."

¹⁷ A fitting analogy indeed! Like gangrene, apostate reasoning is nothing but quick-spreading spiritual death. And since the members of the congregation are like one body, there is a danger that others may be infected. If the one spreading apostate teachings cannot be restored to spiritual health by loving but firm application of the balm of God's Word, amputation of this member (disfellowshipping) may be the only alternative for the protection of other members of the body.

17, 18. (a) How is apostate teaching like gangrene? (b) What warning does the apostle Peter give regarding those who try to turn us away from true worship? (c) What questions will be answered in the next study?

Allow No Place for the Devil!

"Let the sun not set with you in a provoked state, neither allow place for the Devil."—EPHESIANS 4:26, 27.

A VICIOUS wild beast is on the prowl. He has an insatiable desire to devour Christians. Peter warns: "Keep your senses, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to

1. How did Peter describe the Devil, but what assurance of protection did the apostle give?

(Compare Titus 1:10, 11.) Do not be infected by deadly gangrene of a spiritual kind! Keep in good spiritual health by avoiding the contamination of apostate thinking. Heed the sound advice at 2 Peter 3:17, 18: "You, therefore, beloved ones, having this advance knowledge, be on your guard that you may not be led away with them by the error of the law-defying people and fall from your own steadfastness. No, but go on growing in the undeserved kindness and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

¹⁸ But how can we protect ourselves from apostasy? How can we keep our hearts from being receptive to apostate reasoning? These questions will be considered in the next article.

devour someone. But take your stand against him, solid in the faith . . . But, after you have suffered a little while, the God of all undeserved kindness . . . will make you firm, he will make you strong." —1 Peter 5:8-10.

² We can be sure that the Devil and his agents, both demon and human, stand ready to exploit any gnawing doubt, any serious flaw of personality, any negligence on our part to keep spiritually strong in the faith. But Jehovah's Word assures us that the Devil will not devour us if we take a firm stand against him. (James 4:7) For instance, no one falls victim to apostasy because it just could not be avoided. No one is predestined to abandon the faith. Motives of the heart are involved. True,

2. (a) What circumstances make us more vulnerable to attack by Satan? (b) Why does the one who falls victim to apostasy have no one to blame but himself? (c) What weakness opened the way for the Devil to put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus?



*By rejecting counsel, we can
"allow place for the Devil"*

John said that some "went out from us, but they were not of our sort." (1 John 2:19) But this happened because they either chose apostasy or came into Jehovah's organization with a bad motive at the start. Judas Iscariot had a good heart when called as one of Jesus' 12 apostles, but the Devil worked on Judas' weakness of greed. Even before the night of Jesus' betrayal, "the Devil [had] already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray him."—John 13:2.

³ A person goes bad because he lets his own selfish reasoning, his own ambitions and desires, his chosen associates and surroundings, mold his thinking and determine the direction of his will. Paul spoke of some who were 'once enlightened, had tasted the heavenly free gift, but had fallen away.' (Hebrews 6:4-6) If we are not continually on guard, the Devil can by his sly propaganda make our hearts receptive

3. What factors can influence a person to become a victim of apostasy?

to apostate thinking. But how does the Devil, in effect, set a person up as a likely casualty, a victim of apostasy?

⁴ Common attitudes that Satan looks for are bitterness, resentment, and faultfinding. Such feelings can grow so strong that there is very little room left for love and appreciation. Perhaps some unresolved problem festers, causing a person to feel angry and justified in staying away from vital Christian meetings. By remaining provoked for an extended period of time, he 'allows place for the Devil.' (Ephesians 4:27) The disturbed individual sees only his brother's human weaknesses, rather than forgiving him "seventy-seven times," and he fails to use the trying circumstances as opportunities to be perfecting Christian qualities. (Matthew 18:22) While in this state of mind, if someone comes along and suggests that Jehovah's organization is oppressive or restrictive, or even wrong in certain vital teachings, the embittered Christian's heart may be receptive to such unfounded claims. How necessary it is, then, to avoid letting bitterness and resentment build up! Do not let the sun set on your anger. Instead, let love have its full expression in your life.

⁵ What other conditions of heart and mind is the Devil looking for? Well, there are pride, a feeling of self-importance, resentment at not getting the prominence one feels one should have. These are all pitfalls used by the Devil. (Romans 12:3) If you are counseled or even reproofed for some wrong practice or attitude, this, too, may prove to be an ideal time for the Devil to prompt you to ask yourself if you are in the right organization. So keep humble. Be content to conduct yourself as "a lesser

4. What can happen if we succumb to bitterness, resentment, and faultfinding?

5. (a) How can pride or the resenting of correction prove to be a pitfall? (b) What part does humility play in remaining solid in the faith?

one." Do not let pride or a feeling of self-importance ever cause you to totter from standing solidly in the faith.—Luke 9:48; 1 Peter 5:9.

⁶ Impatience is another thing looked for by the Devil. We may sometimes feel that changes should be made; we want quick action, immediate answers. "This problem must be cleared up now, or I quit. I've got to have the answer to this question right now, or I'm not going any further. Armageddon and the new system have been "right around the corner" for years now. I'm tired of waiting.' Be assured that the Devil is ready to sow seeds of doubt and revolt in such fields of impatience. Endurance and faith are needed.—Hebrews 10:36, 39.

⁷ James said: "Let endurance have its work complete, that you may be complete and sound in all respects, not lacking in anything. So, if any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him. But let him keep on asking in faith, not doubting at all, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and blown about. In fact, let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from Jehovah; he is an indecisive man, unsteady in all his ways." (James 1:4-8) Do not let the Devil make you a candidate for apostasy because you have become demandingly impatient, doubtful about the promises of God! Be patient, be thankful. Wait upon Jehovah.—Psalm 42:5.

⁸ What else does the Devil use in trying to turn us away? Has he not always tried to stir up rebellion, to cause Jehovah's

6, 7. (a) What are some manifestations of impatience that the Devil is quick to exploit? (b) If one is lacking in wisdom, what should be done? 8. How does the tendency to rebel against authority open the way for the Devil to entice a person to throw off Scriptural restraints?



Pride can lead to a fall from which one might not recover

servants to become critical of those taking the lead? "The elders just do not understand. They are too critical, too demanding,' some may say. A person may go further and claim that the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses or other responsible brothers interfere with freedom of conscience and the individual's "right" to interpret the Scriptures. But remember Joseph's humble words: "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (Genesis 40:8) And did not Jesus foretell that in these final days an organization of anointed ones, "the faithful and discreet slave," would be entrusted with providing spiritual food at the proper time? (Matthew 24:45-47) Beware of those who try to put forward their own contrary opinions. Also beware of those who want to throw off all restraints or who promise freedom, claiming that Jehovah's Witnesses are slaves! Peter said of false teachers: "While they are promising them freedom, they themselves are existing as slaves of corruption. For whoever

is overcome by another is enslaved by this one.”—2 Peter 2:1, 19.

⁹ What is often the motive of those who criticize the Society or those taking the lead? Is it not often that some application of Scripture affects them personally? Rather than conform to sound doctrine and direction, they want the organization to change. Let us illustrate this with a few examples:

¹⁰ A brother insists on some extreme clothing or grooming style. The elders feel that he is not a good example and do not extend to him certain privileges, such as appearing on the platform to give instruction. He becomes resentful, claiming that others are trying to take away his Christian freedom. But what is behind such reasoning? Is it not usually pride, an independent attitude, or a rather childish desire to have one's own way? While this seemingly is a small thing, a person reasoning in that way could “allow place for the Devil.” But love and humility will cause us to dress and groom ourselves in a modest, acceptable way. We should want to do all things for the advancement of the good news and not to be pleasing ourselves.—Romans 15:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 10:23, 24.

¹¹ Let us take another example. Occasionally you may hear someone question whether the Scriptural prohibition against eating blood really applies to transfusions. But what is behind that reasoning? Is it fear—fear of possibly losing one's present life or the life of a loved one? Is hope in the resurrection fading? Faithful Christians do not compromise on God's law or

look for ways to water it down. Abstaining from blood to nourish the body is just as necessary as abstaining from fornication and idolatry, all condemned in the same spirit-directed decree of the apostles and older men at Jerusalem.—Acts 15:19, 20, 28, 29.

¹² Some who have a critical attitude claim that Jehovah's organization is too strict about cutting off social contacts with disfellowshipped persons. (2 John 10, 11) But why do such critics feel that way? Do they have a close family tie or mistaken loyalty to a friend that they are putting ahead of loyalty to Jehovah and his standards and requirements? Consider, too, that continuing to accord social fellowship to an expelled person, even one as close as a relative, may lead the erring one to conclude that his course is not so serious, and this to his further harm. However, withholding such association may create in him a craving for what he has lost and a desire to regain it. Jehovah's way is always best, and it is for our own protection.—Proverbs 3:5.

¹³ Still another person may incorrectly claim that the Scriptures do not support public preaching from house to house. But is this because he already dislikes this important work and is looking for an excuse to abstain? Love of God and neighbor should motivate us to see the urgency of this lifesaving work. Again, endurance is needed. The apostle Paul spoke of his own endurance in ‘thoroughly bearing witness to Jews and Greeks’ as he taught publicly and from house to house. (Acts 20:18-21) Rather than complain, should we not loyally follow his fine example? Look at the

9. What is often the attitude of those who are critical of the ones taking the lead?

10. How might insistence on extreme clothing or grooming styles result in one's ‘allowing place for the Devil’?

11. What could be behind any questioning of Jehovah's command to abstain from blood?

12. Why should mistaken loyalty not cause us to violate the Scriptural requirement that we avoid social fellowship with those who are disfellowshipped?

13. What attitude should we have regarding public preaching from house to house?

***Busy and happy servants of
Jehovah 'allow no place
for the Devil' or for
apostate ideas***

thousands who have been gathered into the "one flock" because of Jehovah's blessing upon the house-to-house work! (John 10:16) And do not forget the fine benefits we receive in training and discipline, in strengthening our faith, by going from door to door so as to reach people with the good news.—Compare Acts 5:42; 1 Timothy 4:16.

¹⁴ Finally, we might consider what the Society has published in the past on chronology. Some opposers claim that Jehovah's Witnesses are false prophets. These opponents say that dates have been set, but nothing has happened. Again we ask, What is the motive of these critics? Are they encouraging wakefulness on the part of God's people, or are they, rather, trying to justify themselves for falling back into sleepy inactivity? (1 Thessalonians 5:4-9) More importantly, what will you do if you hear such criticism? If a person is questioning whether we are living in "the last days" of this system, or perhaps is entertaining ideas that God is so merciful that he surely will not cause the death of so many millions of people during the "great tribulation," then this individual already has prepared his heart to listen to such criticisms.—2 Timothy 3:1; Matthew 24:21.

14. How do you think we should react when critics accuse Jehovah's Witnesses of being false prophets?



¹⁵ Yes, Jehovah's people have had to revise expectations from time to time. Because of our eagerness, we have hoped for the new system earlier than Jehovah's timetable has called for it. But we display our faith in God's Word and its sure promises by declaring its message to others. Moreover, the need to revise our understanding somewhat does not make us false prophets or change the fact that we *are* living in "the last days," soon to experience the "great tribulation" that will pave the way for the earthly Paradise. How foolish to take the view that expectations needing some adjustment should call into question the whole body of truth! The evidence is clear that Jehovah has used and is continuing to use his one organization, with "the faithful and discreet slave" taking the lead. Hence, we feel like Peter, who said: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life."—John 6:68.

15. Rather than being false prophets, what proves that Jehovah's Witnesses have faith in God's Word and its sure promises?

¹⁶ Only in the spiritual paradise, among Jehovah's Witnesses, can we find the self-sacrificing love Jesus said would identify his true disciples. (John 13:34, 35) By their bad fruits, false prophets are exposed for what they really are. But Jesus indicated that the good trees would be identified by their fine fruits. (Matthew 7:15-20) And what fine fruitage we have in the spiritual paradise! Amazing increases are taking place in practically every country. Over 3,000,000 happy subjects of God's Kingdom around the globe are living proof that Jehovah has a people on the earth.

¹⁷ Because they are taught by God, Jehovah's Witnesses really produce the fruits of Christianity in their lives. (Isaiah 54:13) Only Jehovah's people have completely broken free from Babylonish superstitions. Only they have an organization that completely abides by what God's Word has to say on sexual immorality, abortions, drunkenness, stealing, idolatry, racial prejudice, and other worldly pursuits and practices. And they alone are the ones obeying the command to preach the good news of Jehovah's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) God's own Word unquestionably points to Jehovah's Witnesses as the one organized people that have his blessing!

¹⁸ Yes, to all who are faithfully and loyally enduring in the Christian way, we are sure that Jehovah's truth is still beautiful, satisfying—even more so than when they first heard it. Therefore, resolve in your heart that you will never even touch the poison that apostates want you to sip. Heed the wise but firm commands of Je-

16, 17. (a) How does application of Jesus' words at Matthew 7:15-20 help to identify the organization that has Jehovah's blessing? (b) What is some of the good fruitage produced in the lives of Jehovah's true servants?

18. When confronted with apostate teachings, what should be the position of Jehovah's servants?

hovah to avoid completely those who would deceive you, mislead you, turn you aside into the ways of death. If we love Jehovah with our whole heart, soul, and mind, while loving our neighbor as we love ourselves, we will leave no room for penetration by apostate thinking. (Matthew 22:37-39) We will not "allow place for the Devil" and will have no desire to look elsewhere. We will not 'be quickly shaken from our reason' by some counterfeit teaching.—2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2.

¹⁹ Let us always appreciate our privilege of being in Jehovah's spiritual paradise, where we are enjoying so many rich blessings. We know who are holding faithfully to the sayings of everlasting life. So maintain close association with them, knowing that they are our genuine, loyal brothers and sisters in the faith. May we continue to have the same joy and satisfaction that we had when we first learned the truth, with the assurance of the grand prize of everlasting life in Jehovah's new system of things. As Paul so aptly said: "Let no man deprive you of the prize"!—Colossians 2:18.

19. What course will ensure that 'no man will deprive us of the prize' of everlasting life?

Can You Answer?

- ☐ Why is it true that no one is predestined to abandon the faith?
- ☐ How can resentment, pride, and impatience open up a place in the heart for the Devil?
- ☐ What is usually behind criticism of the counsel that is given by those taking the lead?
- ☐ What fruitage produced by Jehovah's Witnesses proves that they are the one organization God is using?

How Can We Be “Fully Pleasing” to Jehovah?

TODAY, how few are concerned about whether their thoughts, words, and deeds are pleasing to God! Even those professing such concern largely appear to be rendering God mere lip service. In fact, it can be said of the great majority: “They are not pleasing God.”—1 Thessalonians 2:15.

Some professed Christians feel that as long as they do not break the Ten Commandments, they are pleasing to God. But not so! Our Exemplar Jesus Christ said of God: “I always do the things pleasing to him.” (John 8:29) Yes, he pleased his Father by *doing* certain things. Positive action is required, even as can be seen from the apostle Paul’s prayer in behalf of his fellow believers at Colossae. He prayed that they might “walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of *fully pleasing* him as [they went] on bearing fruit in *every good work*.”—Colossians 1:9, 10.

Yet, is it really possible to be “fully pleasing” to Jehovah? Well, being imperfect, Christians cannot now please God perfectly. However, they can earnestly work in that direction, with the objective of “fully pleasing” him. Since Paul mentioned “bearing fruit in *every good work*,” positive works are involved. Of course, we cannot here outline all such activities. But we can provide some food for thought. If these points indicate that there are certain areas of life in which you should make some adjustments, be assured that Jehovah will bless your efforts to please him. The fact is that “fully pleasing” Jehovah does require that we guard our thoughts, words, and actions.

What About Our Thoughts?

God’s Word tells us that “there is not a creation that is not manifest to his sight, but all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting.” (Hebrews 4:13) Neither humans nor demons can read our thoughts, but God can. That being so, we want our very thoughts to be pleasing to him. So we do well to ask ourselves: What do I like to think about when not required to apply my mind to the work at hand? What is the pole, as it were, to which the needle of my mind’s compass naturally swings?

We might also ask: Do I like to build castles in the air and dream of enjoying wealth, fame, or praise because of my exploits? Do I think negatively, such as dwelling on grievances, going over them again and again? Do I tend to let my thoughts dwell almost continually on the pleasures of sex? Or am I always filling my mind with plans and schemes to make money?

Now consider: Can we be “fully pleasing” to Jehovah by filling our minds with such thoughts? Of course not! So through earnest prayer and with God’s help, drive them out by filling the mind with good, positive, wholesome, chaste, and lovable thoughts. (Philippians 4:8) How much better for us to discipline our minds so as to think about things that relate to our worship of Jehovah! Think of God’s Kingdom, so near at hand. Call to mind points recently learned from God’s Word. Go over the subject matter to be considered at coming congregation meetings, and especially any

parts you may have on the program. Give thought to how you can improve your field ministry. Remember that you are, first of all, a Christian minister.

Some have been helped by going over scriptures they have memorized, as well as by humming Kingdom songs. As a reminder, one Christian minister found it helpful to make up and think about this rhyme:

"O God, please help me to submit,
To what your will and love permit.
O may I never once rebel,
Since you are doing all things well."

Yes, keep on praying as did King David of old: "Let the . . . meditation of my heart become pleasurable"—that is, pleasing—"before you, O Jehovah."—Psalm 19:14.

What About Our Words?

David also prayed: "Let the sayings of my mouth . . . become pleasurable before you, O Jehovah." (Psalm 19:14) As we learn from James 3:2-12, only a perfect man can fully bridle the tongue. But strive to control it we must if we would be "fully pleasing" to Jehovah.

We speak many words every day, and, of course, we cannot expect to limit our statements to Scriptural subjects. Regardless of what we happen to be talking about, however, we can be mindful of pleasing Jehovah. For example, we know that profanity, obscenities, or coarse and vulgar speech could not possibly please our heavenly Father. So we should avoid such speech.—Ephesians 5:3, 4.

Then again, if we would be pleasing our Maker fully as regards our speech, we must be careful not to say slanderous, derogatory things about others. Concerning us, it should be possible to say: "He has not slandered with his tongue. To his companion he has done nothing bad, and no reproach has he taken up against his intimate acquaintance." Even though we may be suffering injustices, we should be careful to "speak

injuriously of no one."—Psalm 15:3; Titus 3:2.

What opportunities we have to be "fully pleasing" to Jehovah as to our speech at mealtimes! Naturally, this is no time for angry words or upsetting speech. There are so many fine things to discuss! Especially should we be alert to such opportunities if we are guests or have guests. So often the most talkative rather than the mature Christians dominate the conversation. Will you be having a Christian guest with many years of experience in the full-time ministry? Is he very knowledgeable about God's Word? Then use discernment to draw him out. "Counsel in the heart of a man is as deep waters, but the man of discernment is one that will draw it up," to the benefit of all present.—Proverbs 20:5.

Additionally, to be "fully pleasing" to Jehovah in our speech, we should be alert to opportunities for informal witnessing about God's name and Kingdom. In fact, at times a Christian minister may accomplish much by such informal witnessing. However, the primary way to please Jehovah by our speech, while also blessing others, is by going from house to house with the Kingdom message.—Acts 20:20.

For our words to be "fully pleasing" to Jehovah when we engage in the Christian field ministry, we must keep striving to improve our presentation of the Kingdom message. Having been entrusted with the "good news," we, like the apostle Paul, want to "speak, as pleasing, not men, but God, who makes proof of our hearts." And not to be overlooked is the obligation to use our lips to make public confession of our faith at Christian meetings, where we can incite others to love and fine works.—1 Thessalonians 2:4; Hebrews 10:23-25.

"Fully Pleasing" Jehovah by Our Conduct and Deeds

For us to be "fully pleasing" to Jehovah, we must also be careful about our daily



Do not let recreation encroach on Christian activity

conduct, including our recreation. Yes, even when we seek recreation, we cannot afford to leave God out of the picture. Does that seem extreme? Not at all, for Paul said: "Whether you are eating or drinking or *doing anything else*, do all things for God's glory." We must keep in mind the warning that "those who are in harmony with the flesh cannot please God." So, above all else, our recreation should be wholesome.—1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 8:8.

Nor may we overlook the factors of moderation and timing. To be "fully pleasing" to Jehovah, we must keep recreation in its place, as something incidental and not of paramount importance. Never should we pursue recreation, be it watching a special TV program or going to a sports event, to the point of letting it encroach upon our attending Christian meetings or sharing regularly in the field ministry.—Matthew 6:33.

"Fully pleasing" Jehovah also includes the doing of good to our Christian broth-

ers, as we can find opportunity and as there is need. In this regard, we read: "Do not forget the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." The apostle Paul said that the kindness the Philippian Christians showed him was "an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God."—Hebrews 13:16; Philippians 4:18.

How can children be "fully pleasing" to Jehovah as regards their conduct? Paul shows that a very significant way is by obeying their parents "in union with the Lord." He also says: "You children, be obedient to your parents *in everything*, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord."—Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20.

All dedicated servants of God have experienced so much loving-kindness from Jehovah and his earthly channel that, out of sheer love and gratitude, we should always be concerned with being "fully pleasing" to him. Surely, loving gratitude requires that we do not "accept the undeserved kindness of God and miss its purpose." (2 Corinthians 6:1) Being concerned with pleasing Jehovah fully is also the just, the right, thing to do, since he is the Universal Sovereign. Moreover, seeking to be "fully pleasing" to Jehovah is the wisest course, for doing so is beneficial to us now and holds promise of the life to come.—1 Timothy 4:8.

Yes, we want to guard our thoughts, our words, and our conduct and deeds. With Jehovah's help, this we will do so as to please him ever more fully. And in doing so, let us not give up. Instead, may we always heed the apostle Paul's counsel to Christians at Thessalonica: "Finally, brothers, we request you and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, just as you received the instruction from us on how you ought to walk and please God, just as you are in fact walking, that you would keep on doing it more fully."—1 Thessalonians 4:1.

Bible Highlights

Esther 1:1-10:3

The massacre will be chillingly efficient: young and old, little ones and women, annihilated without exception. No one will dare oppose the scheme, for the execution order bears the seal of the king. Yes, the Jews will die like helpless cattle!

At least this is how things look to Haman, the prime minister of ancient Persia. He has plotted this mass murder out of blind hatred for the Jew Mordecai. But as Haman smugly awaits his victory, the Jewish nation prays for deliverance. The outcome? It is revealed in the dramatic Bible book of Esther. Written by Mordecai himself, it is the faith-strengthening account of how divine assistance—and a young woman's faith—saved a nation.

Esther Becomes Queen

Please read Esther 1:1-2:23. About 484 B.C.E., the Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) convenes a huge banquet. But Queen Vashti refuses to heed his summons to appear there. The enraged king strips her of her rank and sets out to acquire a new queen. After inspecting the most beautiful women in the realm, he selects a modest Jewess named Hadassah, who has been prepared for this role by her cousin Mordecai. The young woman conceals the fact that she is Jewish, using her Persian name Esther.

♦ 1:3-5—Why were these festivities held?

According to historian Herodotus, Xerxes once called an assembly to plan a military campaign against Greece. Perhaps this is the same gathering. Likely, Xerxes showed off the glory and riches of

his kingdom to convince the nobles of his ability to carry out the Greco-Persian campaign.

♦ 1:8—What was the law on drinking?

It seems that the Persians had the custom of urging one another to drink a set amount at such gatherings. The king, however, made an exception on this occasion. Whether this resulted in more moderate or in unrestrained drinking, the Bible does not say.

♦ 2:19, 20—Why did Mordecai 'sit in the king's gate'?

Mordecai apparently was one of the officers of King Ahasuerus. Such men of authority generally sat at the gate, waiting to respond to a royal request. Mordecai's position must have been quite a responsible one. Otherwise, Haman could likely have dismissed him immediately. Mordecai was thus in a position to learn of and to foil a plot to assassinate the king.

Lesson for Us: Esther showed the value of modesty in not requesting jewelry or fine clothing before going into the king's presence. She let the secret person of her heart, with its "quiet and mild spirit," win the king's favor. (1 Peter 3:1-5) Similarly, those of the anointed remnant gathered since 1919 have won the favor of the King Jesus Christ.

Haman's Conspiracy

Read 3:1-5:14. Ahasuerus makes an Amalekite named Haman prime minister. But Mordecai, mindful that Jehovah had determined to "have war with Amalek from generation to generation," refuses to prostrate himself before Haman. (Exodus 17:8-16) In retaliation, proud Haman persuades the king to annihilate the Jews!

Divine Deliverance From Genocide

Mordecai asks Esther to intervene, reminding her that, if she is silent, "relief and deliverance themselves will stand up for the Jews from another place." Since the fate of Jehovah's people and his judgment against the Amalekites are at issue, Mordecai is confident that God will provide escape. (1 Samuel 12:22) Esther approaches the king unbidden—potentially a capital offense! Ahasuerus, though, grants her life and attends a banquet she holds. Returning home, Haman, incensed again at Mordecai's refusal to render homage, plans to execute him.

♦ 3:7—What was involved in casting Pur?

"Pur" appears to be a Persian word meaning "lot." Lots were often cast by astrologers as a form of divination. Likely, this was done so as to determine the most auspicious time for Haman to carry out his plan of genocide.

♦ 4:3—Why did Mordecai and the Jews fast?

Because a national calamity was imminent, it was a time for somber, serious thinking. (Ecclesiastes 3:4) They sorely needed divine guidance. Fasting thus signified their turning to Jehovah for needed strength and wisdom. When faced with trials, do you also turn prayerfully to God?—Hebrews 5:7.

♦ 5:6-8—Why did Esther delay informing the king?

Esther's courage certainly had not failed her, since she had already risked death. Probably, however, she first wanted to win the king's goodwill. Hence, she invited him to a second banquet. Divine direction was also involved, since the ensuing interim allowed for certain developments.

Lesson for Us: Esther showed faith, courage, and willingness to apply Mordecai's counsel. Those who have become part of the anointed remnant since 1919 have shown comparable faith, courage, and willingness to work with the older members of the bride of Christ. Fine examples indeed!

The Plot Is Foiled

Read 6:1-7:10. Ahasuerus suffers from sleeplessness, no doubt divinely induced. Possibly feeling that he has failed in some way, he has the book of records, perhaps the royal diary, read to him. Discovering that Mordecai has gone unrewarded for uncovering an assassination plot, the king asks Haman to suggest an appropriate reward. Haman imagines himself the honored one and proposes an elaborate ceremony. But to his horror he is commanded to heap such honors upon Mordecai! Haman's advisers take this as an omen of his downfall.

No sooner is this humiliating experience over than Haman is escorted to Esther's second banquet. There the monarch invites Esther to make a request. "Let there be given me my own soul at my petition and my people at my request," begs the courageous queen. Revealing that she is a Jewess, she exposes Haman's plot. Terrified Haman pleads for his life but receives, instead, execution—on the very stake intended for Mordecai!

♦ 7:4—Why would destruction of the Jews be damaging to the king?

Had Haman schemed to sell the Jews into slavery, this likely would have resulted in great profit for Ahasuerus. But the destruction of an entire people would result in financial loss far greater than the 10,000 silver talents Haman had

promised to pay. Success of the genocide plot would also result in the king's losing his queen—very personal damage indeed!

♦ 7:8—Why was Haman's face covered?

Haman did not cover his own face in shame or remorse. Evidently the court officials covered his face, possibly to represent shamefulness or doom. Likely this was the first step taken in carrying out the death sentence.

Lesson for Us: At the risk of her life, Esther courageously revealed that she was Jewish. Since 1931, God's people similarly have risked persecution by proclaiming themselves Jehovah's Witnesses. (Isaiah 43:10-12) Are you that courageous?

God's People Delivered!

Read 8:1-10:3. Mordecai becomes prime minister in place of Haman. Again risking her life, Esther approaches the king uninvited and pleads that steps be taken to undo the scheme of Haman. The monarch agrees and allows Mordecai to dictate a counterdecree in Ahasuerus' name. Although by Persian custom the previous extermination order cannot be canceled, the new law permits the Jews to defend themselves.

Jubilation breaks forth among the Jews! No longer helpless victims, they now have several months to organize their defense. Finally, Adar (February-March) 13th arrives. Some 75,000 who were 'seeking their injury' are killed by the Jews. Lest they forget that this victory was from Jehovah, Mordecai decrees that the yearly Festival of Purim be held on the 14th and 15th of Adar.

♦ 8:5—How did Esther show discernment?

Esther weighed her words carefully, appealing to the king to undo

the documents of scheming Haman, "which *he* wrote." Tactfully, she avoided any mention of the king's responsibility in this matter. Christians are similarly tactful when witnessing before government officials.

♦ 8:17—How did people 'declare themselves Jews'?

The *Septuagint* says that these Persians "were getting circumcised and Judaizing." Evidently taking the counterdecree as a sign of divine backing for the Jews, many Persians became Jewish proselytes. Similarly today, "a great crowd" of "other sheep" have taken their stand alongside the anointed remnant.—Revelation 7:9; John 10:16; Zechariah 8:23.

♦ 9:10, 15, 16—Why did the Jews not take plunder?

The king's decree authorized them to take plunder. Their refusal to do so, however, made it evident that their purpose was self-preservation, not self-enrichment.

Lesson for Us: Like the Jews of Esther's day, Jehovah's Witnesses properly appeal to governments and courts for protection from enemies. Especially during World War II was it necessary to do this because of the clergy-inspired attacks against God's people. With Jehovah's blessing, many major court battles have been won.

The book of Esther serves as a source of hope and encouragement to Jehovah's Witnesses today. They know that Satan's intense hatred of them will soon culminate in his making an all-out attempt at their extermination. Exactly how Jehovah will then protect them remains to be seen. (Ezekiel 38:16-23) But their confidence is that, as in Esther's day, Jehovah will not abandon his people. At the right time, he will provide them with "relief and deliverance."

Bearing Fruit in the "Isle of Spice"



PETIT MARTINIQUE

CARRIACOU

GRENADA

IN THE warm, sparkling waters of the Caribbean Sea is the tiny "Isle of Spice." Otherwise called Grenada, it is only 120 square miles (311 sq km) in area. Why, even with its island dependencies, Carriacou and Petit Martinique, the total area is a mere 133 square miles (344 sq km). Grenada earned the nickname "Isle of Spice" because of the prevalence of aromatic spices, such as cinnamon, cloves, tonka beans, and nutmeg.

From north to south, the island is traversed by a mountain range that drops steeply to the sea, especially on the western side. Rivers and streams of clear water course down to the sea, and lush tropical forests abound. During the dry season, the slopes and narrow valleys are covered with bright red and yellow flowers of the wild immortelle and poui trees. This colorful spectacle is enhanced by a variety

of such flowering plants as the bougainvillea, hibiscus, snow-on-the-mountain, and the highly scented 'belles' of the night.

An outstanding feature of Grenada is its palm-fringed seacoast, edged with beautiful white, sandy beaches. The economy has traditionally been supported by the export crops of bananas, cocoa, and nutmeg, supplemented by tourism and significant sums sent by relatives who have migrated to such places as Aruba, Curaçao, England, Trinidad, the United States, and Venezuela. Grenada's 112,000 friendly inhabitants have a ready smile and a knack for turning abbreviated remarks into witty topical commentaries.

Planting Seeds of Truth

The seeds of truth were planted on this colorful island during 1914, the year World War I broke out. A Grenadian,

Elias James, then returned from Panama. As a migrant worker there, he had accepted the message of God's Kingdom and had become a dedicated, baptized minister. He was eager to sow the seeds of truth among the friendly people of this spice isle. Before long, he contacted one Mr. Briggs, a Barbadian residing in Grenada. Briggs quickly embraced the Kingdom message, thus becoming the first fruitage in the "Isle of Spice." Seeing the need for a meeting place, Briggs made the first floor of his house available as the first meeting place of Jehovah's people in the capital city, St. George's.

Being a devoted minister and an eloquent speaker, Elias James assisted many sincere people. Among them was his sister-in-law, Chriselda James. Today, at 88 years of age, she is the only person on the island professing to be an anointed Christian. She raised a family of nine children, and despite her husband's persistent opposition, all nine became baptized Witnesses. Three have since died, but the others are still active ministers, with two in the pioneer service and one serving as a special pioneer and an elder.

By the time Elias James finished his earthly course, he had made a solid pioneering contribution to the planting of the seeds of truth in Grenada. Today, there are six congregations there and one on Carriacou, with a peak of 353 Kingdom proclaimers.

During the years of slow but steady growth, loyal Witnesses have lived through various political changes—from crown colony to statehood to independence from Great Britain in 1974. During that period, there was no marked opposition to the good news, and people were generally willing to listen, if at times only out of politeness. In 1979 a change in political attitudes among some led to a revolution that brought into power the

People's Revolutionary Government. Although many felt that religious activity would be controlled by the new socialist-oriented government, this did not happen, and the work of producing Kingdom fruitage moved ahead.

A dramatic change occurred on October 19, 1983, a date that Grenadians will remember for a long time. The RMC (Revolutionary Military Council) then took control of the government. Several government officials were gunned down along with an undisclosed number of civilians.

This was quickly followed by the imposition of a 4-day, 24-hour, shoot-on-sight curfew. These turbulent events, a new experience for the peaceful islanders, generated widespread fear and uncertainty. Since all were confined to their homes, great hardships were experienced, especially by the sick and the elderly.

Early on Tuesday morning, October 25, 1983, many Grenadians were awakened by the unusual droning of planes, punctuated by loud explosions and the staccato outbursts of heavy gunfire. Later, by means of the local radio station, they would learn that foreign forces had landed on the island. The combined forces of the OECS (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) and the United States Marines had militarily intervened, reportedly after the Governor-General had appealed for help. Within a few hours, both airports (Pearls and Point Salines) came under the control of the Caribbean and United States forces. By midmorning, Grenada became the center of international news.

Fierce fighting broke out between the foreign forces and those loyal to the RMC. However, this was mainly in the St. George's area. Many people there spent those turbulent days under their beds. Some were even too afraid to go to their kitchen to prepare food for their family. Happily, none of Jehovah's Wit-

nesses on the island were injured during the fighting. A few, however, came perilously close to death.

Christian Courage Amid Turmoil

One female Witness had what a local elder described as "a close shave with death." He reported: "This sister sought refuge in her neighbor's house, where she felt she would be more secure. She and the other occupants heard shots being fired from a hill overlooking the house. The U.S. marines started to fire at the house, believing the shots had come from it. All in the house quickly dropped to the floor. When there was a lull in the barrage of shots, the owner of the house nervously rushed outside with a white bedsheet in his hand. All in the house followed him outside, including our frightened sister. While they were standing in the yard, another burst of shots was directed at them, but this time from the hill where the firing had started in the first place. Amid the hail of bullets, the marines quickly dragged all of them away to a safe place. Remarkably, no one was hurt. The marines later told them that they were very fortunate, as they were just about to blow up the house, thinking the soldiers of the RMC were inside and were firing at them. When all the excitement had died down, our dear sister discovered a two-inch (5-cm) piece of thorn in her foot. She had not even felt the pain when it pierced her flesh!"

While the fighting was going on, another elder's five-year-old daughter fell inside the family home and fractured her left arm. It was impossible to get medical help at that time. All the parents could do was to give the child some tablets to ease the pain. When things had calmed down several days later, they took the child to a bone specialist. Upon examination, it was

found that the fracture was multiple. However, the bones were already back in place, and the healing process was well under way without any complications. Needless to say, the concerned parents were overjoyed.

Much to her surprise, one frail sister found out just how strong she was physically. Her husband, a diabetic of over twice her weight, became unconscious and fell to the floor sometime during the curfew. She was the only adult in the house and was unable to get outside assistance. So, what could be done? She reported: "I cried out to Jehovah and appealed for help. I can honestly say that Jehovah heard my earnest plea. With some strenuous effort, I was able to get my husband off the floor into a sitting position until he regained consciousness. I could only say that the strength I got there and then came from Jehovah."

During the brief, though intense, fighting, the appointed elders had many opportunities to prove themselves 'places of concealment from the rainstorm.' (Isaiah 32:1, 2) To provide physical help and spiritual comfort, they risked their safety and even their life while visiting many brothers, especially in areas where there was fierce fighting.

In Our Next Issue

- **The Bible**
—God's Word or Man's?
- **Advocating Truth**
in an Ungodly World
- **Beware of Sin's**
Hardening Effects!

One elder and his family were among hundreds evacuated from their homes and placed in a refugee camp. They had to endure the deafening explosions from the big guns. One such explosion literally threw the elder, his wife, and their daughter to the ground. When asked how he was able to keep calm during that ordeal, he said: "My fearlessness and calmness were a result of years of deep study of God's Word, which built me up and prepared me for such an unusual situation." Thus, this elder was able to calm and console the Witnesses in that camp.

A few weeks later, with the U.S. and Caribbean forces in control of the entire island, an interim administration was established. This provided a somewhat stable period for holding a general election. It took place on December 3, 1984. Under the New National Party led by the Prime Minister, Herbert Blaize, the turbulent past seems to have faded, and many are looking forward to a bright future.

Strengthened for the Work Ahead

Recent events have served to strengthen all of Jehovah's Witnesses in Grenada. They have experienced Jehovah's saving power and are determined to intensify their Kingdom-preaching efforts. Many sincere and honest-hearted people who are showing keen interest in the Kingdom message were among the 914 present for the celebration of the Memorial of Christ's death on April 4, 1985. For each of the 350 Witnesses on the island, about two interested persons were in attendance on that occasion. What fine potential for future growth!

The natural beauty of Grenada gives some hint of what the promised Paradise earth will be like. Such a global Paradise is an assured promise of earth's Creator, Jehovah. Soon the righteous "will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." (Psalm 37:10, 11, 29) All of Jehovah's Witnesses are happy and anxious to share this thrilling message of hope with fellow Grenadians throughout this "Isle of Spice."

Do You Answer in Anger?

"An answer, when mild, turns away rage, but a word causing pain makes anger to come up." So states Proverbs 15:1.

When you are angered by someone, are you impelled to get even and to 'let him have a piece of your mind'? That can lead to serious consequences.

In New York City, a young girl came home after a heated argument over poor service in a pizzeria and told her stepfather about it. He went back to have a word with the store owner. A quarrel ensued, and the pizzeria owner shot the man to death.

Would following the advice of the foregoing proverb have helped in a situation like that? Recall the incident involving Abigail and David, as recorded in 1 Samuel 25:2-35. David was about to make a grave mistake when he received the bad report from the young men returning from Nabal, the husband of Abigail. Innocent blood would have been shed. Abigail's mild answer, along with her kind deeds and humility, turned away the fiery rage of David and his men.

Jehovah Provides for Trinidad's Needs

FROM its small beginning in 1912, the Kingdom-preaching work in Trinidad and its neighboring island Tobago has gone through several stages of expansion. The latest development—in March 1985—was the completion and dedication of a new branch building just outside the capital, Port of Spain. The new facilities were sorely needed, for Trinidad has experienced an increase of 79 percent in Kingdom proclaimers since the last branch facilities were constructed.

Finding suitable property on a small, heavily populated island was not easy. Land is expensive, and construction costs are also very high. Yet, Jehovah provided for all these needs. A fine, accessible site was located just off the airport highway. The brothers rallied around the project, giving splendid support. Almost every Kingdom publisher in Trinidad had some part in the construction work.

Every weekend a group from one congregation would come to assist with the work, while those from another would supply food and refreshments. Night work was done two or three times a week. The construction proceeded right on through the rainy seasons. When it was time to pour the first floor, over 350 brothers were there, passing buckets of cement by hand. Hindu neighbors were simply amazed! This afforded opportunity to witness to them.

Construction costs were met by the same wholehearted spirit. Sisters even contributed their gold jewelry, to be sold and applied toward the construction. An eight-year-old boy wrote: "I love working at the branch complex, but because my Daddy's back is sick and he cannot do hard work, I cannot come very often. So I am send-

ing this money that I saved to help with the work."

Throughout the construction, Jehovah's backing was evident. Hilary Charles, the construction overseer, recalled the time they were down to ten bags of cement and called the cement factory to get more. He said: "Cement was really hard to get. They said we could not get any until the next week. That was at about nine in the morning. At two that afternoon, I saw a load of cement come. The truck driver said: 'The load of cement was for somewhere else, and I

was told to bring it here.' He couldn't understand it. It was Jehovah's hand."

The two-story branch building is in the shape of a T, with the entrance at the top—the south side. To the right of the attractive lobby is the Kingdom Hall, which seats about 200 people. A spacious office is to the left. The downstairs of the longer portion houses the printery, shipping department, and laundry. Upstairs are the kitchen, dining room, and living quarters—eight bedrooms, each with its own bath. A small library and lounge are located above the office.

Saturday, March 16, was dedication day. Milton G. Henschel of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses gave the talk. "Jehovah not only knows how to provide but knows what we need," said Brother Henschel. Yes, the new facilities were a gift from Jehovah. The session ended with an earnest prayer of dedication to Jehovah. How happy we were!

Jehovah's Witnesses in Trinidad and Tobago rejoice over the increase given by Jehovah. And they press forward, looking for even further increase as he continues to provide for their needs as Kingdom proclaimers.



Questions From Readers

■ After David and Bath-sheba sinned, why did their son have to die, since Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 say that a son is not to die for his father's error?

David and Bath-sheba were both married persons when they committed adultery and she became pregnant. Their adultery was a grave sin punishable by death under God's law. (2 Samuel 11:1-5; Deuteronomy 5:18; 22:22) So if God had permitted them to be dealt with by humans under the Law, the son developing in her womb would have died with its mother. But Jehovah chose to handle their case differently, which "the Judge of all the earth" certainly had a right to do.—Genesis 18:25.

When confronted with his guilt, David acknowledged: "I have sinned against Jehovah." Then God's spokesman told David: "Jehovah, in turn, does let your sin pass by. You will not die." (2 Samuel 12:13) David was shown mercy because of the Kingdom covenant. Moreover, since God is able to read hearts, he must have evaluated the genuineness of David's repentance and concluded that there was a basis for extending mercy to David and Bath-sheba. Yet they would not escape all the deserts of their error. They were told: "Notwithstanding this, because you have unquestionably treated Jehovah with disrespect by this thing, also the son himself, just born to you, will positively die."—2 Samuel 12:14.

God 'dealt a blow' involving their child to whom they were not entitled; the boy became sick and died. A person today might tend to focus on the child's death and feel that a harsh judgment was executed. However, it is good to bear in mind that had the adultery been handled by and proved before hu-

man judges under the Law, all three (David, Bath-sheba, and the son in her womb) would have lost their lives. Viewed in that light, God's permitting two of them to survive was merciful. Furthermore, at this late date we do not have all the facts, such as information about the health of the infant immediately after birth. We can, nonetheless, accept God's handling of the matter, confident that what he did was impartial, wise, and righteous. Even David later acknowledged: "As for the true God, perfect is his way."—2 Samuel 22:31; compare Job 34:12; Isaiah 55:11.

That is consistent with David's reaction after he heard God's judgment. While the child was sick, David grieved and fasted. But once death occurred, David appreciated that the matter had ended. (2 Samuel 12:22, 23) So, trusting God's judgment, David proceeded to comfort Bath-sheba (now his legal wife), assuring her that their marriage relationship would continue. Later Solomon was born to them and became David's successor.

God's handling of that case need not be viewed as conflicting with Deuteronomy 24:16 or Ezekiel 18:20.

As part of the Law, God directed: "Fathers should not be put to death on account of children, and children should not be put to death on account of fathers. Each one should be put to death for his own sin." (Deuteronomy 24:16) Those guidelines were for Israelite judges handling legal cases. The judges could not read hearts. They were to deal with

each man on the basis of his own conduct as established by the facts.

Similarly, Ezekiel 18:20 observes: "A son himself will bear nothing because of the error of the father, and a father himself will bear nothing because of the error of the son. Upon his own self the very righteousness of the righteous one will come to be, and upon his own self the very wickedness of a wicked one will come to be." This was primarily referring to adults. The context speaks of a son who witnessed his father's wickedness but refused to share in it; instead, the son carried out Jehovah's judicial decisions and walked in His statutes. Such a son would be preserved when his father died.—Ezekiel 18:14-17.

It is undeniable, though, that children can suffer consequences because of their parents' actions. Parents who are wasteful or foolish may bring poverty on the whole family. Or imagine the effect on children if a parent is sentenced to prison for criminal activity. Even calamities that God justly brought on Israel for their wickedness affected the children of the time. (Deuteronomy 28:15, 20-32; Ezekiel 8:6-18; 9:5-10) Conversely, God urged his people: "You must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring, by loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice and by sticking to him; for he is your life and the length of your days."—Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.

Hence, the experience of David and Bath-sheba should emphasize to parents that their conduct can greatly affect their children. If parents 'are in fear of God's name, the sun of righteousness can shine forth' to the blessing of the entire family.—Malachi 4:2.



'It Has Helped Me Win Respect'

That is what a man from West Africa said regarding the book *Your Youth—Getting the Best out of It*. "I often call together the whole family to have a discussion based on the book," he writes. "Youths in the neighborhood also come to participate in the discussion. Thanks to that book, I have been able to win the respect of all the young people in the area and to help them with their problems."