

The **Watchtower**
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

June 15, 1987

**THE
SUPREME
BEING**

**ONE PERSON
OR THREE?**

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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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THE SUPREME BEING IS UNIQUE

THE SUPREME BEING. Do you believe in him? Despite a widespread drift from the churches in many lands, millions still believe in an all-powerful, benevolent Being to whom they can turn, especially when they are in distress.

For example, in Africa there are many local, traditional religions that differ considerably from one another and that worship deities of many names. Yet, most of the people firmly believe in a Supreme Being who is "unique" and "the absolute controller of the universe."

As related in Dr. Peter Becker's book *Tribe to Township*, an elderly Sotho lay preacher of South Africa said: "My old father and his father . . . knew about God, the *Molimo*, long before the coming of the missionaries, God the Supreme Being who created all things . . . Does it matter that we [the Basuto] call God, *Molimo*, the Zulu, *Nkulunkulu*, the Xhosa, *Thixo* . . . ?"

Of course, a multiplicity of names is confusing. You would likely agree that a universal God should be the same for all people and should have a universal name. The inspired collection of ancient writings, the Bible, is respected around the globe. It declares: "That people may know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." (Psalm 83:18) So, according to the Bible, the Supreme Being has a unique name.

What kind of Being is this one God, as revealed by the Bible? "All his ways are

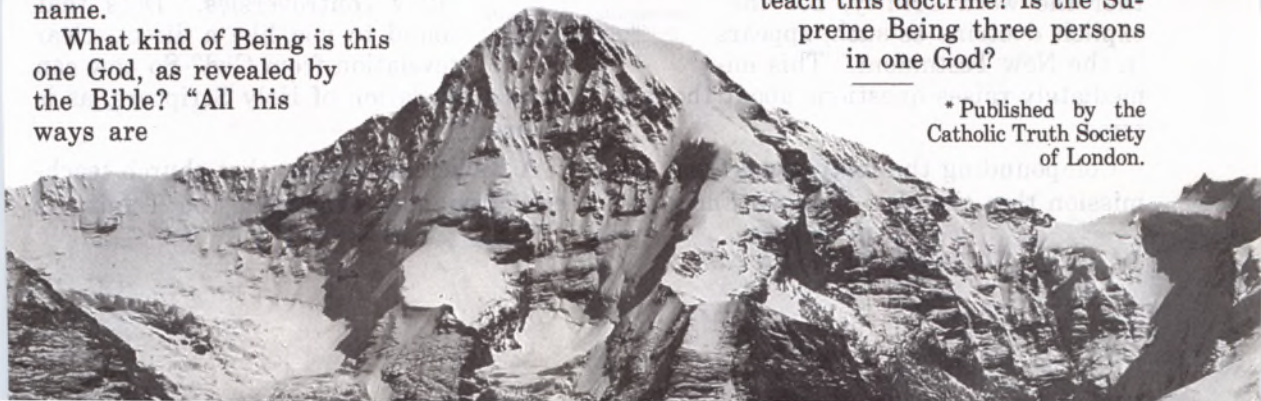
justice"; "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth"; "very tender in affection and merciful"; "a God, not of disorder, but of peace"; "God is love."—Deuteronomy 32:4; Exodus 34:6; James 5:11; 1 Corinthians 14:33; 1 John 4:8.

The Bible also reveals that Jehovah is the only one who should be worshiped. Yes, being unique, he justly demands exclusive devotion. (Exodus 20:5) Jesus Christ said: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service."—Matthew 4:10.

Nonetheless, most Africans, while claiming to believe in a Supreme Being, worship many deities. Would that not seem to you to suggest some confusion about the identity or nature of God? But even in most parts of Christendom, the clear, majestic, person of God is blurred by considering him to be a triune God. You may have heard of this as the Holy Trinity, a dogma that is mysterious and hard to understand. For example, the booklet *The Blessed Trinity* says: "The dogma of the Blessed Trinity . . . is a *mystery* . . . It cannot be proved by reason . . . It cannot even be proved to be *possible*."* (Italics theirs.) The booklet adds: "Proof, therefore, of a mystery consists in showing that it is contained in revelation, in Holy Scripture."

But does Holy Scripture really teach this doctrine? Is the Supreme Being three persons in one God?

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THE “BLESSED TRINITY” —IS IT IN THE BIBLE?

SHE was burned to death in England in 1550. Her name? Joan Bocher. Her crime? The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1964) says: “She was condemned for open blasphemy in denying the Trinity, the one offense which all the church had regarded as unforgivable ever since the struggle with Arianism.”

The Trinity is a fundamental doctrine of the vast majority of churches. But what exactly is the Trinity? *The Waverley Encyclopedia* defines it as “the mystery of one God in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, co-equal and co-eternal in all things.” Yet *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* (1981) says: “Neither the word Trinity, nor the explicit doctrine as such, appears in the New Testament.” This immediately raises questions about the doctrine.

Compounding the matter is a frank admission that the *New Catholic Encyclope-*

dia presents in terms of a question that seminary students often ask,

“But how does one preach the Trinity?” This

Catholic work continues: “If the question is symptomatic of confusion on the part of the students, perhaps it is no less symptomatic of similar confusion on the part of their professors. If ‘the Trinity’ here means Trinitarian theology, the best answer would be that one does not preach it at all . . . because the sermon, and especially the Biblical homily, is the place for the word of God, not its theological elaboration.”

When did this “theological elaboration” begin? Answers *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* (1981): “The doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies.” Does that sound to you like a direct, clear revelation from God? So how can it be a revelation of Holy Scripture, as is claimed?

A Biblical statement that church teachers often use to support the Trinity is



Representation of the Trinity
in 14th-century Catholic
Church in Tagnon, France

Jesus' command that his followers make disciples, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit." (Matthew 28:19) This passage certainly mentions three entities, but it does *not* say that they are three persons or that they are all one. Furthermore, we know the name of the Father (Jehovah) and of the Son (Jesus), but what is the name of the holy spirit? This leads to the question . . .

Is the Holy Spirit a Person?

The fact that the Bible gives no indication of the holy spirit's having a personal name at least suggests that it may not be a person. You might ask also, 'Has the holy spirit ever been seen?' Well, at Jesus' baptism it was manifested as a dove and at Pentecost as tongues as if of fire. (Matthew 3:16; Acts 2:3, 4) If it is a person, why did it not appear as a person? And if the holy spirit is not a person, what is it? Undoubtedly, it is the active force from God that at Pentecost was 'poured out' on the disciples. (Acts 2:17, 18) By this active

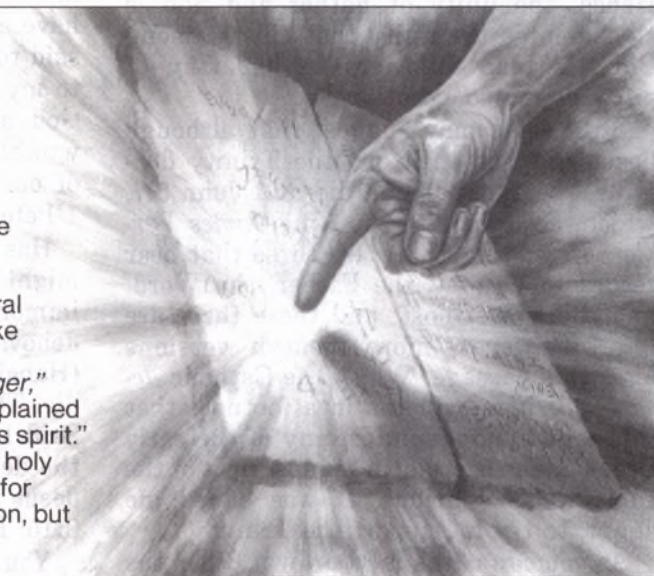
force, Jehovah performed his acts of creation—"God's active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters." (Genesis 1:2) The same active force inspired the writers of the Bible.—2 Timothy 3:16.

One of those inspired writers was the prophet Daniel. In Daniel chapter 7 he describes a wonderful vision Jehovah gave to him: "the Ancient of Days" on his heavenly throne, with a multitude of angels ministering to him. Daniel saw also "someone like a son of man [Jesus]," who was given "rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him." (Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14) What, though, about the holy spirit? It is not mentioned as a person in this celestial scene.

The final book of the Bible—Revelation—describes other remarkable heavenly visions. The Supreme Being, Jehovah, is depicted there on his throne, and the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is with him. But, again, the holy spirit is not mentioned as a distinct person. (Revelation, chapters

God's Finger

"It is the finger of God!" the magic-practicing priests of Egypt admitted when they failed to turn dust into gnats, as Moses had done. (Exodus 8:18, 19) On Mount Sinai, Jehovah gave Moses "tablets of stone written on by God's finger." (Exodus 31:18) Was this a literal finger? No. Jehovah obviously does not have literal fingers. What, then? Bible writers Luke and Matthew give us the key. One recorded that "by means of *God's finger*," Jesus expelled demons. The other explained that Jesus did this "by means of God's spirit." (Luke 11:20; Matthew 12:28) So the holy spirit is "God's finger," his instrument for accomplishing his will. It is not a person, but God's dynamic active force.



4-6) So even the final Bible book does not reveal that there are three persons in one god. This raises . . .

Another Important Question

The Trinity dogma has been described as "the central doctrine of the Christian religion." If this were true, why did Jesus not reveal it when he was on earth? His disciples, being Israelites, believed that Jehovah is unique. To this day, Jews continue to recite Deuteronomy 6:4: "Listen, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." There is no suggestion in the Hebrew Scriptures that the Supreme Being is in three persons. You may well wonder, 'If this were true, why did this "central doctrine" not become dogma until the fourth century—amid bitter controversy that caused widespread confusion?'

Some might argue: 'But Jesus did say, "I and the Father are one."' (John 10:30) True. In what sense, though, are they one? Jesus himself clarified this later by saying in prayer: "Holy Father, watch over them [his disciples] . . . in order that they may be one just as we are one." (John 17:11, 22) Hence, the unity of Father and Son is the same as the unity that exists among Christ's true followers—a harmony of purpose and cooperation.

Still, some may suggest that although Jesus did not spell out the Trinity doctrine, the apostle John did at 1 John 5:7, which, according to the *King James Version*, says: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." However, more modern versions omit this passage. Why? The *Catholic Jerusalem Bible* explains in a footnote that this text is not found in any of the early Greek or the best Latin manuscripts of the Bible. It is spurious. It was added, no doubt, to try to support the Trinity.

As you can check in your own Bible, the

apostle Paul in the opening of his letters often used expressions like this: "May you have undeserved kindness and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 1:7) Why did he not mention the holy spirit as a person? Because Paul knew nothing of the "Holy Trinity." James, Peter, and John used similar phrases in their letters where they likewise do not mention the holy spirit. Why? Because they were not Trinitarians either. The holy spirit is not a person as are God and his Son. But since the Son is a person, the question arises . . .

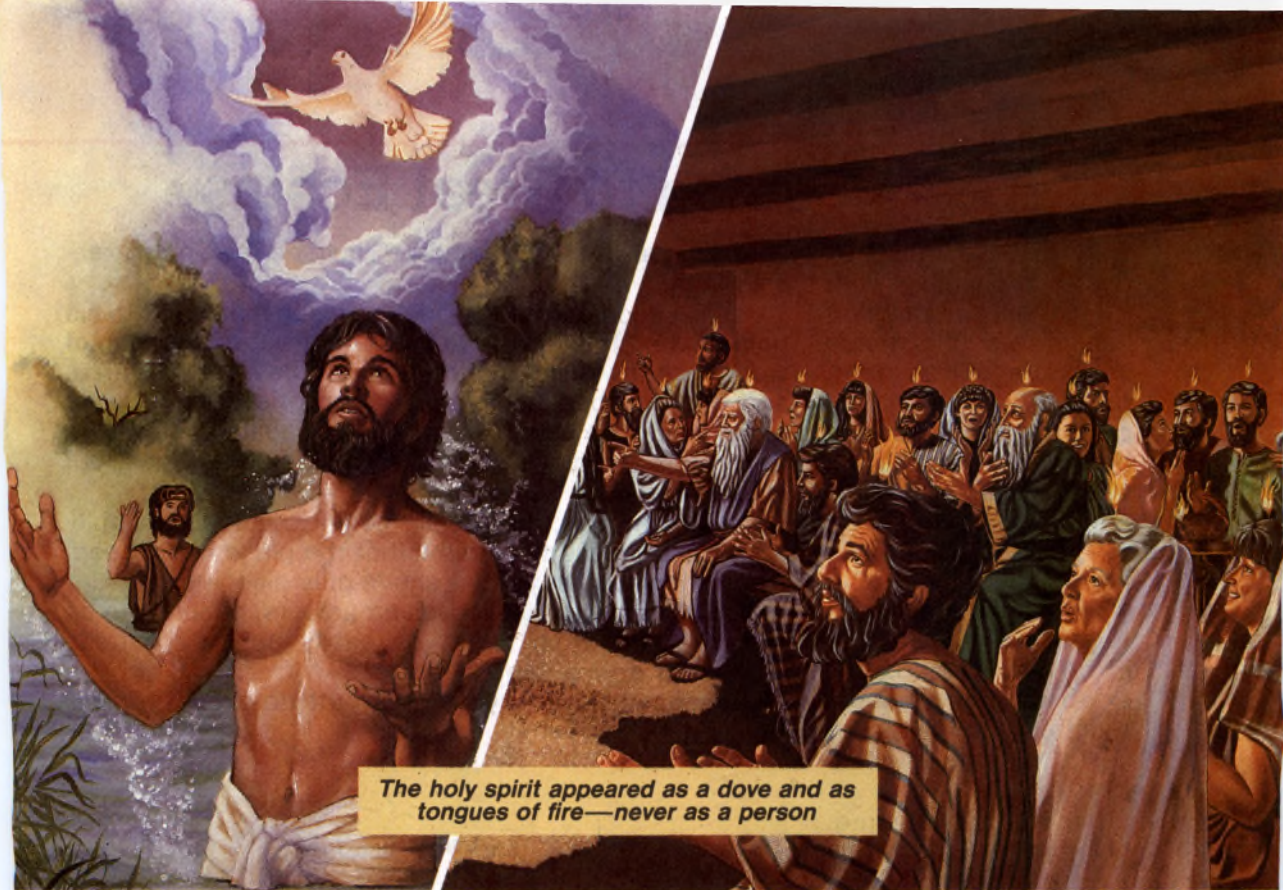
Is Jesus the Supreme Being?

Believers in the Trinity say yes. Yet you should be more interested in what Jesus said: "The Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) "The Son cannot do a single thing of his own initiative, but only what he beholds the Father doing." (John 5:19) Paul added: "The head of the Christ is God."—1 Corinthians 11:3.

Consider carefully, too, these questions: Does Jehovah have a God? Obviously not, he is supreme, the Almighty. Does Jesus have a God? After his resurrection Jesus said to Mary Magdalene: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God." The apostle Peter wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."—John 20:17; 1 Peter 1:3.

Has God ever died? 'Of course not,' might be your correct response. God is immortal. The prophet Habakkuk said of Jehovah: "My Holy One, you do not die." (Habakkuk 1:12) In contrast, Jesus did die. Then who raised him from the dead? Said Peter: "God raised [Christ] up from the dead." It becomes evident, then, that Jesus is not the Supreme Being.—Acts 3:15; Romans 5:8.

You can go further. Has God ever been



The holy spirit appeared as a dove and as tongues of fire—never as a person

seen? "No man has seen God at any time." (John 1:18) Yet thousands saw Jesus on earth. Has God ever prayed to anyone? To whom could he pray? He is the great "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 65:2) And Jesus? He frequently prayed to his Father, even spending a whole night in prayer. Is God a priest? Obviously not. Is Jesus? We read: "Consider the apostle and high priest whom we confess—Jesus."—Hebrews 3:1.

Is it not abundantly clear that Jesus is not the Supreme Being?

Is the Trinity Dogma Harmful?

Yes. This widespread dogma distorts the simple Bible truths that Jehovah alone is the Supreme Being, that Jesus is his Son, and that the holy spirit is God's active force. The doctrine causes confu-

sion by presenting God in a haze of mystery, leading to spiritual darkness.

You, however, need not be in that darkness. You can fix clearly in mind some facts:

The Trinity dogma is not mentioned in the Bible. It is a "theological elaboration" that developed centuries after Jesus' day, and it was imposed under threat of death at the stake. It has downgraded the worship of the Supreme Being, teaching belief in a mystery.

If you have always believed the Trinity, what should you now do? We urge you to study God's Word and publications like this one that will help you to understand the Bible. Doing so is vital. Jesus said that *everlasting life* depends on taking in knowledge of him and of Jehovah—"the only true God."—John 17:3.

Tears Turned to Great Ecstasy

WHEN Jairus sees the woman with the flow of blood healed, his confidence in Jesus' miraculous powers no doubt increases. Earlier in the day, Jesus had been asked by Jairus to come and help his beloved 12-year-old daughter, who lay near death. But while they are en route to Jairus' home, which is in or near Capernaum, a woman who simply touches the fringe of Jesus' outer garment is healed.

In the meantime, however, what Jairus fears most occurs. While Jesus is still speaking with the woman, some men arrive and quietly tell Jairus: "Your daughter died! Why bother the teacher any longer?"

How devastating the news is! Just think: This man, who commands great respect in the community, is now totally helpless as he learns of his daughter's death. Jesus, however, overhears the conversation. So, turning to

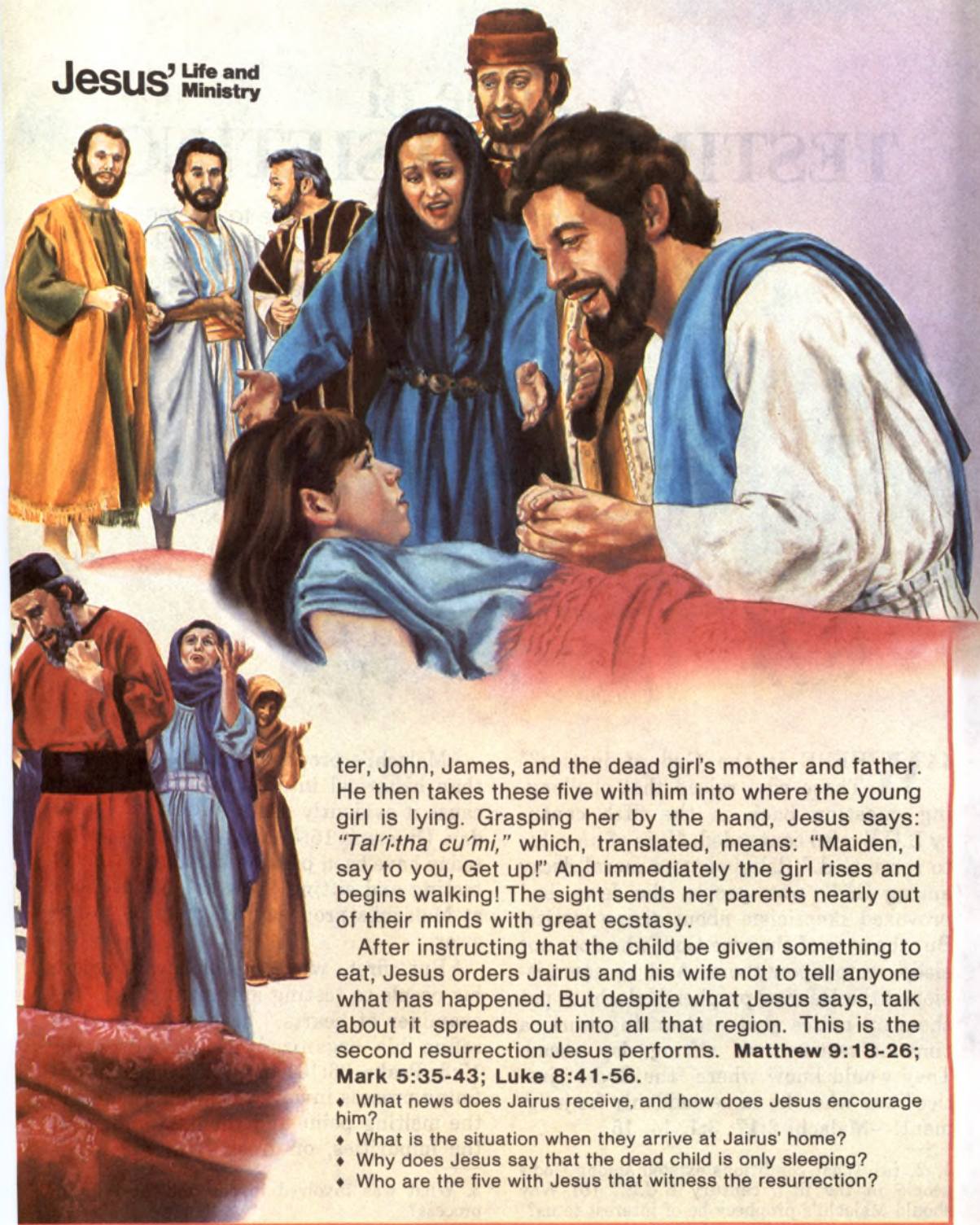
Jairus, he says encouragingly: "Have no fear, only exercise faith."

Jesus accompanies the grief-stricken man back to his home. When they arrive, they find a great commotion of weeping and wailing. A crowd of people have gathered, and they are beating themselves in grief. When Jesus steps inside, he asks: "Why are you causing noisy confusion and weeping? The young child has not died, but is sleeping."

On hearing this, the people begin to laugh scornfully at Jesus because they know that the girl is really dead. Jesus, however, says that she is only sleeping, in order to show that, with his God-given powers, people can be brought back from death as easily as they can be awakened from a deep sleep.

Jesus now has everyone sent outside except for Pe-





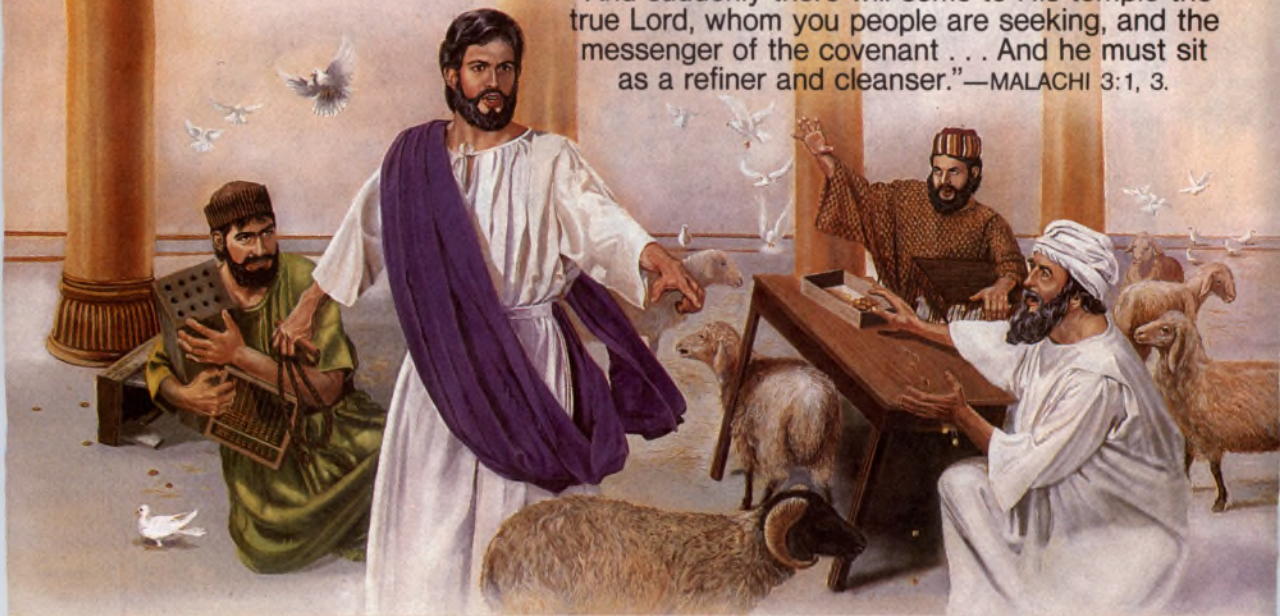
ter, John, James, and the dead girl's mother and father. He then takes these five with him into where the young girl is lying. Grasping her by the hand, Jesus says: "*Tal'i-tha cu'mi*," which, translated, means: "Maiden, I say to you, Get up!" And immediately the girl rises and begins walking! The sight sends her parents nearly out of their minds with great ecstasy.

After instructing that the child be given something to eat, Jesus orders Jairus and his wife not to tell anyone what has happened. But despite what Jesus says, talk about it spreads out into all that region. This is the second resurrection Jesus performs. **Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:35-43; Luke 8:41-56.**

- ◆ What news does Jairus receive, and how does Jesus encourage him?
- ◆ What is the situation when they arrive at Jairus' home?
- ◆ Why does Jesus say that the dead child is only sleeping?
- ◆ Who are the five with Jesus that witness the resurrection?

A Time of TESTING AND SIFTING

"And suddenly there will come to His temple the true Lord, whom you people are seeking, and the messenger of the covenant . . . And he must sit as a refiner and cleanser."—MALACHI 3:1, 3.



“WHERE is the God of justice?” Those who raised that challenging question back in the fifth century B.C.E. also contended: “It is of no value to serve God.” Religious and moral decay among God’s own people, the Jews, had provoked skepticism about divine justice. But the eyes of the true God, who does not sleep, were upon them. And he commissioned the Hebrew prophet Malachi to put them on notice that a cleansing work, a time of testing and sifting, lay ahead. They would know where “the God of justice” was when he came suddenly for judgment!—Malachi 2:17; 3:1, 14, 15.

1, 2. (a) What conditions existed among God’s people in the fifth century B.C.E.? (b) Why should Malachi’s prophecy be of interest to us?

² Malachi’s prophecy should be of more than historical interest to us. Why? Because it evidently has a fulfillment in our day. (Romans 15:4) Yes, Jehovah’s people today have been passing through a time of testing and sifting! How so? A close look at Malachi’s prophecy will help us to answer.

³ But, first, why does Jehovah expose his people to testing and sifting? As “the examiner of hearts,” he has purposed to refine his organized people. (Proverbs 17:3; Psalm 66:10) In Bible times the refining process involved heating a metal to the melting point and then skimming off the impurities, or dross. We read: “The

3. What was involved in the ancient refining process?

refiner watches the operation, either standing or sitting, with the greatest earnestness, until . . . the [liquid] metal has the appearance of a highly-polished mirror, reflecting every object around it; even the refiner, as he looks upon the mass of metal, may see himself as in a looking-glass, and thus he can form a very correct judgment respecting the purity of the metal. If he is satisfied, the fire is withdrawn, and the metal removed from the furnace; but if not considered pure, more lead is added and the process repeated." (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, by J. McClintock and J. Strong) Such refined gold or silver was more valuable.—Compare Revelation 3:18.

⁴ Jehovah allows testing and sifting so as to refine, or purify, his people, helping them to reflect more accurately his image. (Ephesians 5:1) In the refining process, he skims off the dross by clearing away unclean teachings and practices. (Isaiah 1:25) He also sifts out from among his people those who refuse to submit to the refining process and who "cause stumbling and persons who are doing lawlessness." This clears the way for "the sons of the kingdom," the spiritual Israelites, to shine with brightness so that an earthly class can also be gathered and cleave to them organizationally for survival.—Matthew 13:38, 41, 43; Philippians 2:15.

Malachi's Commission

⁵ Malachi prophesied after 443 B.C.E., almost a century after the Jewish exiles returned from Babylon. More than 70 years had passed since the inaugura-

tion of the temple rebuilt by Zerubbabel. The spiritual condition of the Israelites had deteriorated to a low level. Who, particularly, were responsible? The priests! How so? They were "despising" Jehovah's name by accepting sick and lame sacrifices. (Malachi 1:6-8) They "caused many to stumble in the law" by failing to instruct the people and by showing partiality in judgment.—Malachi 2:6-9; James 3:1.

⁶ As a result, Israelites in general began to question the value of serving God, even refusing to pay the tithe required by law. (Malachi 3:6-10, 14, 15; Leviticus 27:30) So far had they fallen from their devotion to God's Law that some had "dealt treacherously" with their wives, evidently by divorcing them in order to marry pagan women. Why, such detestable practices as sorcery, adultery, lying, and fraud were now prevalent among God's people!—Malachi 2:10-16; 3:5.

⁷ Malachi's commission was clear. In a forthright manner he exposed the negligent priests, and he made the people aware of their true spiritual state. Yet, he indicated that the God of merciful love was ready to forgive. "Return to me, and I will return to you," Jehovah pleaded. (Malachi 3:7) Malachi foretold that "the true Lord" was coming to his temple for judgment. The priests were in need of cleansing in order to "become to Jehovah people presenting a gift offering in righteousness." (Malachi 3:1-3) In addition, the people were put on notice that "the true Lord" would become "a speedy witness" against those who persisted in detestable practices.—Malachi 3:5.

⁸ Malachi was true to his commission; he sounded the warning. What he said was of benefit to the priests and the people

4. Why does Jehovah allow testing and sifting among his people?

5, 6. (a) Who, particularly, were responsible for the low spiritual level of the Israelites in Malachi's day? Why? (b) What bad effect did this have on the Israelites in general?

7, 8. What was the prophet Malachi's commission?

in his day. However, several centuries passed before his prophecy saw some of its features come true in a first fulfillment.

The First-Century Fulfillment

⁹ Speaking from his lofty throne in heaven, the Great Judge says: "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he must clear up a way before me." (Malachi 3:1a) Who was that "messenger"? Bible writer Mark combines the prophecies of Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 and applies both of them to John the Baptizer. (Mark 1:1-4) Jesus Christ, too, later identified John as that "messenger." (Matthew 11:10-14) So it was that in the spring of 29 C.E., John the Baptizer began his work as a "messenger," a forerunner. He was to prepare the way for the coming of Jehovah in judgment by getting the Israelites ready for the coming of God's Chief Representative, Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ John's being sent ahead of time was an expression of God's loving-kindness toward the Jews. In a covenant relationship with Jehovah, they needed to repent of their sins against the Law. John set religious matters straight and exposed religious hypocrisy. (Matthew 3:1-3, 7-12) He aroused honesthearted Jews to expect the Christ that they might follow Him.—John 1:35-37.

¹¹ Malachi's prophecy continues: "'And suddenly there will come to His temple the true Lord, whom you people are seeking, and the messenger of the covenant in whom you are delighting. Look! He will certainly come,' Jehovah of armies has said." (Malachi 3:1b) Who was "the true

Lord" that would come to his temple "suddenly," or unexpectedly? The Hebrew expression used is *ha-'A-dhohn'*. The use of the definite article *ha* ("the") before the title *'A-dhohn'* ("Lord; Master") limits the application of this title exclusively to Jehovah God. Indeed, it was to "His temple" that Jehovah would come.—Habakkuk 2:20; Psalm 11:4.

¹² After having mentioned one messenger, Malachi indicated that "the true Lord" would come to "His temple" accompanied by another, a different, messenger, "the messenger of the covenant." Who would this be? Well, in view of how things worked out, it is reasonable to conclude that "the messenger of the covenant" is Jesus Christ, whom John the Baptizer introduced to his disciples as "the Lamb of God." (John 1:29-34) Of what "covenant" is the Messiah "the messenger"? The evidence of Luke 1:69-75 and Acts 3:12, 19-26 suggests that it is the Abrahamic covenant, on the basis of which the Jews were the first ones to be given the opportunity to become Kingdom heirs.

¹³ "The true Lord" Jehovah did not come personally to the literal temple in Jerusalem. (1 Kings 8:27) He came representatively, that is, by means of his "messenger of the covenant," Jesus Christ, who came in Jehovah's name and with the backing of God's holy spirit.*

¹⁴ In the spring of 30 C.E., Jesus came to Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem and

* On a number of occasions, angelic messengers spoke as though they were Jehovah God, for they were acting as Jehovah's representatives.—Genesis 31:11-13; Judges 2:1-3; compare Genesis 16:11, 13.

9. In fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy, who was the "messenger"? Why do you so answer?
10. How did John the Baptizer serve "to get ready for Jehovah a prepared people"? (Luke 1:17)
11. How can we identify "the true Lord" that would come to the temple suddenly?

12. Who is "the messenger of the covenant," and of what "covenant" is he "the messenger"?
13. In what sense would "the true Lord" Jehovah come to the temple?
14. (a) Why was Jesus' cleansing of the temple in 30 C.E. evidently just a token of what was to come? (b) How and when was the temple cleansed in fulfillment of Malachi 3:1?



As a messenger, John the Baptizer prepared the people for the coming "messenger of the covenant"

drove out those who were making it "a house of merchandise." (John 2:13-16) But this was only a token of what was to come in fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. Following this incident, John, as "the messenger," continued baptizing and directing his disciples to Jesus. (John 3:23-30) However, on Nisan 9, 33 C.E., Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, presenting himself as King. (Matthew 21:1-9; Zechariah 9:9) John had finished his work, having been beheaded by Herod about a year before. So when Jesus came to the temple on Nisan 10, he came officially as "the messenger of the covenant," the judicial representative of "the true Lord" Jehovah, in fulfillment of Malachi 3:1. Jesus cleansed the temple, throwing out those commercializing it, overturning the tables of the money changers. He kept saying: "Is it not written [at Isaiah 56:7], '[Jehovah's] house will be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a cave of robbers."—Mark 11:15-18.

¹⁵ Notice was thus served upon Israel's religious leaders that their hour had come. As a class, they refused to accept Jehovah's "messenger of the covenant." They did not 'put up with the day of his coming,' for they refused to submit humbly to the refining process of the Great Refiner. (Malachi 3:2, 3) They deserved to be sifted out as worthy of destruction. Evidently, though, there were some "sons of Levi" with good hearts, for not long after Jesus' death "a great crowd of [Levite] priests began to be obedient to the faith."—Acts 6:7.

¹⁶ On Nisan 11, the day after he cleansed the temple, Jesus forcefully exposed the religious hypocrites and foretold the destruction of the temple and the Jewish system of things. (Matthew, chapters 23, 24)

15. As a class, how did the Jewish religious leaders respond to the refining process, but what was true of some priests?

16. How and when did a "great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah" overtake that Jewish nation?

Indeed, "the God of justice" came as "a speedy witness" upon that Jewish nation 37 years later in 70 C.E., when a "great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah" overtook them. (Malachi 2:17; 3:5; 4:5, 6) At that time, Israel collectively, as a treelike organization that failed to produce fine fruit, was "cut down and thrown into the fire" by means of destruction at the hands of the Romans. (Luke 3:3-14) All of this 'because they did not discern the time of their being inspected.'—Luke 19:44.

Modern-Day Fulfillment

¹⁷ But what of a second, or modern-day, fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy? In the first century, the initial fulfillment followed Jesus' being anointed with holy spirit to become the King-Designate of God's Kingdom. Logically, there should be a further fulfillment of the prophecy after Jesus Christ was enthroned in the heavens in 1914. The prophecy itself indicated that it would find fulfillment "before the coming of the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah." (Malachi 4:5) While a "day of Jehovah" came upon the Jewish system in

17. What indicates that Malachi's prophecy would find a further fulfillment in modern times?

Can You Recall?

- ☐ Why does Jehovah allow his people to go through testing and sifting?
- ☐ How did John the Baptizer serve as a "messenger," a forerunner?
- ☐ In the first century, how did Jesus come to the temple as "the messenger of the covenant"?
- ☐ How do we know that Malachi's prophecy would have a modern-day fulfillment?

70 C.E., the Scriptures point forward to a future "day of Jehovah" during this time of Christ's "presence."—Matthew 24:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2; 2 Peter 3:10-13.

¹⁸ As early as 1922, Jehovah's people were made aware that they were in a time of judgment in fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy. *The Watchtower* of September 1 said: "But Malachi's prophecy looks beyond the partial fulfillment at our Lord's first advent, and forward to the time when Messiah should come in glory and strength, and when he should judge amongst his people . . . Now, once again, the time of judgment has come; again his professed people are tried as by fire, and the true-hearted sons of Levi are being gathered together for service."

¹⁹ As indicated at Malachi 3:1, a special messenger was sent ahead of time. This proved to be, not one individual, but a class serving like John the Baptizer. Since 1881 this class has used what is now the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in a remarkable Bible educational work. This resulted in restoring many basic truths to the hearts of Bible lovers. Some of these clarifications are: Man does not possess an immortal soul, but he is a soul; there is no burning hell; Jesus Christ would not return in the flesh; Jehovah is one God, not a Trinity. Indeed, it was a work that 'cleared up a way before Jehovah' for his judgment work.

²⁰ Suddenly, Jehovah, as "the true Lord," came to his spiritual temple. When? The pattern was set in the first-century fulfillment. Back there Jesus came and cleansed the temple three and a

18. In 1922, how were God's people made aware that they were in a time of judgment?

19. In the modern-day fulfillment, in what way was a "messenger" sent ahead of time?

20. (a) When, evidently, did Jehovah come to the temple? (b) What questions does this raise?

half years after he was *anointed* as King at the Jordan. True to that pattern, since Jesus was *enthroned* as King in the autumn of 1914, it seems reasonable that three and a half years later he would be expected to accompany "the true Lord" Jehovah to the spiritual temple. According

to the prophecy, what was to happen from that time onward? Testing and sifting. But this raises some important questions: What evidences are there of this cleansing? Does it continue down to the present time? And how does all of this affect you personally? Let us see.

TESTING AND SIFTING in Modern Times

"Who will be putting up with the day of his coming,
and who will be the one standing when he
appears?"—MALACHI 3:2.

WHEN "the true Lord" came to the spiritual temple accompanied by his "messenger of the covenant," shortly after the Kingdom was set up in heaven in 1914, what did Jehovah find? His people were in need of refining and cleansing. Would they subject themselves to this and endure any needed cleaning of their organization, activity, doctrine, and conduct? As Malachi put it: "Who will be putting up with the day of his coming, and who will be the one standing when he appears?"—Malachi 3:1, 2.

² Jehovah accepts responsibility for cleansing and refining "the sons of Levi." (Malachi 3:3) In ancient Israel, the tribe of Levi furnished the priests and temple assistants. Such "sons of Levi" correspond to the collective body of anointed ones today serving as priests under Jesus, the High Priest. (1 Peter 2:7-9; He-

brews 3:1) They are the ones who first underwent testing when Jehovah came to the spiritual temple with his "messenger of the covenant." Now, what evidence is there that this refinement took place from the closing days of World War I onward?

A Time of Fiery Trials

³ When Jehovah accompanied his "messenger of the covenant" to the spiritual temple, He found the remnant in need of refining and cleansing. For example, *The Watch Tower* had encouraged its readers to set aside May 30, 1918, as a day of prayer for victory for the democratic powers, as requested by the U.S. congress and by President Wilson. This amounted to a violation of Christian neutrality.—John 17:14, 16.

⁴ The clergy and the governments brought great pressure to bear on

1. When Jehovah came to the spiritual temple in modern times, what did he find, raising what question?

2. In modern times, who are "the sons of Levi" of Malachi 3:3?

3. By the spring of 1918, what was the condition of God's witnesses?

4. What developed as to persecution of Jehovah's servants?

As a result of cleansing and refining, the loyalhearted remnant 'became to Jehovah a people presenting a gift offering in righteousness'

Jehovah's anointed servants. Falsely accused of sedition, the anointed remnant attempted to make their innocence clear publicly. However, on May 7, 1918, warrants were issued for the arrest of eight members of the management and editorial staff of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, including the president, J. F. Rutherford. Their trial began Monday, June 3. On June 20 the jury returned a verdict of guilty on four counts. Then on July 4, 1918, these dedicated Christian men were taken by train to prison in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.

⁵ By the summer of 1918, the once strong, organized voice of public preaching for Jehovah's Kingdom by the anointed was greatly reduced in volume. It was as if they were 'killed' respecting their public activity. (Revelation 11:3, 7) At the time of the Society's conventions that summer, some apostates turned away and formed their own opposing religious groups. Manifesting the traits of an "evil slave," they were 'winnowed' like "chaff" to be separated from Jehovah's faithful remnant. (Matthew 3:12; 24:48-51) The Memorial of Christ's death was celebrated on Sunday, April 13, 1919, with 17,961 attending in many lands. As compared to a partial report for 1917, the Memorial attendance had dropped by more than 3,000, indicating the effects of sifting.

5. How was it evident that there needed to be sifting among those serving God, and what shows that this occurred?

⁶ However, Jehovah's permitting such fiery trials to befall his people was with their eventual blessing in view. He never left them entirely. On Tuesday, March 25, 1919, J. F. Rutherford and his seven associates were released from prison on bail and were later completely exonerated. Suddenly, for the cleansed survivors of this testing period, there had come freedom from bondage! Yes, "spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet," ready for action.—Revelation 11:11.

⁷ What would they do now? As a restored Christian community, the remnant scrutinized themselves. They prayed for Jehovah's forgiveness for any sins of compromise. (Compare Psalm 106:6; Isaiah 42:24.) They went forth as a cleansed people. As a result of being refined, the loyalhearted remnant 'became to Jehovah a people presenting a gift offering in righteousness.' (Malachi 3:3) The spiritual sacrifices of praise that they offered became pleasing to God. (Hebrews 13:15) They rejoiced that the brief interval of Jehovah's displeasure had ended. They were confident that their future service would be acceptable to him. (Isaiah 12:1) From September 1 to 8, 1919, a happy convention was held at Cedar Point, Ohio, with 7,000 attending and 200 being baptized. All of this indicated a restoration and a willingness to accomplish Jehovah's work of preaching.

⁸ How does all of this affect God's people living today? According to the proph-

6. How did Jehovah's permitting such trials have the eventual blessing of his people in view?

7. (a) What did these restored witnesses now do? (b) What resulted from this refining and cleansing?

8. (a) How does the process of refining and cleansing affect us today? (b) In addition to the modern-day "sons of Levi," who else must pass through testing and sifting?

The ancient refiner skimmed off the impurities, or dross. Similarly, Jehovah allows testing and sifting to refine his people



ecy, Jehovah, accompanied by his messenger, would come and “sit as a refiner and cleanser.” (Malachi 3:3) Yes, the process of refining and cleansing would continue, and he would “sit” and watch carefully. The fact that the loyal remnant came through a time of fiery trials early in this century did not mean that the Great Refiner had finished his cleansing of them. The testing and sifting has continued to our day. Jehovah is still at his temple, sitting in judgment. He has not been purifying just “the sons of Levi,” the anointed remnant. Malachi’s prophecy indicated His concern for “the alien resident,” corresponding to the “great crowd,” whose prospect is earthly life. (Malachi 3:5; Revelation 7: 9, 10) Yes, during the past 69 years, there has been a continuous purification of Jehovah’s people in four general ways.

Organizational Refinements

⁹ First, cleansing occurred by progressive harmonizing of the worldwide congregation with newly understood Scriptural principles. There had to be a gradual putting away of democratic ways of conducting congregational affairs. Consider some of the progressive developments along this line.

9. What are some of the progressive developments in organizational structure since 1919?

1919: Appointments by the Governing Body began by the designating from the headquarters of the Watch Tower Society a permanent service director for each congregation to supervise field-service activities.

1932: The annual election of elders and deacons was terminated; congregational selection of men for these positions was replaced by selection of a service committee assisting (and including) the Society-appointed service director.

1937: It was recognized that “Jonadabs” [those with an earthly hope] may hold positions of responsibility in the congregation.

1938: All overseers and their assistants were to be appointed by the Society in a theocratic manner.

1972: It was made clear that the Scriptural method of governing each congregation was not by just one mature Christian man



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A few have been 'winnowed' away as "chaff," but Jehovah's loyal servants joyfully accept progressive spiritual enlightenment

by the spiritual and numerical growth of his worshippers. (Compare Acts 6:7; 16:5.) True, some overseers and others have been sifted out because they would not loyally submit to the God-directed way. By far the majority of Jehovah's people, though, have proved obedient and submissive to organizational improvements. (Hebrews 13:17) They appreciate that by means of such adjustments the Great Refiner has brought them into closer harmony with Scriptural methods for the congregations.

The Field Ministry

but by a body of elders, as appointed by the Society.

1975: Establishment of committees of the Governing Body to care for various responsibilities; no one man would direct matters, but all within a committee would have an equal voice and would look unitedly to the leadership of Christ Jesus.

¹⁰ What has been the result of such adjustments? Jehovah's blessing has undoubtedly been abundant, as evidenced

10. (a) What has resulted from such refinements? (b) How do you feel about all such adjustments?

¹¹ Second, cleansing has taken place through testings as to participation in field service.

1922: All associates of the congregations were urged to share in the house-to-house field service. Monthly Bulletin (now Our Kingdom Ministry) containing service directions became available.

1927: Regular house-to-house preaching on Sundays began; books and booklets were distributed for a contribution.

1937: First Model Study booklet for home Bible studies was received.

11. What progressive forms has the preaching work taken in recent decades?

1939: First annual Watchtower subscription campaign took place; over 93,000 new subscriptions were obtained.

1940: Magazine street work began.

This public preaching took on further progressive forms, including the making of return visits and the conducting of home Bible studies.

¹² What have been the results? Over the years some have been sifted out because they were unwilling to be fruit-bearing Christians. (John 15:5) Yet most of Jehovah's people have certainly responded to the call for Kingdom preachers. Why, that small band of fewer than 8,000 back in 1919 grew to a peak of 3,229,022 Kingdom publishers in 1986! What about the full-time ministry? Compared to 150 active colporteurs (pioneers) in the spring of 1919, last year saw an average of over 391,000 pioneer publishers active each month—the highest number in the history of Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses! By having an active share in preaching the good news, we demonstrate our loyal support of the way in which Jehovah has continued to cleanse his people.—1 Corinthians 9:16.

Increasing Light

¹³ Third, cleansing occurred as God's people were tested as to acceptance of progressive spiritual enlightenment from the Bible. (Proverbs 4:18) From 1919 to the present a veritable flood of newly understood truths has flowed.

1925: It was clearly discerned that there

12. (a) What have been the results of such refinements of the field ministry? (b) How may we demonstrate our loyalty to the way Jehovah has refined his people?

13. What are some examples of how Jehovah has enlightened his people?

Year after year Jehovah continues to refine and cleanse his people

are two distinct and opposing organizations—Jehovah's and Satan's.

1931: The new name Jehovah's Witnesses was adopted.

1935: The "great crowd" of Revelation 7: 9-15 was identified as a class having an earthly destiny.

1941: The rightfulness of the universal sovereignty of Jehovah was shown to be the primary issue raised by Satan's challenge.

1962: The "superior authorities" of Romans 13:1 were properly identified as being the secular governmental authorities, to whom Christians are to be in relative subjection.

1986: It was appreciated that both the remnant and the "great crowd" must figuratively partake of Jesus' flesh and blood by accepting his sacrifice in order to be in harmony with him.—John 6:53-56.

Over the decades, as Jehovah enlightened his people, it became clear that there was a need for congregational attention to maintaining a clean, neutral organization that respected the sanctity of blood.—1 Corinthians 5:11-13; John 17:14, 16; Acts 15:28, 29.

¹⁴ How have God's people responded to such progressive enlightenment? All along, there have been a few who could not accept certain adjustments. These were 'winnowed out.' (Matthew 3:12) On the other hand, how happy Jehovah's loyal servants are for such spiritual

14. (a) How have Jehovah's people responded to such progressive enlightenments? (b) What is your own determination as to Jehovah's channel of communication?

enlightenment! At a time when Christendom gropes in spiritual darkness, the path of Jehovah's people grows brighter and brighter. Should we not be determined to stick closely to the channel of communication that Jehovah is using, accepting all such progressive enlightenments as "food at the proper time"? —Matthew 24:45.

Putting Away Unclean Practices

¹⁵ Fourth, cleansing took place when it became mandatory to put away unclean or Babylonish practices. In the 1920's God's people ceased celebrating Christmas and other holidays that were shown to be of pagan origin. In 1945 the Christian stand on blood transfusions was explained. During the 1960's and 1970's, as the moral climate in the world continued to degenerate, *The Watchtower* continued to provide pointed counsel for God's people on such subjects as proper conduct between the sexes and the need to break free from tobacco and other drugs.

¹⁶ Of course, such adjustments as to unclean practices have often served as a test of loyalty for God's people. However, those who made the necessary adjustments looked upon such changes as assistance in putting away a filthy garment. (Colossians 3:9, 10) They realized that although the customs associated with some holidays may appear harmless, it is Jehovah's view that should concern us; he observed firsthand the pagan religious practices from which these originated. As to God's moral requirements, they viewed them as a protection rather than a restriction, so they were blessed by Jehovah for becoming clean. If an adjustment

15. How has Jehovah gradually refined his people as to unclean or Babylonish practices?

16. How should such adjustments as to unclean practices be viewed?

seemed difficult to understand, they trusted that Jehovah was 'teaching them to benefit themselves.'—Isaiah 48:17.

¹⁷ Year after year Jehovah continues to refine and cleanse his people. Collectively, they have subjected themselves to the refining process as to their organization, activity, doctrine, and moral cleanness. But what about us *individually*? Through his organization Jehovah continues to dispense "solid food" for guidance that refines the heart. Our motives are tested and examined. (Hebrews 4:12; 5:14) By responding to the refining, cleansing process of the Great Refiner, we keep clean as we await "the coming of the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah."—Malachi 4:5.

¹⁸ Thanks be to Jehovah, "the true Lord," and his "messenger of the covenant," Jesus Christ, who refine us and deliver us from uncleanness in this time of testing and sifting. May all of us be determined to continue walking in Jehovah's clean paths of peace under the "Prince of Peace," Christ Jesus, and thus keep our happy relationship with Jehovah.—Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 72:7.

17, 18. (a) How are we individually tested by the Great Refiner? (b) What should be our determination as we await Jehovah's day?

How Has Jehovah Refined His People As To—

- ☐ Organizational adjustments?
- ☐ Field service participation?
- ☐ Acceptance of progressive enlightenment?
- ☐ Putting away unclean practices?

Insight on the News

Who Are the Heretics?

"In the Bible we read that God is a Trinity," wrote Professor Johan Heyns, spiritual leader of South Africa's Dutch Reformed Church, in the November 15, 1986, edition of the South African newspaper *Naweek-Volksblad*. Of those who reason that God cannot be three and yet one, continues the professor, "the Christian Church said that these people were preaching a false doctrine, and therefore the church also denounced them as heretics."

But where is the word Trinity found in the Bible? Professor Heyns did not say. This is not surprising because, as *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* explains, "neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema [Jewish confession of faith] in the Old Testament: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord' (Deut. 6:4)." If not taught by Jesus and his apostles nor specifically stated in the Bible, how did the Trinity doctrine become popular? Although the *Britannica* claims that the germ of the doctrine is in the "New Testament," it admits that "the doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies" and that by the end of the fourth century "the doctrine of the Trinity

took substantially the form it has maintained ever since."

If those who refuse to believe that God is three in one are heretics, then what about Jesus Christ himself? He repeated the above words of Deuteronomy 6:4: "The Lord our God is one Lord." (Mark 12:29, *King James Version*) Jesus also said: "The Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) So who are the heretics? Those who stick to what Jesus taught or those who cling to a doctrine developed centuries after his death?—Compare 1 Corinthians 4:6 with 2 John 9.

"Fortress" City

"Sydney today is a city under siege," began an editorial in *The Sun-Herald*, a Sydney, Australia, newspaper. "Its residential suburbs are barred, double deadlocked and electronically-guarded fortresses. Its night trains are vandalised, graffiti-scarred and ominously empty. Its streets after dark are becoming increasingly unsafe."

Although the above could be a distressing portrait of many large cities around the world, it sets off alarms of deep concern for Australians. Yet, Bible students are not surprised to see lawlessness spreading. Why? Because they recall Jesus' prophetic words about conditions in our day. Jesus said that "because of the increasing of lawlessness the

love of the greater number will cool off." (Matthew 24:12) And while the editorial in *The Sun-Herald* bewails the pall of fear affecting what has been called the Lucky Country's luckiest city, "luck" will not bring an end to wickedness. Only Jehovah, by means of his heavenly government, will. Psalm 5:4 assures us that Jehovah is "not a God taking delight in wickedness; no one bad may reside for any time with you."

Fatal Ironic Twist

The Bible commands Christians to 'abstain from blood.' (Acts 15:29) Jehovah's Witnesses believe that this Scriptural injunction applies to the eating of blood as well as to blood transfusions. AIDS, a fatal disease that attacks the body's immune system, can be contracted from blood transfusions. In a sad but ironic twist, a baby born with a rare and deadly immune-deficiency disease called reticular dysgenesis was given a bone-marrow transplant at the age of six months. The procedure involved blood transfusions. The transplant appeared to be a success until doctors discovered that the transfusions used gave the infant another deadly disease. "At 2 1/2 the patient is doing well except for one thing," reports *Physician's Weekly*. "The child was given posttransplant platelets before screening for (the AIDS virus) became mandatory and he now has AIDS."

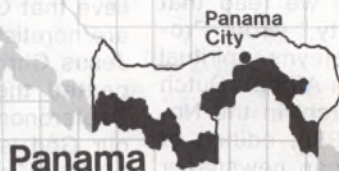
Panama Rejoices in Its Building Work

BUILDING projects are not new to Panama. Toward the beginning of this century, work began on the huge canal that cuts through the center of this narrow isthmus country, joining the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. This prodigious building project earned tiny Panama the name "the crossroads of the world."

On January 18, 1986, a building work of another sort reached its culmination. On that day Jehovah's Witnesses held a dedication program for their newly constructed branch office facilities. While only 211 could attend the dedication program in person, thousands more listened by means of a telephone hookup. The new building houses the headquarters staff, missionaries, and a printery.

The construction of these facilities, however, is but a part of a spiritual building program that has been going on in Panama since the end of the 19th century. At that time seeds of Kingdom truth were sown here. By the year 1957, there were a thousand or so publishers of the "good news" in Panama. (Matthew 24:14) The small branch office and missionary home built in that year was sufficient. But in 20 years the number of Witnesses had tripled! So in September 1982 the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses approved the construction of a new branch office.

The location? About 12 miles (19 km) outside Panama City in a beautiful spot overlooking a lake.



The Challenge of Building

But who would design the building? How would it be built and by whom? Bearing in mind the words of Psalm 127:1, the brothers moved ahead, knowing that Jehovah would help them overcome these seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

A drawing of tentative plans was made, showing the amount of space required for an office, a library, literature storage, a small printery, and housing for the headquarters staff. A spacious Kingdom Hall was included. The architectural staff at the Watch Tower Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, followed through by designing a building to meet these needs.

Next came the challenge of doing the actual building. Hundreds of local Witnesses volunteered. Brothers in the United States also offered their skills and services. Within a period of just six weeks, a total of 230 helpers had arrived, including some from other Central American countries.

The local brothers were happy to open up their homes. One family even moved



into a tent temporarily so as to accommodate 11 volunteers. Some who owned small school buses provided transportation for these workers. Yet others shared in providing the 30,000 free meals that were served right on the construction site. Refreshing drinks made of pineapple, oranges, papaya, and mangoes, as well as coconut milk, were served frequently to quench the thirst of those toiling under the tropical sun.

No Tower of Babel

The work progressed rapidly. Within two weeks all the walls had been raised to the second-floor level, some of the steel beams were in place, and the floor of the Kingdom Hall on the second story was poured. Plumbing and electrical work proceeded simultaneously with the block laying, plastering, and installation of windows and doors. In less than a month the roof was put up, just in time to provide protection from a heavy downpour—unusual for this time of year.

There were some problems. At times, up to 800 volunteers were on hand, and a great deal of organization was needed to

keep all of them busy. Furthermore, most of the visiting brothers did not know Spanish. Rather than this causing the building work to stop, as at the infamous Tower of Babel, the brothers evinced the fruitage of the spirit—and got the assistance of some interpreters.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

Throughout the project, spiritual matters were emphasized. Regular congregation meetings were held at the building site, and time was set aside for sharing in the field ministry. There were also periods of recreation, sight-seeing, and social gatherings. But the brothers were primarily there to work, and the buildings were soon finished!

In his dedication talk, John Booth of the Governing Body summed matters up nicely, saying: "What's going to come from all this building we've been doing? Why, we're building for the eternal future. Not that the building will last forever, but the result of this building and the work of the brothers throughout the country and throughout the world will be people who will live forever." No wonder that the Witnesses in Panama rejoice over their ever-expanding building work!

Family Care

—How Far Does It Extend?



“AFRICAN culture tells me that I am my brother’s keeper,” said Nigerian writer S. A. Jegede. “African culture calls for respect and care for one’s parents.” Yes, in Africa and other parts of the world, helping out family members is a way of life.

Often, though, “family” is thought to include aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews—even people who are simply from the same village! But as African families leave the rurals for city jobs, such extended family members have become a potential source of problems. Transplanted families often find themselves besieged by relatives requesting money or lodging. Because of the unique demands of city life, however, helping distant relatives or people from the same village is often difficult, if not impossible.

The Bible states: “Certainly if anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith.” (1 Timothy 5:8) How far, though, does the principle of family care extend? Is a Christian obliged to provide for extended family members in all circumstances? Or is it as the above-quoted Nigerian writer asserts: “The abuse of the extended family system has no room in African culture or in the Bible”?

Parents and Children

The extended family system existed in Bible times. Yet, in obligating a Christian to “provide for those who are his own,” the Bible nowhere indicates that

Christian parents have a primary obligation toward their own children



this necessarily includes all the relatives and others of the extended family system.

The Bible particularly stresses the obligations of parents toward children. Regarding a congregation's helping him, the apostle Paul wrote: "For the children ought not to lay up for their parents, but the parents for their children." (2 Corinthians 12:14) H. B. Clark, a famous law authority, commented: "A natural and moral obligation rests upon a father to support his child." As the God-appointed head of the family unit, the father has the *prime responsibility* to be the breadwinner. Often the wife assists by caring for the home efficiently, spending wisely, even working outside the home when circumstances demand it.—Compare Proverbs 31:10-31.

Note, though, that parents are encouraged to do more than simply earn money. They are urged to "lay up" some earnings

in behalf of their children. Parents that follow this wise counsel are often able to assist their children even after they have grown up and left home. Particularly is this appropriate when children pursue the full-time Christian ministry and occasionally need financial assistance to remain in that service. No mention is made of parents' having to "lay up" for innumerable extended family members.

"Due Compensation"

This loving care on the part of parents is not to go unrewarded. The apostle Paul says at 1 Timothy 5:4: "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let these learn first to practice godly devotion in their own household and to keep paying a due compensation to their parents and grandparents, for this is acceptable in God's sight." Such support of an aging parent or grandparent would certainly harmonize with the Bible's command to

Christian responsibilities may extend to aged parents as well as to one's children



honor one's parents.—Ephesians 6:2; Exodus 20:12.

Again, note that Paul evidently laid no obligations upon distant relatives to care for such widows. Back then, in cases where no close relatives were on hand to care for a Christian widow with a record of faithful service, the congregation was to bear the burden of her support.—1 Timothy 5:3, 9, 10.

The Christian obligation to provide “for those who are his own” thus definitely includes a person’s marriage mate and children, parents and grandparents. A responsibility of this sort exists even when such dependent ones are unbelievers or are physically disabled in some way. It continues as long as such ones are alive. And if one is married, it may even include helping one’s mate to honor his or her parents. Serious marital difficulties have sometimes arisen when this principle has been overlooked or disregarded.

Provide What? When?

Nevertheless, parents should not conclude that they can squander their resources in the belief that they can, at any time, demand material support from their children. Nor does it mean that they should make unreasonable demands for attention from their offspring, who often have families of their own to whom their first obligation belongs. This view is in line with Paul’s words: “Children ought not to lay up for their parents, but the parents for their children.”—2 Corinthians 12:14.

In the normal course of events, parents may be able to acquire their own home, property, and source of income (including company or government retirement pay) that may sustain them in their old age. “Money is for a protection,” and by ‘laying up’ for themselves prudently, parents can often avoid placing a great financial or emotional burden on their chil-

dren later on in life.—Ecclesiastes 7:12.

Solomon's words at Ecclesiastes 9:11, however, remind us that even the best-laid plans are subject to "time and unforeseen occurrence." So, what if, in spite of careful planning, a couple's means of support fails or needs supplementing? Their God-fearing children would naturally be moved to help them in some reasonable way. This may mean providing financial assistance, inviting the parents to live with or near them, or, when necessary, arranging for institutional care. Of course, aged parents or grandparents certainly should be reasonable, not expecting their offspring to provide a lavish life-style, for the Bible's counsel is: "Having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things."—1 Timothy 6:8.

In many cases, government social-security programs, pensions, old-age benefits, and personal savings can provide adequate, albeit modest, support for aged parents or grandparents. It is wise to find out what provisions are available to those who qualify.—Romans 13:6.

Avoid Pharisaical Reasoning

Jesus chastised the scribes and the Pharisees because they said to needy parents: "Whatever I have by which you might get benefit from me is a gift dedicated to God." (Matthew 15:5) In Jesus' day, pious Jews could set aside money or property for eventual donation to the temple. The Pharisees fostered the view that once dedicated, such goods could under no circumstances be used for any other purpose—including caring for aged parents.

Christ condemned this Pharisaical thinking as being out of harmony with the spirit of God's Law. In his view, honoring one's parents took priority over a man-made rule. Similarly today, some

Christians have devoted their lives to the ministry, perhaps serving as missionaries, pioneers, or traveling overseers. Upon learning that their parents were in need, they tried hard to find ways to care for their folks while still continuing in their form of ministry. But when no such arrangements could in any way be worked out, they did not reason that their privileges in the ministry were more important than honoring their parents. Such ones are to be warmly commended for making adjustments in their lives—often at great personal sacrifice—so as to meet their family obligations.

Working What Is Good Toward All

Though the Bible obligates Christians to care for needy members of their immediate family, this does not rule out reasonably showing love to members of the extended family. At times certain aunts, cousins, or nephews seem as close as immediate family members! The Bible encourages us to "work what is good toward all." (Galatians 6:10) If a Christian has the means to help such a one, certainly he would not have to 'shut the door of his tender compassions.' Indeed, he may feel morally obligated to help.—1 John 3:17.

Nevertheless, a Christian's primary obligation is toward his immediate family—marriage mate, children, parents, and grandparents. He would therefore give serious thought before taking on a responsibility that could harm them—financially, emotionally, or spiritually.

The Bible's advice on family care is thus kind and reasonable. Applying it can relieve a Christian of much unnecessary anxiety, and it can help him to set his priorities. All of this is to the praise of Jehovah, "the Father, to whom every family in heaven and on earth owes its name."—Ephesians 3:14, 15.

'God Will Finish Your Training'

AN ATHLETE preparing for an important event has to train hard. He wants to get his body in shape so that on the big day, he will render his best possible performance. Christians, too, have to train hard but with a different goal. The apostle Paul said: "Be training yourself with godly devotion as your aim."—1 Timothy 4:7.

Thus, a Christian has to keep himself in shape spiritually. As an athlete builds his body, the Christian builds his spiritual strength and endurance. He does this by studying God's Word the Bible, by prayer, by regularly associating with fellow Christians, and by making public expressions of his faith.

An athlete often has a trainer, and Christians, too, have a trainer. Who? None other than Jehovah God himself! The apostle Peter pointed out Jehovah's concern for the Christian training program, writing: "The God of all undeserved kindness . . . will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong." (1 Peter 5:10) What training does Jehovah give us? Many kinds, and all are vital if we want to stay in shape as Christians.

Direct Discipline

Peter himself received training from Jehovah. We can learn a lot from his experience. Sometimes Peter's training was painful. Imagine how Peter must have felt



when he tried to discourage Jesus from going through with God's purpose, and Jesus answered: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not God's thoughts, but those of men." (Matthew 16:23) Imagine, too, how he felt many years later when fear of man led him to act unwisely. The apostle Paul administered Jehovah's discipline on that occasion: "When Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I resisted him face to face, because he stood condemned."—Galatians 2:11-14.

Nevertheless, on both occasions Jehovah was training Peter. He learned that "no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterward to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness." (Hebrews 12:11) Accepting those strong reproofs as discipline from Jehovah helped Peter to get the right view of matters and trained him in the vital Christian quali-

ties of meekness and humility.—Proverbs 3:34; 15:33.

Handling Situations

Jehovah can train us by permitting situations to arise that are difficult to handle—sometimes these are even within the Christian congregation. We grow as Christians as we pray for guidance, put into application the Bible principles we have learned, and see how applying those principles is *always* the best way.

Peter was involved in personality conflicts that arose among Jesus' apostles. When we read the accounts of this, it is interesting to see how Jesus used these conflicts—which were really the result of imperfection and inexperience—as opportunities to train his followers in the essential Christian qualities of love, humility, and forgiveness.—Matthew 18:15-17, 21, 22; Luke 22:24-27.

Paul also witnessed personality conflicts. (Acts 15:36-40; Philippians 4:2) He explained how such problems give Christians the opportunity to receive training: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also. But, besides all these things, clothe yourselves with love, for it is a perfect bond of union."—Colossians 3:13, 14.

In the first century, a more sinister danger appeared among Christians. Peter warned about it: "There will also be false teachers among you. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects and will disown even the owner that bought them, bringing speedy destruction upon themselves. Furthermore, many will follow their acts of loose conduct, and on account of these the way of the truth will be spoken of abusively." (2 Peter 2:1, 2) This experience would result in the destruction of the

unrepentant "false teachers." (2 Peter 2:3) But what of those who remained faithful?

The experience would train them to 'rouse up their clear thinking faculties.' (2 Peter 3:1) Their alertness in guarding against the intrusion of false teachings would call for them to review the reasons for their faith. As they saw the bad results of the actions of the "false teachers," their confidence in Christian truth would be even stronger.—2 Peter 3:3-7.

For example, in one congregation the aged apostle John was opposed by a certain Diotrephes, an ambitious man who had little respect for John's authority and who not only refused to receive the messengers sent by John but may even have tried to disfellowship those who did. This must have been painful to all the sincere Christians who were in the same congregation as Diotrephes. But it did give them the opportunity to show that they were not 'imitators of what is bad' and thus to receive advanced training in loyalty to Jehovah and to apostolic authority.—3 John 9-12.

In Dealing With Non-Christians

Jesus said that his followers were no part of the world. (John 17:16) A Christian's first loyalty is to Jehovah and his Kingdom. He tries to maintain God's moral standards, so his main interests and concerns are different from those of the world. However, a Christian has to live in the world, and this inevitably causes tensions.

Peter, during his long ministry, must have seen many occasions when Christians had to make difficult decisions, balancing the demands of the world with the dictates of their conscience. In Peter's first letter, he gave fine, practical counsel as to how to do this so that Christians could "hold a

good conscience.”—1 Peter 2:13-20; 3:1-6, 16.

Of course, as Christians we look forward to the time when we no longer have to consider the demands of this system of things. But meanwhile we are being trained in endurance and allowed to demonstrate our loyalty in the face of temptation and ungodly influences. As we gain experience in applying Bible principles to different circumstances and courageously act the way we know Jehovah wants us to act, we are also trained in practical wisdom and courage. Think about how much more training we will have received because of having lived in this system and successfully handled so many difficult problems!

Under Persecution

When Peter spoke about God's training of us, he was particularly referring to persecution. He showed that Christians should expect persecution: "Keep your senses, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone."—1 Peter 5:8; see also 2 Timothy 3:12.

Peter was qualified to speak about this because he had personally suffered persecution. In the early days of the Christian congregation, he and the other apostles were flogged and ordered to stop preach-

ing. Their reaction? They "went their way from before the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his name."—Acts 5:41.

Hence, Peter spoke from experience, as well as under inspiration, when he said: "On the contrary, go on rejoicing forasmuch as you are sharers in the sufferings of the Christ, that you may rejoice and be overjoyed also during the revelation of his glory. If you are being reproached for the name of Christ, you are happy, because the spirit of glory, even the spirit of God, is resting upon you."—1 Peter 4:13, 14.

Yes, outright persecution can serve as a form of training. Under it, a Christian learns to rely even more on God's spirit. His faith develops a "tested quality." (1 Peter 1:7) He is trained in courage based on Jehovah's power. (2 Timothy 1:7) He develops patient endurance, and like Jesus, he 'learns obedience through the things he suffers.'—Hebrews 5:8; 1 Peter 2:23, 24.

Jehovah Finishes Our Training

Of course, the difficult problems, including persecution, that a Christian endures do not come from God. James counsels: "When under trial, let no one say: 'I am being tried by God.' For with evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." (James 1:13) Problems may arise from many causes, including when people make mistakes or do wrong of their own free will. However, since such things do happen, Jehovah uses them to train his servants in vital Christian qualities.

Job, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, and all of God's servants in Bible times were trained in this way. We, too, as we face various difficult situations, should view them as a source of training permitted by Jehovah. By our facing up to them in Jehovah's strength, we will be trained in obedience,

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- **Controlling Anger in an Angry World**
- **Michael the Great Prince Stands Up**
- **Staying Close to Jehovah's Organization**

wisdom, humility, courage, love, tolerance, and many other qualities.—Compare James 1:2-4.

We are encouraged, too, by knowing that this stage of our training will one day be over. Hence, Peter comforted his fellow Christians, saying: "After you have suffered a little while, the God of all undeserved kindness, who called you to his everlasting glory in union with Christ, will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong." (1 Pe-

ter 5:10) These words apply with equal force to the "great crowd" that look forward to everlasting life in the Paradise earth.

That thought in itself should help us to submit patiently to these training experiences, to be determined not to compromise. Thus, we will experience the truthfulness of Paul's encouraging words: "So let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out."—Galatians 6:9.

Questions From Readers

■ When on the stake, Jesus cried: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Did he lack faith, believing that God had deserted him?

Upon reading these words at Matthew 27:46 or Mark 15:34, some have concluded that when Jesus faced a painful death, his confidence in God wavered. Others have said that this was merely Jesus' *human* response, an understandable cry of desperation by a flesh-and-blood man in agony. There is good reason, though, to look beyond such human evaluations based on surface appearances. While none of us today can know with certainty all that was involved in Jesus' crying out as he did, we can note two likely motives.

Jesus was well aware that he would have to "go to Jerusalem and suffer many things . . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised up." (Matthew 16:21) In heaven the Son of God had observed even imperfect humans experience torturous deaths while maintaining their integrity. (Hebrews 11:36-38) So there just is no reason to believe that Jesus—a perfect human—would be seized with fear over what he faced; nor would death on a

stake suggest to him that his Father had rejected him. Jesus knew in advance "what sort of death he was about to die," that is, death by impalement. (John 12:32, 33) He was sure, too, that on the third day he would be raised up. How, then, could Jesus say that God had forsaken him?

First, he could have meant it in the qualified sense that Jehovah had taken away protection from his Son so that Jesus' integrity would be tested to the limit, a painful and shameful death. But God's releasing of Jesus to the wrath of enemies directed by Satan did not indicate total abandonment. Jehovah continued to show affection for Jesus, as proved on the third day when He raised his Son, which Jesus had known would occur.—Acts 2:31-36; 10:40; 17:31.

Connected to the foregoing is a likely second reason for Jesus' utterance while on the stake, that by using these words he could fulfill a prophetic indication about the Messiah. Hours earlier Jesus told the apostles that things

would happen "just as it is written concerning him." (Matthew 26:24; Mark 14:21) Yes, he wanted to carry out the things that were written, including things in Psalm 22. You may find it revealing to compare Psalm 22:7, 8 —Matthew 27:39, 43; Psalm 22:15—John 19:28, 29; Psalm 22:16—Mark 15:25 and John 20:27; Psalm 22:18—Matthew 27:35. Psalm 22, which gave so many prophetic indications of the Messiah's experiences, begins: "My God, my God, why have you left me?" Hence, when Jesus cried out as he did, he was adding to the record of prophecies that he fulfilled.—Luke 24:44.

The psalmist did not believe that his God had simply rejected or abandoned him, for David went on to say that he would 'declare God's name to his brothers,' and he urged others to praise Jehovah. (Psalm 22:22, 23) Similarly, Jesus, who knew Psalm 22 well, also had reason for confidence that his Father still approved of him and loved him, despite what God allowed him to experience on the stake.

During a Bible talk, a minister said that Christians should set personal goals and then strive to meet them. A four-year-old girl who heard the talk announced to her parents the following morning that she had set the goal of listening to the entire 256-page *My Book of Bible Stories* that is recorded on tapes. Her mother writes:

"Since this time she has started school, and her teacher says that she is the best oral reader they have ever heard."