April 15, 1987

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

GOD'S WISDOM
CAN YOU SEE IT?

The Watchtower®

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

April 15, 1987
Vol. 108, No. 8

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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.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

May 24: Gaining Peace With God Through Dedication and Baptism. Page 10. Songs to Be Used: 13, 202.

May 31: Increase Your Peace Through Accurate Knowledge. Page 15. Songs to Be Used: 135, 91.

Average Printing Each Issue: 12,315,000

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20 cents (U.S.) a copy

The Bible translation used is the "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures," unless otherwise indicated.

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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly for $4.00 (U.S.) per year by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Watchtower, ***Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.***

Published by
Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania
25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, U.S.A.
Frederick W. Franz, President

God's Wisdom
Can You See It?

VISUALIZE the court of an ancient king. There, arrayed in royal robes, the monarch sits on a throne of splendor as he presides. He is renowned not only for his wealth but also for his wisdom. His court attendants are organized to perfection. The scene of magnificence is breathtaking. Behold: King Solomon! —1 Kings 10:1-9, 18-20.

Listen, now, to the man recognized as the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ: "On the matter of clothing, why are you anxious? Take a lesson from the lilies of the field, how they are growing; they do not toil, nor do they spin; but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."—Matthew 6:28, 29.

What did Jesus mean by that? Well, he was certainly giving counsel about not being materialistic. But could his words about Solomon be literally true? Remember, Jesus used true-to-life illustrations. So Solomon's designers and craftsmen, though competent, could not equal the designs, the blending of colors, the symmetry of "the lilies of the field" framed in their natural surroundings.

Jehovah's Wisdom Made Manifest

Even a casual examination of flowers may cause you to endorse Jesus' statement. We do not know just what variety of lily Jesus may have had in mind, but flowers abound in most parts of the earth. Look carefully at a flower, any flower: a lily, a rose, an orchid. What delicate shades of color and intricate designs you see, a blending of the sepals, the leaves, and other parts of the flower's body. Can you see the silent but strong proof that a Great Designer of infinite wisdom and imagination is behind this beautiful handiwork? Not only do our eyes revel in their beauty but our nostrils take in their fragrant perfumes in the air we breathe.

The apostle Paul observed that Jehovah God's "invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made." (Romans 1:20) However, God created more than flowers to robe the earth; he made countless shrubs and trees, all of which form a practical, yet handsomely verdant, kingdom. If you could visit the Humboldt National Forest in California, U.S.A., you would find a giant redwood that is believed to be the tallest tree in the world. If you could stand at its foot and gaze up at its height of over 360 feet (110 m), would you not silently praise the One who knew how to make such a tree?

The Instinctive Wisdom of Animals

On land and sea there are animals, small and great, that impress us with God's wisdom. Apparently each serves some

From tiny minnows to great whales, divine wisdom is seen in their form and function

purpose of the Creator. Wise King Solomon counseled: "Go to the ant, you lazy one; see its ways and become wise." (Proverbs 6:6) Those who have observed the ant marvel at its organizing ability. Ants are not isolationists; they live in communities. Some are farmers and harvest seeds. In the tropics you see some ants busily nipping off pieces of leaves to carry to their nests. How do they know to do this? Agur, one of the writers of the book of Proverbs, answers that the ant is "instinctively wise." Who made it that way? Jehovah, the Producer of heaven and earth. —Proverbs 30:24, 25.

Yes, the animal creation has instinctive wisdom. It is very apparent in the migration of birds. You may have heard about the migration of the Capistrano swallows. At a certain time each year, they travel thousands of miles from their wintering grounds in South America to a mission at San Juan Capistrano, California, U.S.A. Instinctively and unerringly they come to the same place at the same time in March.

As to the vast sea, the psalmist states: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions. As for the sea so great and wide, there there are moving things without number." (Psalm 104:24, 25) From the tiny minnows to the great whales, divine wisdom is seen in their form and function.

God's crowning creation on earth was man himself. Here was a creature that did not act just by built-in, or instinctive, wisdom. He had the capability of being like God in many ways. How true of him that "in a fear-inspiring way" he is wonderfully made! Even if we are not medical scientists, we can read their findings and draw the same conclusions as the inspired writer. The Creator's works evident in the human body are wonderful.—Psalm 139:14.

Jehovah's Heavenly Wisdom

Psalm 19:1 states that the heavens declare the glory of God. How very true! The psalmist David had no telescopes or electronic instruments, but he had reverential appreciation for what he could see. Today, the average person knows much more than David did about our solar system and our great galaxy, the Milky Way. He also knows that there are countless other great galaxies in the limitless reaches of space. How do you feel as you contemplate the wisdom of the great and matchless Designer? Can you say with reverential voice: 'Jehovah, you are "doing great things unsearchable, and wonderful things without number"'? You should. —Job 9:10.

In the untold past aeons, Jehovah proceeded with his acts of creation, first his only begotten Son, then the rest of his spirit creation. This was followed by the material universe. All was serene and orderly. Why, the angelic sons of God actually shouted their appreciation in applause at the founding of the earth! (Job 38:4-7) Man and woman were created and placed in a perfect garden, but then a shocking thing occurred. A voice out of the invisible, speaking through a serpent, slandered the Grand Creator. It charged that Jehovah was misusing his sovereignty; it called God a liar. Hence, the owner of the voice gained unsavory names that identify him, such as Devil, Serpent, and Satan. What now would the All-Wise One do? What could he do? A new dimension of wisdom would be required that would eclipse designs that already outshone Solomon's glory.—Genesis 3:1-5.

A New Dimension of Divine Wisdom

"AT THIS God said to Moses: 'I SHALL PROVE TO BE WHAT I SHALL PROVE TO BE.' And he added: 'This is what you are to say to the sons of Israel, "I SHALL PROVE TO BE has sent me to you."'" (Exodus 3:14) Jehovah explained to Moses that before this even His servants did not understand the full significance of His name. He is the God of purpose and always fulfills his will. If circumstances require, he can alter his method to achieve his purpose. He is that wise!

Satan himself did not appreciate what God's name implied. Likely, he did know of the tree of life in the garden of Eden. If he had led Adam and Eve to it, that might have seemed to put Jehovah on the horns of a dilemma: either to keep his word that sin would mean their death or to keep his word as to the tree of life. (Genesis 2:9; 3:1-6) In any event, Satan was in for a disappointment.

God now began to demonstrate a wisdom unanticipated by his spirit sons and previously unrevealed to them. (Compare Ephesians 3:10.) He began to inaugurate a series of pronouncements and events that over a long period of time would marvelously demonstrate his great wisdom and his ability to fulfill his eternal purpose, which was to have the earth full *of happy*, loyal humans who could live forever in Paradise. (Genesis 1:27, 28) Time and again God would thwart Satan's efforts to interfere.

The Sacred Secret Unfolds

Immediately after the first rebellion, God acted. He held court for the guilty couple and upheld his sanction of death for disobedience. What about Adam and Eve's eating from the tree of life? "Jehovah God went on to say: 'Here the man has become like one of us in knowing good and bad, and now in order that he may not put his hand out and actually take fruit also from the tree of life and eat and live to time indefinite,—' With that Jehovah God put him out of the garden of Eden."—Genesis 3:17-23.

At this time God also undertook the role of Evangelizer, or Proclaimer of good news. He uttered the first prophecy: "Jehovah God proceeded to say to the serpent: . . . 'I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel.'" (Genesis 3:14, 15) Centuries later the apostle Paul explained: "For the [human] creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope."—Romans 8:20.

Yes, man thereafter would be helplessly shackled to death inherited from Adam, but God was declaring his purpose to rescue Adam's obedient offspring. Yet, what was "the basis of hope"? How could he rescue humans and still uphold his sentence of death for sin? This was to be God's hidden wisdom; it involved "the sacred secret that was hidden from the past systems of things and from the past generations." (Colossians 1:26; 1 Corinthians 2:7, 8) Although faithful ones of old did not understand the secret, they did have a hope that somehow God would rescue

them. Why, even the angels were eager to learn how Jehovah would fulfill his purpose! (1 Peter 1:10-12) Do you understand this sacred secret?

Redeemed by Ransom

Gradually over the centuries, Jehovah added information to his original promise. To faithful Abraham he promised a seed through whom blessings for all obedient humans would come. (Genesis 22:15-18) Through Jacob he revealed that the seed would be a king from the tribe of Judah. (Genesis 49:10) By this time godly men believed in a resurrection of the dead, although they could not fully understand how this was to be. (Job 14:14, 15; Hebrews 11:19) Finally, God promised David that the coming King, or Messiah, would be a descendant of David and would reign to time indefinite.—2 Samuel 7:16.

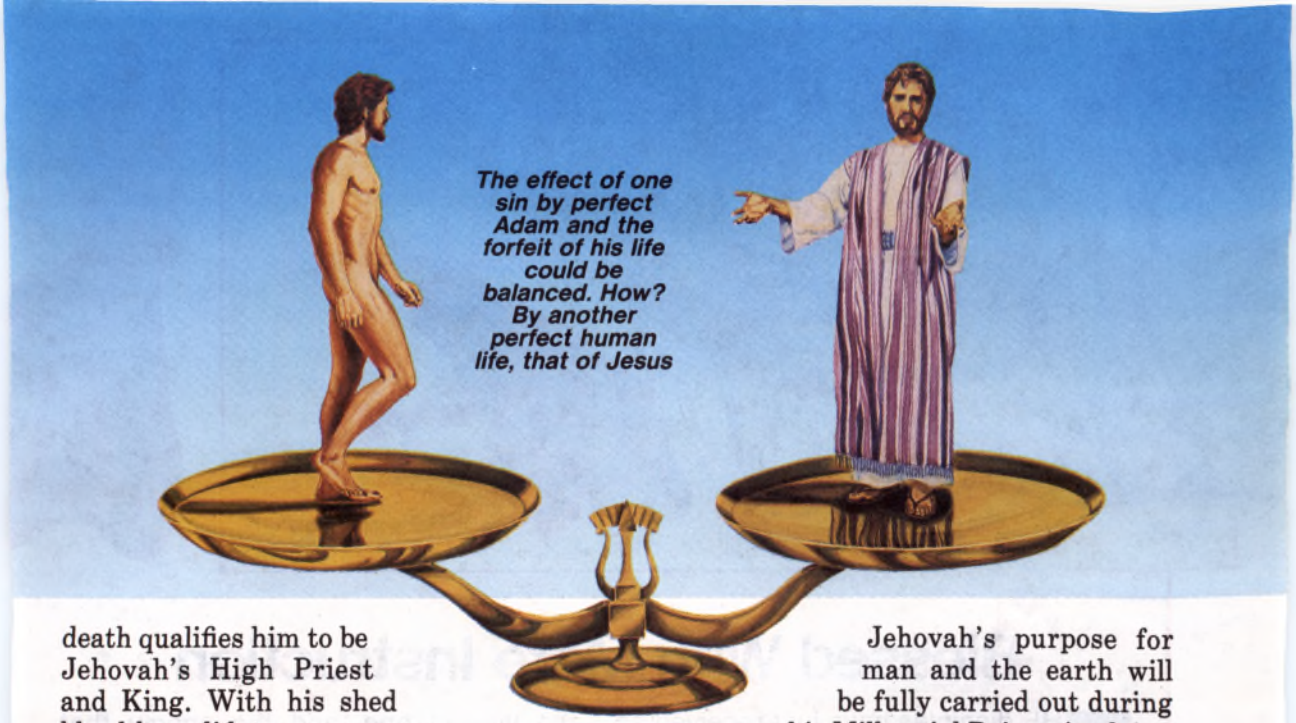
All the prophets added bits of understanding to the sacred secret, but men could not see the complete picture. Eventually, the time for the appearance of the Messiah arrived, and then, at long last, this greatly diversified wisdom of God became much clearer. It centered around Jesus Christ and the provision of his perfect human life as a corresponding ransom for mankind. With that as a basis, the rest of the glorious purpose of Jehovah through the Kingdom would proceed. Do you understand the ransom?

In Romans chapters 5 and 6, Paul gives a fine explanation of it. At Romans 5:12 he explains our inherited sin and death. He goes on to show how the effect of just one sin by perfect Adam and the forfeiture of life for his offspring could be balanced by another perfect human life. That proved to be the life of the "man Jesus Christ." (Verses 15-21; see also 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.) Why could Jesus provide this ransom? Because he was the Son of God, Jesus was "loyal, guileless, undefiled, separated from the sinners." (Hebrews 7:26; Luke 1:32, 33) We need not attempt to explain the details of the genetics of Jesus' birth. The angel Gabriel assured Jesus' mother, Mary, and us, that nothing is impossible with God. (Luke 1:37) So Jesus, although born out of a female descendant of Adam, was the Son of God—actually a perfect man. His blood, or life, was worth far more than the blood of countless animals that had been sacrificed by the Aaronic priests of Israel at the temple in Jerusalem. He was "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."—John 1:29; 3:16.

Could God make this arrangement through Jesus and still be just? If God raised his Son to life on the third day, what happened to the ransom? Paul assures us that God *is* just. Follow his reasoning: "But by his mercy they are made upright for nothing [it being free], by the deliverance secured through Christ Jesus. For God showed him publicly dying as a sacrifice of reconciliation to be taken advantage of through faith. This was to vindicate his own justice (for in his forbearance, God passed over men's former sins) —to vindicate his justice at the present time, and show that he is upright himself, and that he makes those who have faith in Jesus upright also." (Romans 3:24-26, *An American Translation*) Now, what does this mean? Simply that Jesus, as a perfect, flesh-and-blood man, actually died as a man and remains dead as a man forever. He died "once for all time when he *offered* himself up." (Hebrews 7:27) So the ransom is valid. Jesus died in the flesh; on the third day he was "made alive in the spirit."—1 Peter 3:18.

The New Covenant and the New Creation

Now we see the crowning part of the sacred secret. Jesus' being faithful to



The effect of one sin by perfect Adam and the forfeit of his life could be balanced. How? By another perfect human life, that of Jesus

death qualifies him to be Jehovah's High Priest and King. With his shed blood he validates a new covenant. This new covenant is to produce heavenly associates who will rule with Jesus as kings and priests. (Revelation 5: 9, 10; 20:4, 6) They constitute a new nation, "a new creation," and that certainly is something!—Galatians 6:15, 16.

Consider: God through Christ Jesus chooses a representative number out of mankind, both men and women. He can legally declare them righteous and call them to be spiritual sons. In God's due season after their death, he resurrects them to heaven and grants them immortality, even as he rewarded Jesus. (1 Peter 1:3, 4) What confidence he has in his "new creation" and their loyalty to him! What an answer to the one who has falsely accused them before Jehovah! (Revelation 12:10) Although immortal with Jesus Christ, they will *never* be disloyal to Jehovah. But that is not all.

The Paradise Earth

Christ Jesus, with his associate heavenly kings and priests, will see to it that Jehovah's purpose for man and the earth will be fully carried out during his Millennial Reign. Applying the benefits of the ransom, Jesus will resurrect the dead and will bring to human perfection the faithful ones among them and the survivors of the end of this wicked system. At the same time, the earth will be made a paradise. All who then reject Satan's final effort to corrupt them will be granted perfect human life forever. Satan and all his evil crowd will be destroyed forever. Peace and unity will prevail in all creation, fully vindicating Jehovah's sovereignty and his rule by love. Both angels and men will have demonstrated loyal love for their Creator and God.—Revelation, chapter 20.

Now we can better understand the sacred secret. Now we see Jehovah's wisdom that excels even his creative designs in the plant and animal worlds. We have good reason to exclaim: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are . . . Because from him and by him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen."—Romans 11:33-36.

Blessed With More Instruction

THE disciples have just received an explanation of the illustration of the sower. But now they want to learn more. "Explain to us," they request, "the illustration of the weeds in the field."

How different the attitude of the disciples from that of the rest of the crowd on the beach! Those people lack an earnest desire to learn the meaning behind the illustrations, being satisfied with merely the outline of things set out in them. Contrasting that seaside audience with his inquisitive disciples, Jesus says:

"With the measure that you are measuring out, you will have it measured out to you, yes, you will have more added to you." The disciples are measuring out to Jesus earnest interest and attention and so are blessed with receiving more instruction. Thus, in answer to his disciples' inquiry, Jesus explains:

"The sower of the fine seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; as for the fine seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; but the weeds are the sons of the wicked one, and the enemy that sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is a conclusion of a system of things, and the reapers are angels."

After identifying each feature of his illustration, Jesus describes the outcome. At the conclusion of the system of things, he says, "the reapers," or angels, will separate weedlike imitation Christians from the true "sons of the kingdom." "The sons of the wicked one" will then be marked for destruction, but the sons of God's Kingdom, "the righteous ones," will shine brilliantly in the Kingdom of their Father.

Jesus next blesses his inquisitive disciples with three more illustrations. First, he says: "The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and for the joy he has he goes and sells what things he has and buys that field."

"Again," he continues, "the kingdom of the heavens is like a traveling merchant seeking fine pearls. Upon finding one pearl of high value, away he went and

promptly sold all the things he had and bought it."

Jesus himself is like the man who discovers a hidden treasure and like the merchant who finds a pearl of high value. He sold everything, as it were, giving up an honored position in heaven to become a lowly human. Then, as a man on earth, he suffers reproach and hateful persecution, proving worthy of becoming the Ruler of God's Kingdom.

The challenge is placed before Jesus' followers also to sell everything in order to obtain the grand reward of being either a coruler with Christ or an earthly Kingdom subject. Will we consider having a share in God's Kingdom as something more valuable than anything else in life, as a priceless treasure or a precious pearl?

Finally, Jesus likens "the kingdom of the heavens" to a dragnet that gathers up fish of every kind. When the fish are separated, the unsuitable are thrown away but the good are kept. So, Jesus says, it will be in the conclusion of the system of things; the angels will separate the wicked from the righteous, reserving the wicked for annihilation.

Jesus himself begins this fishing project, calling his first disciples to be "fishers of men." Under angelic surveillance, the fishing work continues down through the centuries. At last the time comes to haul in the "dragnet," which symbolizes the organizations on earth professing to be Christian.

Although the unsuitable fish are cast into destruction, thankfully we can be counted among the 'good fish' that are kept. By exhibiting the same earnest desire as Jesus' disciples did for more knowledge and understanding, we will be blessed not only with more instruction but with God's blessing of eternal life. **Matthew 13:36-52; 4:19; Mark 4: 24, 25.**

- How do the disciples differ from the crowds on the beach?
- Who or what is represented by the sower, the field, the fine seed, the enemy, the harvest, and the reapers?
- What three additional illustrations did Jesus provide, and what can we learn from them?

Gaining Peace With God
Through Dedication and Baptism

GAINING peace with God? But why? Few persons consider themselves in conflict with God. Is it possible, however, to be an actual enemy of God and not be aware of it? The apostle Paul explained to Christians in the first century: "We all at one time conducted ourselves in harmony with the desires of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and the thoughts, and we were naturally *children of wrath* even as the rest."—Ephesians 2:3.

[2] Likewise today, though you may be interested in pleasing God, sin inherited from Adam affects your outlook and can cause you to pursue "the things willed by the flesh." Even if you are a person studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses or an unbaptized youth whose parents are Witnesses, a self-centered do-as-I-please attitude may characterize much of your life and continue to alienate you from God. A person who maintains such a course is 'storing up wrath for himself.' (Romans 2:5; Colossians 1:21; 3:5-8) God will express his anger completely during the fast-approaching "day of wrath and of the revealing of God's righteous judgment." (Romans 1:28–2:6) How can you gain

1, 2. (a) Why are people in general not at peace with God? (b) Why is it vital for all to gain such peace?

peace with God and survive this "day of wrath"?

The Foundation for Peace

[3] Jehovah took the initiative to help. "He loved us and sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10) Jesus' sacrificial death propitiates, that is, appeases or satisfies Jehovah's justice. This provides a legal basis for the forgiveness of sins and, eventually, for the complete removal of the enmity between God and man. Yes, it is possible to become "reconciled to God through the death of his Son," as the apostle Paul wrote.—Romans 5:8-10.

[4] But to benefit personally from Christ's sacrifice, we must take certain steps. These are indicated in a dramatic vision given to the prophet Ezekiel, a vision that is fulfilled during our time when God's "day of wrath" is imminent. God's executional forces are pictured in the vision by six armed men. Before these express God's wrath, a seventh man, carrying a secretary's inkhorn, is told: "'Pass through the midst of the city, . . . and you must put a mark on the foreheads of the men that are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the midst of it.' And to [the six armed men] he said in my ears: 'Pass through the city after him and strike. . . . But to any man upon whom there is the mark do not go near.'"—Ezekiel 9:1-6.

[5] These protectively 'marked' ones were sickened because persons claiming to worship the true God had 'filled the land with violence' and had engaged in sexual immorality, idolatry, and all manner of other wrong conduct. (Ezekiel 8:5-18; Jeremiah 7:9) Likewise today, those who would be 'marked' must first learn, through a study of the Bible, to value God's standards and become grieved at heart, yes, to 'sigh and groan,' over teachings and practices that dishonor him. Perhaps because of ignorance some engaged in wrongdoing or consented to such by giving their support. Yet, now they begin to view such activities as God views them—with disgust! (Romans 1:24-32; Isaiah 2:4; Revelation 18:4; John 15:19) This increased appreciation leads to one of the first steps to gain peace with God: repentance. The apostle Peter urged: "Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, that seasons of refreshing [rather than wrath] may come from the person of Jehovah." (Acts 3:19) How refreshing such forgiveness is!

Getting the "Mark"

[6] To be spared from God's wrath, those who 'sighed and groaned' had to be marked on their forehead. (Ezekiel 9:4) In ancient times slaves were often marked on the forehead to be clearly identified. Distinctive marks on the forehead and elsewhere might also show that a person worshiped a certain deity.* (Compare Isaiah 44:5.) So, in our day, what is the distinctive, lifesaving mark that clearly identifies its bearers as true worshipers and slaves of Jehovah?

[7] The symbolic mark is the evidence, as if displayed on your uncovered forehead, (1) that you are a dedicated, baptized

3. How did God provide the basis for reconciliation?
4. What relevant vision was given to Ezekiel, and why is it of importance to us?
5. What leads to repentance?

* About 150 years after Ezekiel's vision, the Greek historian Herodotus, noting that the marks on devotees of the god Hercules afforded them protection, wrote: "If the slave of any person whatsoever takes refuge [in Hercules' temple], and has sacred marks impressed on him, so devoting himself to the god, it is not lawful to lay hands on him."

6. For what reasons were some people marked during ancient times?
7. What is the symbolic mark?

disciple of Jesus Christ and (2) that you have put on the Christlike new personality. (Ephesians 4:20-24) Since those thus 'marked' must first make a dedication, we need to know what this involves. Jesus explains: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and follow me continually." —Mark 8:34.

[8] The Greek word translated "disown" means "to deny utterly" or "renounce." Therefore, to 'disown yourself' means more than denying yourself a certain pleasure or indulgence now and then. Rather, it means being willing to say no to yourself when it comes to letting your life be dominated by your personal desires and ambitions. We are helped to see the scope of Jesus' words by noting how this concept is translated into different languages: "To stop doing what one's own heart wants" (Tzeltal, Mexico), "to not belong to oneself any longer" (K'anjobal, Guatemala), and "to turn his back on himself" (Javanese, Indonesia). Yes, this means an exclusive dedication, not just a commitment that could be made to a number of things.

[9] A Christian named Susan, who formerly was quite independent, explains what dedication meant to her: "I was surrendering my whole self to someone else. Jehovah now determines my course, tells me what to do, and sets my priorities." Are you willing to make the same exclusive dedication to Jehovah God? Remember, the symbolic mark identifies you as 'belonging' to God, as a happy slave to his Master. —Compare Exodus 21:5, 6; Romans 14:8.

[10] "Who of you that wants to build a tower does not first sit down and calculate the expense, to see if he has enough to complete it?" asked Jesus. (Luke 14:28) So are you willing to: Attend Christian meetings regularly? (Hebrews 10:25) Maintain the high moral standard set by God for his servants? (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 4, 7) Have as full a share in the Kingdom preaching work as you can? Put God's will first when choosing a career or setting goals in life? (Matthew 6:33; Ecclesiastes 12:1) Care for your family obligations? (Ephesians 5:22-6:4; 1 Timothy 5:8) Once you have made a personal dedication in prayer, a further step lets others know this officially.

8, 9. (a) What does it mean to 'disown yourself'? (b) How can what dedication requires be illustrated?

10. What matters should one consider before making a dedication?

Baptism—For Whom?

[11] Jesus commanded that his followers be baptized. (Matthew 28:19, 20) They were to be totally immersed in water and raised out of it. Like a burial and a resurrection, this well pictures a person's dying to a self-centered way of life and being made alive to do God's will. By baptism you identify yourself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's worldwide congregation.* Baptism validates a solemn agreement made with God. (Compare Exodus 19:3-8.) Your life must be in harmony with his laws. (Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Baptism, which ordains you as a minister of God, reflects also a "request made to God for a good conscience" because you know that you are at peace with God.—1 Peter 3:21.

[12] Should even youths consider baptism? Well, recall that Jehovah told the six armed men in the vision: "Old man, young

* Recently the two questions addressed to baptismal candidates were simplified so that candidates could answer with full comprehension of what is involved in coming into intimate relationship with God and his earthly organization.

11. What does baptism symbolize, and what is accomplished by it?

12. When are children protected by their parent's "mark"?

man and virgin and little child and women you should kill off—to a ruination. But to any man upon whom there is the mark do not go near." (Ezekiel 9:6) Of course, children too young to make a dedication would be protected by a parent's "mark" if that parent is striving to bring the children up to love Jehovah and if they are obediently responding. (1 Corinthians 7:14) Yet, if a child is intelligent enough to make a personal decision and has reached the point where he "knows how to do what is right," do not presume that he will continue indefinitely under the merit of his parent's "mark."—James 4:17.

[13] Before making a dedication, a youth should have adequate knowledge to comprehend what is involved and should be seeking a personal relationship with God. He should understand and be adhering to Bible principles, knowing that he will be held accountable for any infraction thereof. He should also have sufficient experience in sharing his faith with others and know that this is a vital part of true worship; he should truly want to serve God. Naturally, he would not be expected to show the maturity of an adult, but his spiritual progress should be reasonably steady.

13. What are some considerations in determining a youth's readiness for baptism?

[14] If one has 'counted the cost,' it places one at no disadvantage to make a dedication as a youth. With almost all new Christians, after baptism appreciation deepens. "Getting baptized as a youngster was a protection for me," explained David. "As I got older, I noticed how some unbaptized teenagers in the congregation felt free of the authority of the elders and as a consequence veered into bad conduct. But I always remembered that I had dedicated my life to God. My life was already taken, so I could not follow such teenagers."

[15] 'What, though, if my son or daughter gets baptized when young and then cools off?' some parents wonder. Certainly, a youth should not get baptized just to please a parent or because some friends do. Yet Joseph, Samuel, King Josiah, and Jesus when teenagers all had a serious view of the worship of God and held to it. (Genesis 37:2; 39:1-3; 1 Samuel 1:24-28; 2:18-21; 2 Chronicles 34:3; Luke 2:42-49) In modern times, a Christian named Jean was baptized when she was only ten years old. When asked years later if she really understood the step, Jean replied: "I knew I loved Jehovah, I appreciated what Jesus

14. Why did one youngster consider his baptism a protection?

15. (a) How do we know that it is possible for youths to maintain a serious view of true worship? (b) How can parents best assist?

Immersion or Sprinkling?

The account of Jesus' baptism mentions his "coming up out of the water." (Mark 1:10) That Jesus was immersed is consistent with the meaning of the Greek word translated baptism (*ba·pti·sma*). This comes from the word *ba·pti·zo,* which means "dip, immerse." It was sometimes used to describe the sinking of a ship. The second-century writer Lucian uses a related word to describe one person's drowning another: "Plunging him down so deep [*ba·pti·zon·ta*] that he cannot come up again." *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* concludes: "Despite assertions to the contrary, it seems that *baptizō,* both in Jewish and Christian contexts, normally meant 'immerse', and that even when it became a technical term for baptism, the thought of immersion remains."

did for us, and I wanted to serve Jehovah." She has served faithfully for some 40 years since her baptism. Each youth is an individual; no one can set a standard age limit. Parents should strive to reach their child's heart, helping him or her to develop godly devotion.* They should not only keep before their children the privilege of dedication and baptism but also fortify them to be steadfast worshipers.

Overcoming Obstacles

16 While Bible knowledge is essential, the "mark" involves more than head knowledge. For instance, in the vision given to Ezekiel, likely the elders executed for offering up incense to false gods had extensive knowledge of Jehovah's written Word. But their behavior behind closed doors showed that they were not true worshipers. (Ezekiel 8:7-12; 9:6) So, to be 'marked' for survival requires putting on "the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."—Ephesians 4:22-24.

17 A formidable obstacle is the influence of your sinful flesh. (Romans 8:7, 8) Some even hold back from baptism because of not controlling some serious fleshly weakness or because of wanting to indulge in illicit worldly pleasures. (James 4:1, 4) Such ones are missing a precious relationship. God's Word advises: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you indecisive ones." (James 4:8) Decisive action is required. As an example, one man who began to study the Bible had abused alcohol and drugs for 16 years and was deathly sick because of this. With determination he overcame these bad habits. "But just as I was progressing toward dedication, a woman began begging me to have an affair with her. It was a real temptation," he admitted. "Though the woman thought I was crazy, I told her: 'I'm studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, and I cannot.'" What prompted his response? "I had seen what Jehovah did for my life by helping me to get off the alcohol. He helped me in other ways too. This kept drawing me closer to him. I could not disappoint him." This man had grown close to God.

18 What counts is not how much you know but how much you love what you know. Psalm 119:165 says: "Abundant peace belongs to those loving [not just knowing] your law, and for them there is no stumbling block." The key is loving God's law, deeply appreciating its value in your life.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

19 Of course, other obstacles or stumbling blocks may arise. "The hardest one for me," said the brother mentioned above, "was fear of men. I had some worldly 'friends' that I used to drink with. It was

* See "Train Your Child to Develop Godly Devotion" in our issue of August 15, 1985.

16. Why is more than head knowledge required?
17. (a) What obstacle holds some back from baptism? (b) How can the counsel of James 4:8 be applied?

18. What is a key to overcoming obstacles?
19, 20. (a) What obstacles must be overcome, and what assurance do we have? (b) Successfully overcoming all obstacles will result in what?

Points for Review

- How does God help us to gain peace with him?
- What is the symbolic lifesaving mark?
- What is the significance of dedication and baptism?
- What sort of obstacles must be faced, and how can these be overcome?

the most difficult thing for me to tell them that I was cutting off my association because I was going to dedicate my life to God." (Proverbs 29:25) Others have faced the scorn of family members. One newly baptized Witness, who overcame her husband's opposition, observed: "Rather than one major hurdle, there were a lot of little hurdles I had to get over one at a time." Faithfully overcoming each obstacle as it comes will fortify your heart. Be assured that there is no obstacle that cannot be overcome by those loving God's law! —Luke 16:10.

20 As you prevail over each stumbling block, you will gain "abundant peace." (Psalm 119:165) Yes, "you will walk in security on your way . . . Your sleep must be pleasurable. You will not need to be afraid of any sudden dreadful thing, nor of the storm upon the wicked ones, because it is coming. For Jehovah himself will prove to be, in effect, your confidence."—Proverbs 3:23-26.

Increase Your Peace
Through Accurate Knowledge

"May undeserved kindness and peace be increased to you by an accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."—2 PETER 1:2.

THE peaceful relationship established with Jehovah God at your baptism is, in some respects, like a marriage. Although the wedding day is delightful, it is only the start of a precious relationship. With effort, time, and experience, a marriage relationship will grow even dearer, becoming a haven during times of distress. So, too, by diligence and with Jehovah's help, you can increase your peace with him.

2 The apostle Peter explained how those who had "obtained a faith" could strengthen their peace with God. He wrote: "May undeserved kindness and peace be increased to you by an accurate knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord."—2 Peter 1: 1, 2.

1, 2. (a) Why can a peaceful relationship with God be compared to a marriage? (b) How can we strengthen our peace with God?

"Accurate Knowledge of God"

3 The Greek word for "accurate knowledge" (*e·pi'gno·sis*) used in this context means a deeper, more intimate knowledge. The verb form can refer to knowledge gained by personal experience and is rendered "know fully" at Luke 1:4. Greek scholar Culverwel explains that to him the word implies becoming "better acquainted with a thing I knew before; a more exact viewing of an object that I saw before afar off." Gaining such "accurate knowledge" involves getting to know Jehovah and Jesus more intimately as persons, becoming better acquainted with their qualities.

4 Two ways to gain this knowledge are through good personal study habits and

3. Having accurate knowledge of Jehovah and Jesus means what?

4. How can we increase our knowledge of God, and why does this improve our peace with him?

regular attendance at meetings of God's people. In these ways you will learn more clearly how God conducts himself and what he thinks. You will form a more distinct mental image of his personality. But knowing God intimately means to imitate and reflect this image. For instance, Jehovah described a person who reflected godlike unselfishness, and then He said: "Was not that a case of *knowing* me?" (Jeremiah 22:15, 16; Ephesians 5:1) Imitating God more closely increases your peace with him because you improve in putting on the new personality, "which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it." You become more pleasing to God.—Colossians 3:10.

5 One Christian woman named Lynn found it hard to be forgiving because of a misunderstanding with a fellow Christian. But Lynn's careful personal study caused her to examine her attitude. "I recalled the type of God Jehovah is, how he does not hold a grudge," she admitted. "I thought of all the little things we do to Jehovah every day, yet he does not keep account of them. This matter with my Christian sister was so small by comparison. So whenever I saw her, I said to myself, 'Jehovah loves her just as he loves me.' This helped me to get over the problem." Do you see areas where you also need to imitate Jehovah more closely?—Psalm 18:35; 103:8, 9; Luke 6:36; Acts 10:34, 35; 1 Peter 1:15, 16.

Accurate Knowledge of Christ

6 Having accurate knowledge of Jesus requires having "the mind of Christ" and imitating him. (1 Corinthians 2:16) Jesus was an enthusiastic proclaimer of truth. (John 18:37) His intense evangelizing spirit was not shackled by community prejudices. Though other Jews hated Samaritans, he witnessed to a Samaritan woman at a well. Why, even talking at length in public with any woman may have been frowned upon!* But Jesus did not allow community feelings to stop him from giving a witness. God's work was refreshing. He said: "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." The joy of seeing the response of people, like the Samaritan woman and many of the townspeople, sustained Jesus like food.—John 4:4-42; 8:48.

7 Do you feel as did Jesus? Granted, starting up a conversation about the Bible with a stranger is hard for many and is often frowned upon by others in the community. Yet, to have the same mental attitude as Jesus had, we cannot escape this fact: We must witness. Of course, not all can do the same amount of preaching. This varies according to our abilities and circumstances. So do not feel that God is never satisfied with your sacred service. Our knowledge of Jesus, however, should spur us to do our best. Jesus commended whole-souled service.—Matthew 13:18-23; 22:37.

The Need to Hate Wickedness

8 Accurate knowledge also helps us to appreciate what things are hated by Jesus and by Jehovah. (Hebrews 1:9; Isaiah 61:8) "There are six things that Jehovah does hate; yes, seven are things detestable to

* According to the Talmud, ancient rabbis advised that a scholar "should not converse with a woman in the street." If this custom prevailed in Jesus' day, it may be why his disciples "began to wonder because he was speaking with a woman."—John 4:27.

5. (a) How did accurate knowledge help one Christian woman? (b) In what ways can we more closely imitate Jehovah?

6. How did Jesus Christ show that the preaching work was of foremost importance to him?

7. (a) Knowledge of Jesus should motivate us to do what? (b) Does God expect all of his servants to do the same amount of preaching? Explain.

8, 9. What are some things that God hates, and how can we reflect the same hatred?

Jesus refused to allow community prejudices to hinder his giving a witness. Do you imitate his zeal for preaching?

his soul: lofty eyes, a false tongue, and hands that are shedding innocent blood, a heart fabricating hurtful schemes, feet that are in a hurry to run to badness, a false witness that launches forth lies, and anyone sending forth contentions among brothers." (Proverbs 6:16-19) These attitudes and forms of conduct are "detestable to his soul." The Hebrew word here rendered "detestable" comes from a word meaning "to loathe, nauseate," "to be averse to, as to that which is offensive to all the senses; to detest, hate with indignation." So to be at peace with God, we must develop a similar aversion.

9 For instance, shun "lofty eyes" and any show of pride. After baptism some have felt that they were no longer in need of the regular assistance of those who taught them. But new Christians should humbly accept help as they become well grounded in the truth. (Galatians 6:6) Also, avoid gossiping, which can easily cause "contentions among brothers." By spreading unkind hearsay, unjustifiable criticism, or lies, we may not be "shedding innocent blood," but we surely can destroy another person's good reputation. We cannot be at peace with God if we are not at peace with our brothers. (Proverbs 17:9; Matthew 5:23, 24) God also says in his Word that "he has hated a divorcing." (Malachi 2:14, 16) If married, do you, therefore, work to keep your marriage strong? Are flirting and taking undue liberties with another's mate disgusting to you? Do you, like Jehovah, abhor sexual immorality? (Deuteronomy 23:17, 18) Hating such practices is not easy, since these may appeal to our sinful flesh, and they are smiled upon by the world.

10 As an aid to cultivating a hatred for wickedness, avoid being entertained by movies, TV programs, or literature featuring spiritism, immorality, or violence.

10. How can we cultivate a hatred for wickedness?

When faced with a serious problem, David supplicated Jehovah . . .

. . . and disguised his sanity to plan an escape. Jehovah heard David's prayer

(Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Psalm 11:5) By making wrongdoing seem 'not that bad' or even humorous, such entertainment undercuts efforts to develop godly hatred of it. On the other hand, earnest prayer will help, for Jesus said: "Pray continually, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit, of course, is eager, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41) Regarding being faced with a strong fleshly desire, one Christian said: "I make myself pray. Sometimes I feel unworthy to approach Jehovah, but by making myself do it, by appealing to him, I get the strength I need." You will better understand why Jehovah detests wrongdoing if you review in your mind its painful consequences.—2 Peter 2:12, 13.

[11] Despite having peace with God, you will at times be troubled by everyday pressures and temptations and even by your own weaknesses. Remember, you have made yourself a special target of Satan. He wars against those who keep God's commandments and are Jehovah's Witnesses! (Revelation 12:17) How, then, can your inner peace be maintained?

Coping With Peace-Disturbing Calamities

[12] "Many are the calamities of the righteous one," wrote David at Psalm 34:19.

11. What things may trouble us at times?
12. (a) What is the background of Psalm 34? (b) How do the Scriptures describe David's feelings during this experience?

According to the superscription of this psalm, David penned it following a close encounter with death. Fleeing from King Saul, David sought refuge with Achish, the Philistine king of Gath. That king's servants recognized David and, recalling his previous military exploits for Israel, complained to Achish. When David overheard the conversation, he "began to take these words to his heart, and he became very much afraid on account of Achish the king of Gath." (1 Samuel 21:10-12) After all, this was the hometown of Goliath, and David had killed their hero—he was even carrying the giant's sword! Would they now use this huge sword to cut off *his* head? What could David do?—1 Samuel 17:4; 21:9.

13 David supplicated God with intense cries for help. "This afflicted one called, and Jehovah himself heard. And out of all his distresses He saved him," said David. He also said: "Out of all my frights he delivered me." (Psalm 34:4, 6, 15, 17) Have you also learned to supplicate Jehovah, pouring out your heart during times of anxiety? (Ephesians 6:18; Psalm 62:8) Though your particular distress may not be as dramatic as David's, still you will find that God will give you help at the right time. (Hebrews 4:16) But David did more than pray.

14 "He [David] disguised his sanity under their eyes and began acting insane. . . . Finally Achish said to his servants: 'Here you see a man behaving crazy. Why should you bring him to me?'" (1 Samuel 21: 13-15) David thought out a strategy by which he escaped. Jehovah blessed his efforts. Likewise, when we are confronted with knotty problems, Jehovah expects us to use our mental faculties and not simply to expect him to work them out for us. He has given us his inspired Word, which will "give to the inexperienced ones shrewdness, . . . knowledge and thinking ability." (Proverbs 1:4; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) God has also provided congregation elders, who can help us to know how to maintain God's standards. (1 Thessalonians 4:1, 2) Oftentimes, these men can assist you in researching the publications of the Watch Tower Society for help in making a right decision or coping with a problem.

15 Even when our heart pains us because of our own weaknesses or failures, if we have the right attitude, we can maintain our peace with God. David wrote at Psalm 34:18: "Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves." If we ask for forgiveness and take any necessary steps to correct matters (especially in cases of serious transgression), Jehovah will stay close to us, supporting us emotionally. —Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; 2 Corinthians 7:9-11.

Personal Knowledge Gives Peace

16 Another way in which we gain accurate knowledge of God, besides taking in spiritual information, is through our personally experiencing his loving help. (Psalm 41:10, 11) Being delivered out of distress does not always mean the immediate or complete end of a problem; you may have to continue to endure it. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Though David's life was spared at Gath, he remained a fugitive for several years, facing one danger after another. Through it all, David sensed Jehovah's care and support. He had pursued and found peace with God, and he learned that those who do so "will not lack

13. What did David do during this calamity, and how can we follow his example?
14. How did David use "thinking ability," and what has God provided to help us do the same?
15. Why is Psalm 34:18 comforting?
16. (a) What is another way in which we gain accurate knowledge of God? (b) Explain David's statement: "Taste and see that Jehovah is good."

anything good." Realizing by personal experience how Jehovah supported him during calamity, David could say: "Taste and see that Jehovah is good, O you people; happy is the able-bodied man that takes refuge in him."—Psalm 34:8-10, 14, 15.

17 Taking refuge in Jehovah during difficulties will also enable you to "taste and see that Jehovah is good." Because of an accident, a Christian in the midwestern United States lost the well-paying job that he had had for 14 years. Since they had no income, he and his family supplicated God. At the same time, though, they cut down on expenses, gleaned in nearby fields, and fished for food. With help from some in the congregation and by taking part-time work when available, this family of four managed. A year after the accident, the mother reflected: "We can fool ourselves into thinking that we are relying upon Jehovah, when we are really relying upon our own abilities, our mate, or our job. We, though, really learned to trust just Him. These other things can be taken away, but Jehovah never left us—not for one moment. Though we have just the bare necessities, our relationship with Jehovah as a family is much closer."

18 Yes, a financial hardship may persist. Or one may be plagued with a chronic physical illness; a personality conflict with another; an emotional disorder, such as depression; or one of a host of other problems. Yet, by truly knowing God, you will have faith in his support. (Isaiah 43:10) This unbreakable trust will help you to endure and to have "the peace of God that excels all thought."—Philippians 4:7.

19 When going through a troubling experience, never forget that Jehovah knows what you are suffering. In a psalm that was also composed when he reflected on his experience at Gath, David entreated Jehovah: "Do put my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not in your book?" (Psalm 56:8) Certainly, God listened to David's request. How consoling to know that God would gather up such tears caused by affliction and anxiety and put these, as it were, in his skin bottle, just as one would pour into such a container precious wine or drinking water! Such tears would always be remembered, yes, written down in God's book. How tender is Jehovah's regard!

20 So your baptism is just the beginning of a peaceful relationship with God. By becoming better acquainted with the personal qualities of God and Jesus, and personally experiencing Jehovah's support during trials, you will increase your peace with God. Not only will you have a relationship with Jehovah that becomes a haven of security now but you will also have the precious hope of living forever in Paradise, where you will find "exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:11, 29.

17. During a calamity, what effect did taking refuge in Jehovah have on one family?
18. What will enable you to endure even persistent problems?
19. How do we know that Jehovah does not take our sufferings lightly?
20. How can we increase our peace with God?

Do You Recall?

- In what ways can we gain accurate knowledge of God and Jesus?
- Imitating God and Jesus will cause us to do what?
- How do we *imitate* God's hatred for evil?
- How can we maintain peace despite difficulties?

Insight on the News

Catholic-Marxist Dialogue

In Budapest, Hungary, in October 1986, 15 Catholic theologians and philosophers met with 15 Marxist intellectuals. The meeting was convened by the Vatican Secretariat for Unbelievers and the Hungarian Academy of Science to discuss the evolution of moral values.

Among the Catholics present were French Cardinal Poupard, chairman of the Secretariat for Unbelievers, and Austrian Cardinal Koenig, a specialist on the Catholic Church's relations with communist nations. The Marxists included the heads of the Hungarian Institute of Philosophy and of the Soviet Institute of Scientific Atheism.

The French daily *Le Monde* reported: "Marxist intellectuals recognize that they are faced with a crisis of moral values, the seriousness of which they measure by the number of suicides, the use of drugs, and the consumption of alcohol. According to the Catholic delegation, in their search for a solution they [the Marxists] are counting on the cooperation of the Christian churches. On the Roman [Catholic] side, the twofold purpose was to evaluate better how man and morals fit into a Marxist society and to *'examine the moral basis for concrete coexistence between Christians in the Eastern* [communist] *countries and Marxists.'"*

The true solution to the moral problems of the day will not be found in conferences between conflicting ideologies. Rather, it will be found when Jehovah's Kingdom in the hands of his Son, Jesus, overturns the present system of things, building in its place a new world under that heavenly Kingdom.—Daniel 2:44; Revelation 21:4, 5.

True Liberation?

Liberation theology—a movement that condones violence as a way to "liberate the poor and oppressed," especially in the Third World, is becoming more popular. This was the topic of discussion at the Second International Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians held in Oaxtepec, Mexico, December 8-13, 1986. Why are these religious scholars more determined as to their goals for social change than ever before?

Although in 1985 the Vatican released an instruction condemning liberation theology, the *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation* sent out in 1986 stated that it is "perfectly legitimate that those who suffer oppression on the part of the wealthy or politically powerful take action." "Armed struggle" is now approved of as a "last resort."

However, while on earth, did Jesus Christ get involved in the world's social movements? No, on the contrary, when the apostle Peter resorted to "the sword" to defend God's Son, Jesus rebuked him by saying: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52) The Bible promises that true liberation will come through divine intervention when God rids the world not only of poverty, international strife, racial discrimination, and oppression but also of tears, pain, sorrow, and death. (Revelation 21:4) Surely, this will be true liberation!

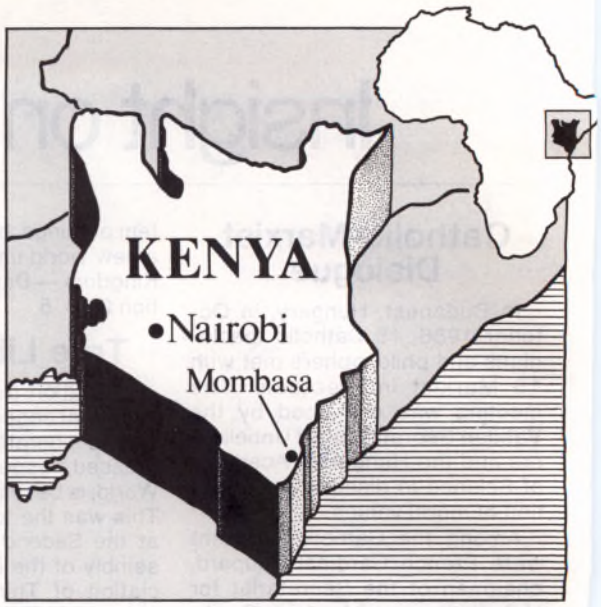
Baptism of Children Refused

A German Protestant minister from Frankfurt recently informed church authorities that he henceforth would refuse "to baptize unaware children of his parish." Explaining why his own baptism as an infant was not worthy of the name baptism, 58-year-old Klaus Hoffmann said: "It neither fulfilled the prerequisite of a Biblical baptism, that is faith, nor had the right symbol, namely immersion." In support of his view, he chose to be rebaptized and thus "underwent the Biblical baptism of immersion," reports the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.*

At first, church officials suspended Hoffmann from all duties, but the judgment was commuted to "a leave of three months for research purposes." With what results? The newspaper reports that his further research on the matter only confirmed "that within the Bible there is no support for infant baptism. Also, writings of the first Christians are silent as to the introduction of this act until the third century."

Not surprisingly, religious authorities cite tradition as the basis for this act. However, in spite of these facts, infant baptism continues to be practiced throughout much of Christendom. Does such clerical support make it right? Jesus instructed his followers to baptize, not babies, but believers who were taught to keep all his commandments. He himself was not a baby but "about thirty years old" when he was immersed in the waters of the Jordan River.—Luke 3:21-23; Matthew 28:19, 20.

Proving "Zealous for Fine Works" *in Kenya*



"THIS is what I have been looking for all my life!" exclaimed a man of Hindu background after having attended a recent convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Kenya, Africa. "This is something special."

What was it that moved him to say that? "People of so many colors, backgrounds, and countries—all mixing freely with evident affection for one another," he said. But how was this possible in a world so full of disunity and racial prejudice? What led to such unity and spiritual harmony in Kenya?

Early Pioneers Pave the Way

Back in 1931, Frank and Gray Smith sailed from South Africa to Mombasa with 40 cartons of books. From there they made an exhausting and hazardous journey to Nairobi, where they distributed their entire supply of literature in about a month. Both contracted malaria, and Frank died —faithful to the end. Later the same year, Robert Nisbet and David Norman followed up on a similar expedition, distributing 200 cartons of publications in East Africa. Thus were the first seeds of truth sown in Kenya.

Then in 1935, Gray Smith and his wife, together with Robert Nisbet and his brother George, set out to follow up the interest found. This time Robert contracted typhoid fever. The others were afflicted with malaria and blackwater fever. Opposition and deportation orders by the colonial government added to the hardships. Despite all of this, however, these early zealous pioneers distributed a tremendous amount of literature, laying a foundation for growth. For instance, about 30 years later, a Witness working remote rural territory in Kenya was surprised to find a man who had a copy of the book *Reconciliation.* His brother had obtained it in 1935. This man progressed and is now one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Further Growth

It was not until 1949 that the first Witness, Mary Whittington, came to reside in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. She had been baptized in England only one year earlier. Little did she know of the isolation, hindrances, and opposition she was about to face. Yet, she had the joy of seeing the 'little one become a thousand.' (Isaiah 60:22) Today, at the age of 73, she is still serving as a regular pioneer.

Bill and Muriel Nisbet, the first grad-

Thousands of Swahili-speaking delegates attended the "Integrity Keepers" Convention in December 1985

uates of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead to be assigned to Kenya, arrived in 1956. At the time, racial segregation was prevalent, and the colonial administration had laws that restricted the preaching activity and limited the size of meetings to no more than nine people. So the work of the Nisbets was confined to only the European field and informal discussions with the African people. Nevertheless, growth came.

In 1962 the work of Jehovah's Witnesses was legally recognized. Shortly thereafter, in 1963, colonial rule ended, thus opening the door to further expansion of our Christian work. Now publications could be printed in the Swahili language, and elders of Jehovah's Witnesses were authorized by the government to officiate at weddings. Since that time, Jehovah's Witnesses have been instrumental in helping almost 2,000 couples to register their marriage legally.

By 1972 a fine new branch office building, conveniently located in Nairobi, was dedicated. (It has since been expanded.) Kenya was now better equipped to oversee the Kingdom work in the ten East African countries under its care and to fill the need for publications in the various native languages.

Fine Examples of Zeal

The proclaimers of the good news in Kenya manifest the same 'zeal for fine works' that was noticeable among the first-century Christians. (Titus 2:14) They do not allow hardships to deter them from helping others to gain an accurate knowledge of the Bible.

In one instance, a Witness received a request from the branch office to call on an interested blind man, who lived 16 miles (26 km) away. The Witness regularly made the journey by bicycle to conduct a Bible study with him. Although this man went through stages of negative thinking and depression, now he is a Witness himself, zealously telling others about God's promise of Paradise restored when even the eyes of the blind will be opened.—Isaiah 35:5.

In some areas, great efforts have to be made to attend Christian meetings. A 70-year-old woman regularly walks about six miles (10 km) to get to the weekly meetings. On the way, she wades through one of Kenya's biggest rivers, even though crocodiles are lurking nearby. At times the current becomes so strong that it almost sweeps her away. Yet, she considers the spiritual feast well worth the effort. What an outstanding example of zeal!

Another fine example of zeal and appreciation was provided by a Witness who walked nine hours to attend the circuit

Bible dramas presented in Swahili and English edified the audience

assembly. Why did he do so, even though he had enough money for bus fare? Motivated by love, he gave his funds to his Bible student so that he, too, could enjoy the assembly program! Yes, love and 'zeal for fine works,' based on accurate Bible knowledge, are clearly seen in Kenya.

Pioneer Spirit

This zeal has been displayed in the full-time pioneer ministry in an outstanding way. Many have found joy in this service in spite of difficult circumstances. One young regular pioneer serves in the hot and humid port city of Mombasa. Some years ago both his legs had to be amputated because of a truck accident. While in the hospital, he contemplated suicide and begged the nurse to give him a lethal injection, which she refused to do. After his release, he found the Witnesses and began studying the Bible with them. This led to his baptism and a new life in the full-time service. He overflows with zeal and gratitude.

A large number of mothers with family responsibilities have also become regular pioneers. Among them is one with three children. She has severe high blood pressure and a speech impediment. She has to work full-time, and her husband is not a Witness. Yet, she is a happy pioneer. Of course, not only mothers share in the regular pioneer service; recently, a father who has eight children to look after and a job that involves shift work also took up this privilege of service.

Many who are not able to be regular pioneers glow with the pioneer spirit. They look for opportunities to share in the full-time ministry as auxiliary pioneers, spending 60 hours in the preaching work each month.

In April 1984, as well as in 1985, more than a third of all the publishers in Kenya participated in some form of full-time service. One congregation had 73 publishers enrolled as auxiliary pioneers that month, working along with the five regular pioneers. The other 28 members of the congregation averaged 64.6 hours, even though many of them were not baptized. As a result, a total of 233 Bible studies were conducted!

Age does not prove to be a barrier. A 99-year-old grandmother took up the auxiliary pioneer ministry. Despite her physical limitations, she lets her light shine courageously toward young and old. (Matthew 5:16) Through her efforts, a number of others have been helped to become Kingdom proclaimers, and they fondly remember the devotion and pioneer spirit of this grandma. Yes, such 'zeal for fine works' has led many to cultivate the pioneer spirit.

The public baptism gave evidence of Jehovah's blessing

Praise—Out of the Mouths of "Babes"

Young ones, too, though not yet baptized, happily and eagerly accompany their parents in bringing good news from the true God to other people. (Matthew 21:16) During a special campaign, a four-and-a-half-year-old girl worked with her parents in isolated territory. She spent 160 hours in the field ministry that month, placing 27 books, 66 booklets, and 47 magazines with people who were interested in the Bible!

This 'zeal for fine works' is manifest in the schools as well. In a rural area outside Nairobi, a primary-school boy, whose mother was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, was able to help his teacher on the road to eternal life. In class, when the teacher brought up the subject of life after death, this young boy politely mentioned that his mother had taught him something different, based on the Bible. This aroused the teacher's curiosity. She contacted the boy's mother, who directed her to a more experienced Witness. Now the teacher herself is spreading Bible truth to others, thanks to the courage of this young one. What a fine example of the zeal that exists among Christian children today!

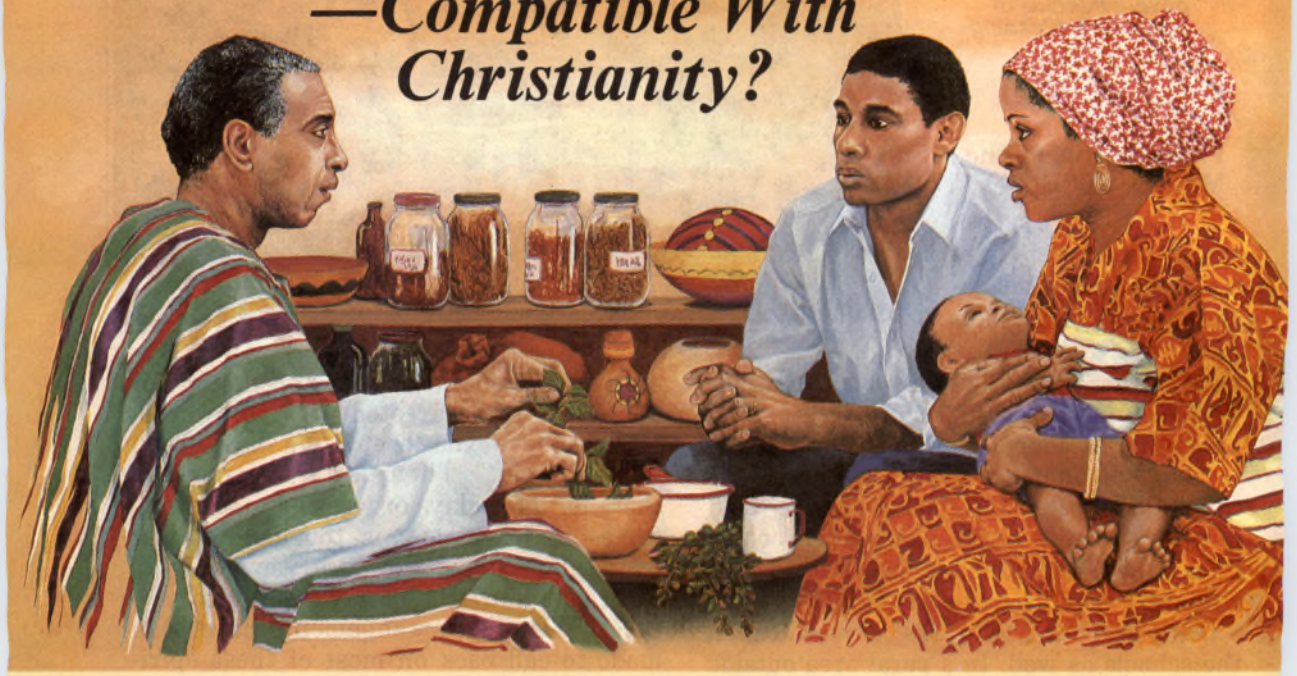
More Growth Expected

Over half of Kenya's population have yet to hear the good news of the Kingdom. Because of distance, some isolated territories can be covered only once a year. Upon arriving in such areas, it is common for Witnesses to be greeted with the words: "Where have you been? We have been missing you." Then, after witnessing there for a few days or weeks and the time comes to leave, one is touched to hear expressions like: "Now are you going to leave us again? How are we going to progress?" Happily, arrangements have been made to call back on most of these spiritually hungry individuals.

Today, there are 3,686 Kingdom ministers in Kenya. At the 1986 Memorial celebration of Christ's death, 13,067 were in attendance. That was almost four times the number of Witnesses! Former alcoholics, brawlers, gang leaders, extortioners, spiritists, and others have made great changes in their lives and now walk in the pathways of truth. What does this tell us about the future?

Obviously, more growth is to be expected. Yes, people in Kenya are responding favorably to the "good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) Many have joined the ranks of Jehovah's Witnesses—a people "zealous for fine works." Because of these works, they stand out as a unique people, free from racial barriers and other hindrances to true unity. Truly, "this is something special."

Traditional Medicine in Africa —*Compatible With Christianity?*



For millions of Africans, traditional healers are their only contact with medicine of any kind. Particularly is this true in rural areas where hospitals are few and doctors are rare. Traditional medicine, however, usually has strong roots in superstition and spiritualism. What should a Christian do under these circumstances?

"'THIS "agbo" will in all probability kill him off and put an end to all his misery and ours.' And so, on the assumption that the new remedy was going to result in good riddance of me, the concoction was poured down my throat."

This was written by a medical doctor in a Lagos, Nigeria, *Sunday Times* article entitled "Don't Despise the Traditional Healer." He was describing how his parents had given up hope of his recovery from a critical illness when he was only one year old. The medicine, sent to them by a traditional healer, was credited with saving his life.

Many Africans who favor traditional medicine tell of surprising cures that have been effected in cases where hospital treatment had failed. Others condemn it as unhygienic, superstitious quackery. On the middle ground are those who call for scientific research into the local herbal remedies and for greater recognition and acceptance of traditional healers. Many would like to see a blending of traditional and modern medicine, citing the cooperation between practitioners of both groups in China and India.

Even if you do not live in Africa, you may be interested in knowing if African

folk medicine is really effective and beneficial. What about the ritual element so common among Africans? Is the supernatural an essential ingredient or a harmful feature that should be rejected? What should be the Christian's position toward such traditional African medicine?

Herbal Medicines

Vegetation, of course, is our main source of food and is essential to our existence. There are also plants that yield drugs or poisons that have destroyed countless numbers of people who have misused them. But did you know that some of these same drugs are used in modern medicines? Scientists discovered some of these drugs by investigating plants that were being used in folk medicine or in the concoctions of medicine men. They collected samples, analyzed them chemically, and tested their effects on the body and on microorganisms that cause disease. The result has been the production of some important medical drugs, such as quinine, reserpine, digitalis, and codeine.

People of ancient times discovered many herbal remedies accidentally, by trial and error, or by observing what happened to animals when they ate certain plants. Often those who made such discoveries and who became healers kept the art in their families. The knowledge of herbs thus came to be passed on from father to son or to other persons selected as apprentices. Most traditional healers still tend to be very secretive, often very reluctant to reveal from which plants they make their medicines. But more is involved in African traditional medicines than just herbal remedies.

The Strong Influence of Spiritism

Much of African traditional healing has been closely associated with the supernatural. Many believe that plants possess feelings, powers of communication, and extrasensory perception. Some healers claim to understand the language of plants and to be able to communicate with them. Others do not see the communication as coming from the plants, for they claim that unseen spirits have directed them to herbs that have healing properties.

Spiritism has thus played a prominent role in traditional medicine in Africa. Many Nigerians, for instance, believe that diseases and deaths are caused either by offended gods (or ancestral spirits) or by enemies who employ witchcraft. So sacrifices of appeasement are made, and spiritistic rituals and methods are employed.

Asuquo, a Nigerian healer, is one who strongly believed this. He says: "I learned herbal medicine from my father and used to sacrifice to the gods and to the spirits of our forefathers in preparing my concoctions. I believed that they produced the cures and that failure to sacrifice to them would bring sickness and death."

In actuality, it often works the other way around. Such beliefs have subjected millions of people to superstitious fears and enslavement to unseen spirit forces. Many have suffered spiritistic obsession and harassment. This alone is strong reason to reject any cure that includes sacrifices or other spiritistic rituals. And spirits that would obsess and harass people or deceive them into thinking that their ancestors are still alive or that plants can communicate are obviously deceptive and evil. The Bible warns: "The things which the nations sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers with the demons." —1 Corinthians 10:20.

The demons, disobedient angels condemned by God to future destruction, are bent on diverting people from worshiping

the true God, Jehovah. (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) They pretend in some cases that they themselves are benevolent gods. (2 Corinthians 11:14) Carrying their deception further, they impersonate the dead and lead people to think that their ancestors are still alive in a spirit world. However, the Bible clearly says: "The dead . . . are conscious of nothing at all, . . . for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol, the place to which you are going."—Ecclesiastes 9: 5, 10.

So it would be wrong for worshipers of the true God to accept from herbalists any cures that involve spiritistic practices. Likewise, herbalists who desire to render acceptable worship to God must discontinue every form of spiritistic practice. Truly, those who resort to spiritism forfeit Jehovah's favor and protection and have no place in the Christian congregation. (Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8) There are many who have rejected spiritism, and they have found that some herbal cures can be quite effective without the spiritistic practices.

The Change to Christianity

Speaking of his personal experiences, Erhabor, an officially recognized physician who operates an herbal hospital, says: "Formerly I believed that sacrifices had to be included with the medicine in order to combat the spirit behind the disease. But after I studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and became a Christian, I discarded these practices and now conform to Bible principles. I have found that the healing properties are in the plants themselves."

Similarly, Asuquo says: "Things I learned about Jehovah brought new meaning to my life. My fear about ancestors was removed, and I got to know the true God. I also got to see that sacrifices were not necessary and that it is the juice of barks and leaves that heals people. Many people now come to me for treatment because I do not exploit their superstitions by asking for sacrifices. My treatment does not cost them as much as when they go to the juju healers."

Because Okon, who also practices herbal medicine, does not use incantations or sacrifices in his practice, he is accused by other herbalists of "spoiling their practice." "Some of my patients," he says, "came as spies to prove that I still use sacrifices secretly. After being successfully treated for two weeks, they admitted that I do not use any form of juju. They also benefited from the Scriptural discussions I had with them. I was surprised to see four former patients at the 'Divine Love' Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in December 1980. They embraced me and said: 'We came to you for physical healing. You also gave us spiritual healing.'"

Christians like these have had to resist those who desire that they return to spiritistic practices. They know that if they combined their healing methods with any form of spiritism, they would no longer be fit to remain in the Christian congregation. So they do not offer sacrifices or use incantations. They do not make lying claims that they can cure every kind of

In Our Next Issue

- **Do All Prophecies Come From God?**
- **Death-Dealing Famine in a Time of Plenty**
- **Looking Back Over 93 Years of Living**

illness, nor do they try to give the impression of having special powers. They avoid even the appearance of spiritism.

True Healing From God

In many developing nations, the majority of the inhabitants depend on the treatment given by traditional healers, in whom most have great confidence. Besides, hospitals and medical doctors are too few to meet the demands for treatment. Hence, most people in these lands likely will continue to consult healers, many of whom use spiritistic methods. But what will you do?

"The truth," said Jesus, "will set you free." (John 8:32) Knowing that the Bible condemns such practices, the Christian would refuse to become disloyal to God by consulting oracles or by seeking from an herbalist a cure involving divination. (Deuteronomy 18:10-13; compare Numbers 23:21, 23.) And if ill, neither would it be wise for a Christian to assume that the problems stem from a spiritistic spell. One need not have fear of being made ill by witchcraft when remaining firmly on God's side by rejecting anything connected with spiritism. If, because of the imperfection that all of us have, illness is experienced, then a personal decision must be made concerning types of treatment.*

The ransom sacrifice offered by Jesus is the only means of deliverance from sin and the resultant sickness and death. (John 3:16; Acts 4:12) It alone opens the way for faithful persons to gain everlasting life on a paradise earth where "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isaiah 33:24.

Until that happy day, the almighty God assures us that he will protect those who trust him. So all Christians need to rely on Jehovah, keeping close to him in prayer and supplication. This will result in a healthier life now, and it will ensure our receiving perfect life in the promised Paradise earth.—2 Peter 3:10-14; 1 John 2:17.

* See *The Watchtower* of June 15, 1982, pages 22-9.

"Treasures by a False Tongue . . . an Exhalation"

THESE days, lying and cheating are often viewed as legitimate—and eminently successful—business tactics. This was true in Bible times. The psalmist Asaph wrote of those who "have increased their means of maintenance," evidently by fraudulent schemes. Such ones can appear to be "at ease indefinitely" because of the wealth their treachery has brought them. —Psalm 73:8, 12.

Christians today, however, must avoid 'loving dishonest gain' and resorting to shady or dishonest business maneuvers. (1 Peter 5:2) Warns Proverbs 21:6: "The getting of treasures by a false tongue is an exhalation driven away, in the case of those seeking death." Yes, any "treasures" obtained by lying and fraud are bound to be as temporary as "an exhalation," as evanescent as a vapor. "The treasures of the wicked one will be of no benefit" in the long run. (Proverbs 10:2) Really, the lying one is "seeking death" by pursuing a death-dealing course. His life could be cut short prematurely as his lying schemes backfire. (Compare Esther 7:10.) Or at the very latest, his life will be terminated on God's day of judgment.

Do You Remember?

Have you given careful thought to recent issues of *The Watchtower?* If so, you will likely be able to recall the following:

□ Why should a Christian not celebrate Christmas?

One reason is that the festival of Christmas originated in the pagan celebration of Saturnalia, the Roman festival of the agricultural god Saturn. God's Word says: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 6:14-17) A Christian cannot be separated from unbelievers while he is still celebrating a festival of pagan origin.—12/15, page 6.

□ What is the Christian Jubilee?

It is a liberation involving "the truth" that can set humans free from "the law of sin and of death." This truth is centered on "the Son," Jesus Christ. (John 8:31-36; Romans 8:1, 2, 21)—1/1, page 21.

□ When is the Christian Jubilee celebrated?

On Pentecost 33 C.E., the Christian Jubilee began to be celebrated by those destined for life in heaven. For believing mankind who will enjoy everlasting life on earth, a grand Christian Jubilee will be experienced during the *Millennium*, as all traces of inherited sin and imperfection are wiped out.—1/1, pages 21, 22, 27.

□ Why do Jehovah's Witnesses not operate schools for children in Asia and elsewhere?

Because of what the Bible says, Jehovah's Witnesses must be principally concerned with their commission to preach the vital message about God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) They are not unaware of human suffering and injustices in the present system, and they help as they can. Yet they recognize that the true remedy lies, not in human hands, but in the deliverance that God's Kingdom will soon bring. (Psalm 146:3-10)—1/15, page 7.

□ What facets of faith can we learn from the examples of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses?

Faith like Abel's enhances our appreciation for Jesus' sacrifice. True faith helps us to be courageous, like Enoch. As with Noah, faith moves us to follow God's instructions. Abraham's faith impresses us with the need to obey God and to trust in his promises. We should remain unspotted from the world and stand loyally by God's people, as Moses exemplified.—1/15, page 20.

□ In what way can curiosity be either a blessing or a curse?

A healthy curiosity about our Creator, his will, and his purposes can be very satisfying and beneficial, bringing joy and refreshment into our life. On the other hand, an unbridled curiosity can lead us into a morass of speculation and human theories, undermining genuine faith and godly devotion.—2/1, page 29.

□ What did Jesus mean when he prayed: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me"? (Matthew 26:39)

Jesus was concerned about the charge of blasphemy that he saw would be hurled against him. This was the worst crime of which a Jew could be guilty. His death under that circumstance might seem, therefore, to bring reproach upon his heavenly Father.—2/15, page 13.

□ If a person has to endure suffering or affliction, what is the wise course for him to take?

It is best for him to be patient, looking hopefully to God for relief, and to draw closer to Him. This will make it easier for the person to undergo other similar experiences in life without losing hope. (Lamentations 3:25-31)—2/15, page 24.

□ Who are "the twelve tribes of Israel" spoken of by Jesus at Luke 22:28-30?

These represent all the peoples of mankind who are to be judged by Christ and his 144,000 underpriests in connection with a regeneration of all that Jehovah has purposed for this earth. (Matthew 19:28)—3/1, page 28.

□ What is meant by divine peace, and how can it be attained?

Divine peace is a calm condition of mind and heart, an inner state of quiet, regardless of what may be taking place. (Psalm 4:8) It can only come about from an approved relationship with God, made possible by the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus. (Colossians 1:19, 20)—3/15, pages 11, 14, 15.

□ What provisions do we have today to help us get to know God intimately?

We have both the Bible and the perspective of centuries of fulfilled Bible prophecies. Also, we have the Gospel records of the life, works, and words of Jesus Christ, concerning whom Paul wrote: "It is in him [Christ] that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily." (Colossians 2:9)—4/1, page 6.

Questions From Readers

■ **May a person making a dedication of his life to Jehovah God rightly speak of it as a *vow?***

Humans who come to love the true God and who determine to serve him completely should dedicate their lives to Jehovah and then be baptized. While the Bible does not use the word "vow" regarding Christian dedication, doing so does not seem to be objectionable.

Aid to Bible Understanding explains that Scripturally a vow is "a solemn promise to perform some act, make some offering or gift, or enter some service or condition; a pledge, either positive or negative." Some vows of Biblical record involved a pledge to follow a stated course *if* God first did something. For example, Numbers 21:2 relates: "Consequently Israel made a vow to Jehovah and said: 'If you will without fail give this people into my hand, I shall also certainly devote their cities to destruction.'" (Genesis 28:20-22; Judges 11:30-39) A Christian's dedication of his life to God is certainly not such a conditional vow. He does not say, as it were: 'If you, Jehovah, make me happy and prosperous now and guarantee me everlasting life in the new system of things, I promise to serve you all my life.'

The Bible presents some vows as being unrequested and unsolicited. *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* says of the Hebrew word involved: "[*na·dar'*] to vow, *i.e.* to promise voluntarily to give or do something; the primary idea is that of setting apart." So a person *voluntarily* makes a vow to God. May it thus be reasoned that a person's becoming a dedicated, baptized disciple of Jesus would not constitute a vow because God now *requires* dedication of all who want His approval?*

However, the fact that Jehovah has certain requirements in order for an individual to be his friend does not mean that no personal choice is involved. Moses told the Israelites: "I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring." (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20; Psalm 15:1-5; compare Joshua 24:15; 1 Kings 18:21.) Recall Jesus' words: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls." (Matthew 11:28, 29) Is that an arbitrary requirement, a demand? Or is it an invitation allowing for voluntary response?

Jesus was born into a nation dedicated to God; many aspects of his life and death were predetermined in prophecy; and God prepared a body for Jesus to sacrifice. Still, Christ's voluntary decision in presenting himself for special service is reflected in his words: "Then I said, 'Look! I am come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do your will, O God.'" (Hebrews 10:5-10) In a similar way, each individual has to determine personally to become a dedicated, baptized Christian.

Furthermore, Christians today realize that usage of a word such as "vow" is not limited just to how it was employed in the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses have long used "marriage vows" in weddings solemnized at their Kingdom Halls.* This accords with the general meaning of "vow," as in the definition: "a solemn promise or undertaking, especially in the form of an oath to God."—*Oxford American Dictionary,* 1980, page 778.

Consequently, it does not seem necessary to limit the use of the word "vow." A person who decides to serve God may feel that, for him, his unreserved dedication amounts to a personal vow—a vow of dedication. He 'solemnly promises or undertakes to do something,' which is what a vow is. In this case, it is to use his life to serve Jehovah, doing His will faithfully. Such an individual should feel seriously about this. It should be as with the psalmist, who, referring to things that he had vowed, said: "What shall I repay to Jehovah for all his benefits to me? The cup of grand salvation I shall take up, and on the name of Jehovah I shall call. My vows I shall pay to Jehovah."—Psalm 116:12-14; see also Psalm 50:14.

* This was the position taken in *The Watchtower* of October 1, 1973, page 607.

* During a wedding, the bride and groom make a vow to one another, but they are also doing so before witnesses and in God's sight.

'Helped to understand Someone I never thought I could'

In the following letter to the Watch Tower Society, a person describes where she received such help.

"Dear Sirs:

"I would like to let you know how much your books are helping me to understand Someone I never thought I could. The Bible is now the most fascinating book I've ever read because of the help you have given me through your books.

"Could you please send me a list of all the books you publish, if possible?

"Enclosed is $2.50 for two copies of *Reasoning From the Scriptures* . . . I must share this great 'little helper.'"