

The **Watchtower**
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

January 15, 1989

**ARE YOU OPEN
TO NEW IDEAS?**

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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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Why be open to new ideas?

AS A curtain of haze gradually lifted, the American commodore Matthew C. Perry viewed Mount Fuji from the deck of his flagship, the *Susquehanna*. He had been longing to see Japan and had finally reached it on July 8, 1853, after more than seven months of navigation. The commodore had studied every available report on the country. Why? Because he hoped to open this "self-isolated kingdom" to the world.

Self-isolated, indeed! More than 200 years earlier, Japan had cut off trade and cultural ties with all countries except China, Korea, and Holland. The nation then sat back in undisturbed complacency. In that state, it resembled many individuals who resist new ideas and refuse to listen to opinions differing from their own. In some ways, this can be comforting, for new ideas can be unsettling, even frightening. But is such a position wise? Well, consider the results of Japan's policy of exclusion.

What Led to Japan's Seclusion?

Japan did not seclude herself without reason. In 1549, Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier arrived in Japan to spread his religion. Within a short period, the Roman

Catholic faith became prominent in the land. The rulers of that time had experienced religious rebellion by a Buddhist sect and saw the same potential among Catholics. Hence, Catholicism was banned, although the ban was not strictly enforced.

Claiming that Japan was "the divine nation," the rulers had no intention of permitting a "Christian" religion to threaten their system. Why, then, did they not more rigidly enforce the ban on Catholicism? Because Catholic missionaries came on Portuguese trading ships, and the government craved the profits that those vessels meant for them. Nevertheless, fear that Catholics would influence the Japanese gradually outweighed the rulers' desire for trade. Thus, they issued edicts tightening control on foreign trade, emigration, and "Christians."

When persecuted and hard-pressed "Christians" revolted against a local feudal lord, it was the last straw. Viewing the uprising as a direct result of Catholic propaganda, the central Shogunate government expelled the Portuguese and forbade the Japanese to go abroad. With the issuing of this edict in 1639, the seclusion of Japan became a reality.

The only Westerners allowed to

continue trading with Japan were the Dutch, who were squeezed onto Dejima, then a small island in Nagasaki harbor. For 200 years, Western culture leaked into Japan only through now reclaimed Dejima. Each year, the island's trading-post director submitted the "Dutch Report," which let the government know what was going on in the outside world. But the Shogunate regime made sure that nobody else saw these reports. So the Japanese lived in isolation until Commodore Perry banged on their door in 1853.

The End of Seclusion

As Perry's great black ships steamed into Edo Bay, they belched out smoke, dumbfounding local fishermen who thought these were moving volcanoes. The citizens of Edo (now Tokyo) panicked, and many fled the city with their furniture. This exodus was so great that the government had to issue an official notice to calm the people.

Not only the steamships commanded by Commodore Perry but also the gifts he brought stunned the isolated people. They were astounded by a demonstration of messages being telegraphed from one building to another. The *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan*, compiled under Perry's supervision, tells about Japanese officials who could not resist jumping on a Lilliputian locomotive that "could hardly carry a child of six years of age." Even "a dignified mandarin" clung to its roof "with his loose robes flying in the wind."

The door to Japan was finally wrenched completely open by Perry's second visit the following year. Succumbing to pressure, the government opened up the country. Diehard exclusionists who wanted to preserve Japan's isolation resorted to terrorism, assassinated the chief minister of the

government, and attacked foreigners. Some exclusionist lords opened fire on foreign fleets. Their assaults, however, eventually subsided, and the emperor took over the government from the Tokugawa Shogunate.

By the time Perry opened the door to Japan, Western nations had already gone through the Industrial Revolution. Because of Japan's seclusion, she had been left far behind. Industrialized countries had harnessed the power of steam. By the 1830's, steam engines and steam-powered machines were in general use. Japan's seclusion policy had caused her to lag greatly in industrialization. This was keenly felt by the first Japanese delegation to Europe. At an exhibition held in London in 1862, Japanese exhibits were of paper and wood such as "would be displayed at an antique shop," according to one embarrassed delegate.

Japanese delegates in Europe and the United States felt a desperate need to industrialize their country and eagerly introduced modern inventions and ideas. Sixty-four years after Perry's first visit, the last surviving member of his crew visited Japan and said: "The progress of Japan within just over sixty years astounded me."

Hence, Japan's seclusion policy greatly limited her potential for growth. Opening her doors to new ideas proved beneficial to the nation in many ways. Today, however, some in Japan point to a "seclusion of mind" among individuals and present this as a problem to be solved. Indeed, conquering the tendency to resist new ideas is a challenge not only for the modern Japanese but for all humans. How about you and the matter of "seclusion of mind"? Would you benefit from opening your mind to new ideas, as Japan did back in the 1850's?

Are you open to new ideas?

SOME people close their mind to any new idea. They may reject it because it differs from their viewpoint. For instance, a certain woman in Denmark wrote to the weekly journal *Hjemmet* and said: "We are constantly haunted by Jehovah's Witnesses at our door. They irritate me terribly, but I can't figure out how I can get them to leave. . . . Couldn't their pestering be forbidden by law?"

To the Japanese of the mid-19th century, the knock at their door by the West was also viewed as "pestering." In the eyes of many of them, everything having to do with the intruders was worthless or even harmful. As an Oriental proverb says, "Suspicion creates monsters in the dark." The frame of mind of many Japanese was well illustrated in their drawings depicting Commodore Perry. Out of some 50 that remain, only 2 or 3 represent him as an ordinary U.S. naval officer. The others depict him as a long-nosed goblin or a pale-faced monster, as illustrated here.

With the opening of their country, however, open-minded Japanese came to realize that the foreigners were not barbarians. In the case of some on the first Japanese mission to the United States, it was as though scales fell from their eyes as they saw Western culture firsthand. Higher officials kept complaining about how impolite the Americans were from a Japanese point of view. But the younger

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Library of Congress photo LC-USC62-7258

generation made a more balanced judgment of the new culture.

One 19-year-old attendant of a high official later wrote: "Most of the 70 Japanese delegates on this mission resented or hated [the Americans]. However, on witnessing the real conditions, individuals among us realized they had been mistaken and regretted harboring such feelings. Considering foreigners as being as base as dogs or horses and insulting them will only win from them the notoriety of our being unmerciful and unrighteous." Are you open-minded enough to look at new thoughts with as unprejudiced an attitude as that of this young attendant?

The Example of the Bereans

In the first century C.E., many Jews harbored an unreasoning prejudice against Christian teachings. In some ways, it resembled the prejudice of seclusionist Japanese against the outside world.

"Everywhere [Christianity] is spoken against," claimed the Jews in ancient Rome. (Acts 28:22) Concerning certain Christians in the city of Thessalonica, biased Jews cried out: "These men that have overturned the inhabited earth are present here also."—Acts 17:6.

Nevertheless, there were people willing to look beyond their prejudices. For example, how did residents of Berea respond to the good news preached by the apostle Paul and his associate Silas? Regarding the Bereans, the Bible writer Luke said: "The latter were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11) Are you "noble-minded" like the Bereans?

Please consider the case of Masaji. At one time, he bore a strong animosity toward Christianity. He was like the exclusionists who opposed the opening of Japan. When his wife, Sachiko, started to study the Bible, he violently opposed her. He even thought of killing his family and then committing suicide. Because of his violence, his family had to flee to the home of Sachiko's older brother in northern Japan.

Finally, Masaji decided to open his mind a little and investigate his wife's religion. After reading some Bible literature, he saw the need to make changes. As he studied the Scriptures, his violent attitude changed into one that reflected the fruitage of God's spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Masaji hesitated to attend meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses because he feared that the Witnesses might seek revenge for his violence against them. But when he finally visited a Kingdom Hall, he was welcomed with such warmth that he burst into tears.

Yes, overcoming prejudice and examining new ideas can widen our horizon and may benefit us in other ways. However,

does that mean that we have to be open to every new idea that comes along?

Be Selective!

With the end of Japan's seclusion, new ideas poured into the country. Some of these benefited the Japanese, but they would have been better off without others. "Against the intentions of Commodore Perry," said U.S. general Douglas MacArthur upon accepting Japan's surrender after World War II, "Japan turned the knowledge of the West into an instrument of oppression and slavery." Imitating its Western mentors, Japan embarked on a course that led her into a series of wars. These culminated in World War II, at the end of which two atom bombs were dropped on Japanese territory.

What can we learn from this? That we should be selective about accepting new ideas. We would do well to imitate the Bereans by "carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things [taught by Paul] were so." (Acts 17:11) The Greek word here rendered "examining" means to "make careful and exact research as in legal processes." (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, by A. T. Robertson) Rather than blindly accepting every new idea presented to us, we need to do careful and exact research, just as a judge would in hearing a legal case.

If we are selective, we will not be swayed by every passing fad or by new ideas that are really harmful. For instance, what was called the new morality of the 1960's seemed to be an appealing new idea to some. But careful scrutiny would have revealed it to be harmful old immorality under a new name. Also, in economically troubled Germany of the 1920's, doubtless many viewed Nazism as an exciting new idea, but what agony it caused!

Happily, God has provided a touchstone

that can be used to test new ideas. It is his inspired Word, the Bible. Applying its guidelines to family life and human relationships will help us to check many of the new ideas heard today from sociologists, psychologists, and others who claim expertise in these fields. (Ephesians 5:21-6:4; Colossians 3:5-14) The Bible's counsel regarding our relationship with God and neighbor gives us a means of checking many of the novel ideas now being spread on the subject of religion. (Mark 12:28-31) Accurate Bible knowledge will equip us to determine whether a new idea is of real

value or not. We will then be able to 'make sure of all things and hold fast to what is fine.'—1 Thessalonians 5:21.

Jehovah's Witnesses visit their neighbors to encourage them to learn about the Bible and thus be able to judge new ideas properly. The Witnesses also point out Bible thoughts that are new to many. Among these is the truth about the times we are living in and what the future really holds for mankind. (Matthew 24:3-44; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Revelation 21:3, 4) So do not adopt a seclusionist attitude when the Witnesses call at your home. Rather, why not open your door and listen to what they have to say? Do not close your mind to ideas that can be of eternal benefit to you.



Searching for the Lost

JESUS is eager to seek and find those who will humbly serve God. So he searches out and talks to everyone about the Kingdom, including notorious sinners. Such persons now draw near to listen to him.

Observing this, the Pharisees and scribes criticize Jesus for keeping company with people whom they consider unworthy. They mutter: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." How beneath their dignity that is! The Pharisees and scribes treat common people like dirt under their feet. In fact, they used the Hebrew expression *'am ha'a'rets*, "people of the earth [land]," to show their disdain for such ones.

On the other hand, Jesus treats everyone with dignity, kindness, and compassion. As a result, many of these lowly ones, including persons well known for practicing wrongdoing, are eager to listen to him. But what of the Pharisees' criticism of Jesus for expending efforts in behalf of those they consider unworthy?

Jesus answers their objection by using an illustration. He speaks from the Pharisees' own viewpoint, that they are righteous and are safe in the fold of God, while the despicable *'am ha'a'rets* have gone astray and are in a lost state. Listen as he asks:

"What man of you with a hundred sheep, on losing one of them, will not leave the ninety-nine behind in the wilderness and go for the lost one until he finds it? And when he has found it he puts it upon his shoulders and rejoices.

And when he gets home he calls his friends and his neighbors together, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost.'"

Jesus then makes the application of his story, explaining: "I tell you that thus there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who have no need of repentance."

The Pharisees consider themselves to be righteous and thus to have no need of repentance. When some of them criticized Jesus a couple of years earlier for eating with tax collectors and sinners, he told them: "I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners." The self-righteous Pharisees, who fail to see their need to repent, bring no joy in heaven. But truly repentant sinners do.

To make doubly strong the point that the restoration of lost sinners is a





How remarkable this loving concern of God's angels for the restoration of lost sinners! Especially is this so since these once lowly, despised *'am ha-a'rets* eventually come into line for membership in God's heavenly Kingdom. As a result, they attain a position in heaven higher than that of the angels themselves! But rather than feeling jealous or slighted, the angels humbly appreciate the fact that these sinful humans have faced and overcome situations in life that will equip them to serve as sympathetic and merciful heavenly kings and priests. **Luke 15:1-10; Matthew 9:13; 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3; Revelation 20:6.**

- ♦ Why does Jesus associate with known sinners, drawing what criticism from the Pharisees?
- ♦ How do the Pharisees view the common people?
- ♦ What illustrations does Jesus use, and what can we learn from them?
- ♦ Why is the rejoicing of the angels remarkable?

cause for great rejoicing, Jesus relates another illustration. He says: "What woman with ten drachma coins, if she loses one drachma coin, does not light a lamp and sweep her house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it she calls the women who are her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found the drachma coin that I lost.'"

Jesus then gives a similar application, saying: "Thus, I tell you, joy arises among the angels of God over one sinner that repents."



What Prevents You From Getting Baptized?

JEHOVAH'S angel had spoken, and something noteworthy was taking place on the desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza. Seated in a moving chariot was an Ethiopian reading the Scriptures. Soon another man was running alongside the vehicle. "Do you actually know what you are reading?" he asked. "Really," responded the Ethiopian, "how could I ever do so, unless someone guided me?" That guidance was provided by Philip the evangelizer, who had been sent by the angel. Once aboard the chariot, Philip started with a prophecy penned by Isaiah and declared "the good news about Jesus."

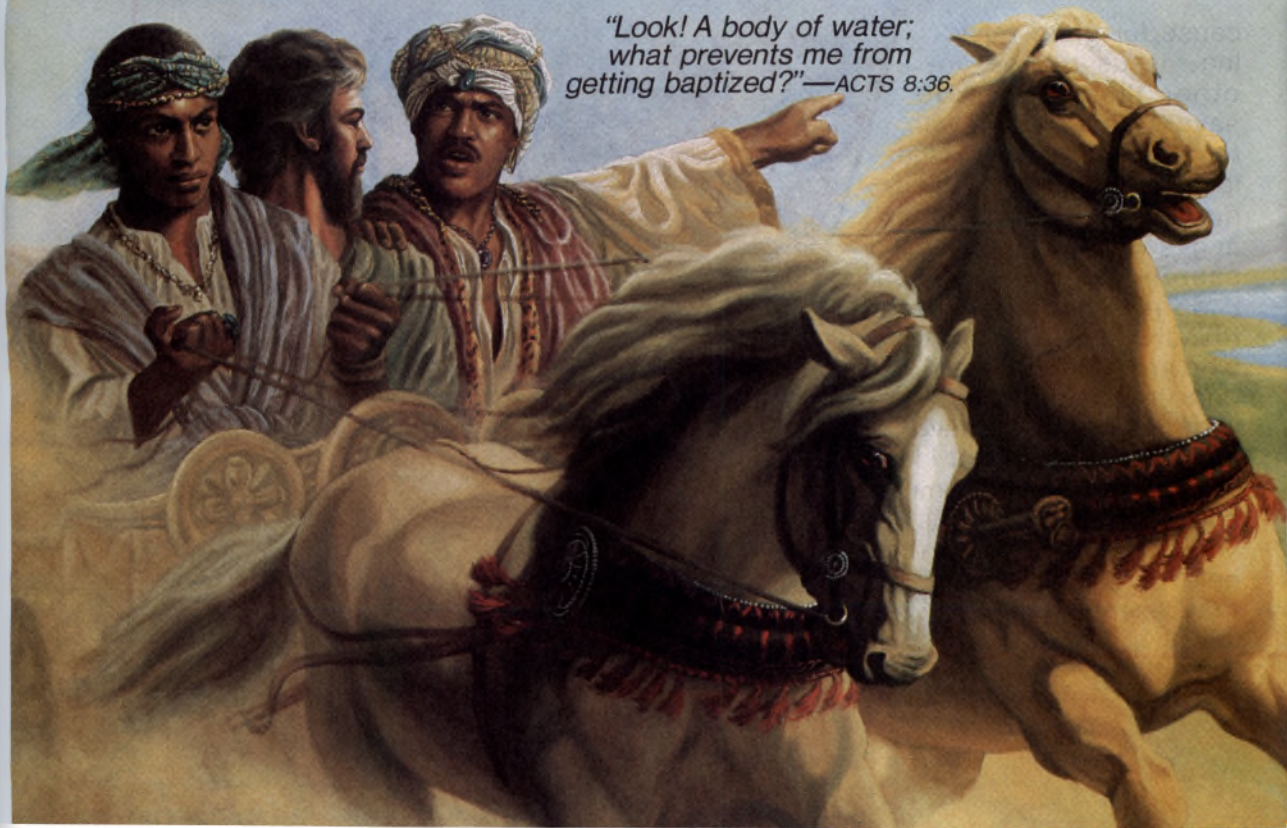
1. What was happening on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza?

² At one point along the road, the Ethiopian exclaimed: "Look! A body of water; what prevents me from getting baptized?" At that, he commanded the chariot to halt. Both men entered the water and Philip baptized him. Then Jehovah's spirit led the evangelizer elsewhere, and the Ethiopian went his way rejoicing.—Acts 8:26-39.

³ If you are associating with Jehovah's Witnesses but have not been baptized, these events may prompt you to ask: Why was the Ethiopian baptized so quickly? How should baptism be performed? Of

2, 3. (a) How did the Ethiopian respond to the good news? (b) What questions does this incident raise?

"Look! A body of water; what prevents me from getting baptized?"—ACTS 8:36.



what is it a symbol? And what prevents me from getting baptized?

Not Baptized Too Soon

⁴ Since the Ethiopian “had gone to Jerusalem to worship,” he was a circumcised Jewish proselyte. He was a “eunuch” but not in a fleshly sense, for sexually mutilated men were excluded from the Israelite congregation. (Deuteronomy 23:1) In his case, “eunuch” denoted an officer, for he was ‘a man in power under Queen Candace of the Ethiopians and was over all her treasure.’—Acts 8:27.

⁵ The Ethiopian was a man of the nations. Since he had been converted to the Jewish religion, however, he could be baptized as a disciple of Christ before the Kingdom message went to uncircumcised Gentiles like Cornelius in 36 C.E. As a Jewish proselyte, the Ethiopian knew about God and His Word, though he needed spiritual help. So Philip was directed to preach to this man and could baptize him before the good news went to Gentiles.

Early Christian Baptism

⁶ How was the Ethiopian baptized? The word “baptize” comes from the Greek term *ba-pti'zo*, meaning “dip, plunge.” A form of the same word is used for “plunge” at 2 Kings 5:14 in the Greek *Septuagint*. And it is noteworthy that the Ethiopian requested baptism when he and Philip came to a “body of water.” For the baptism, they “went down into the water,” afterward coming “up out of” it. (Acts 8:36-39) Therefore, the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized by being immersed in water.

⁷ Jesus himself was baptized by under-

going water immersion. Thus, after his baptism in the Jordan River, it is said that he “came up from the water.” (Matthew 3:13, 16) In fact, as a suitable place to perform baptisms, John the Baptizer had chosen a location in the Jordan Valley near Salim. Why? “Because there was a great quantity of water there.” (John 3:23) The Scriptures therefore authorize baptism in a body of water.

⁸ We can draw some sound conclusions regarding baptism if we consider customs of the Pharisees and other Jews. The Gospel writer Mark said: “When back from market, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves by sprinkling [Greek, *ran-ti'zo*]; and there are many other traditions that they have received to hold fast, baptisms [*ba-pti-smous*'] of cups and pitchers and copper vessels.” (Mark 7:3, 4) These men sanctimoniously *sprinkled* themselves before eating when they returned from the market. But they *baptized*, or immersed in water, the various objects they used during meals.

⁹ Even after apostasy had made inroads, the church father Tertullian (c. 160-230 C.E.) said concerning baptism: “There is absolutely nothing which makes men’s minds more obdurate than the simplicity of the divine works which are visible in the *act*, when compared with the grandeur which is promised thereto in the *effect*; so that from the very fact, that with so great simplicity, without pomp, without any considerable novelty of preparation, finally, without expense, a man is dipped in water, and amid the utterance of some few words, is sprinkled, and then rises again, not much (or not at all) the cleaner, the consequent attainment of eternity is esteemed the more incredible.” Note that

8. Regarding baptism, what can we conclude from practices of the Pharisees and other Jews?
9. What did Tertullian say about baptism?

4. Who was this Ethiopian?
5. Why could the Ethiopian eunuch be baptized so quickly?
6. How was the Ethiopian baptized, and why do you so answer?
7. What precedent was there for baptism by water immersion?

Tertullian said, "a man is dipped in water . . . and then rises again."

¹⁰ Scholars also show that Christians originally baptized people by total immersion in water. A noted French encyclopedia says: "The first Christians received baptism by immersion everywhere water was found." And *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "The most ancient form usually employed was unquestionably immersion."—Volume II, page 261 (1907 edition).

To Teach and Baptize

¹¹ Before a person is baptized, he must acquire and act on accurate knowledge. This was made clear when Christ told his followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

¹² Being baptized "in the name of the Father" means that the baptismal candidate recognizes God's office and authority. Jehovah is acknowledged as "the Most High over all the earth," the Creator and Universal Sovereign. (Psalm 36:9; 83:18; 2 Kings 19:15) Such a person also accepts Jehovah as his Judge, Statute-Giver, and King.—Isaiah 33:22; Psalm 119:102; Revelation 15:3, 4.

¹³ To be baptized 'in the name of the Son' means to acknowledge Christ's office and authority and recognize him as the one through whom God has provided "a cor-

10. What do scholars say about the earliest mode of Christian baptism?

11. Jesus gave his disciples what commission?

12. What does it mean to be baptized "in the name of the Father"?

13. Being baptized 'in the name of the Son' means what?

responding ransom." (1 Timothy 2:5, 6) After Jesus' death as an integrity keeper, "God exalted him to a superior position," and those desiring baptism must acknowledge Christ as "Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11) They must also accept Jesus as Jehovah's "Faithful Witness" and as the "King of kings."—Revelation 1:5; 19:16.

¹⁴ An individual must also be baptized 'in the name of the holy spirit.' He must realize that the holy spirit is not a person but is God's active force, used in creation, to inspire Bible writers, and so forth. (Genesis 1:2; 2 Samuel 23:1, 2; 2 Peter 1:21) Jehovah's spirit must be recognized as being vital if we are to comprehend "the deep things of God" and display the godly fruitage of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." (1 Corinthians 2:10; Galatians 5:22, 23) It must also be acknowledged that God's spirit is needed to carry on the Kingdom-preaching work.—Joel 2:28, 29.

What Baptism Symbolizes

¹⁵ It was with the backing of the holy spirit that John the Baptizer immersed people. (Acts 13:24) He baptized them, not to wash away their sins, but in symbol of their repentance. (Acts 19:4) John also baptized Jesus, who "committed no sin." (1 Peter 2:22) And Ananias urged Saul of Tarsus: "Rise, get baptized and wash your sins away by your calling upon [Jesus'] name." (Acts 22:12-16) Hence, Christian water immersion does not wash away sins. Not baptism but the pouring out of Jesus' blood and "calling upon his name" make forgiveness possible.—Hebrews 9:22; 1 John 1:7.

14. Baptism 'in the name of the holy spirit' requires what?

15. Why is it that Christian baptism does not wash away sins?

¹⁶ Although Christian baptism does not wash sins away, it is a symbol indicating that the individual being immersed in water has made an unconditional dedication to Jehovah God through Jesus Christ. (Compare Matthew 16:24.) To dedicate means "to declare, to affirm, to devote." Dedication to God refers to the act whereby a person is unreservedly set apart by an agreement to do God's will through Christ. Figuratively, when the baptismal candidate is temporarily "buried" under the water and then lifted out of it, he dies to his previous course and is raised to a new way of life, to do Jehovah's will unreservedly. —Compare Romans 6:4-6.

¹⁷ Clearly, baptism is a serious step. Baptizing an infant is wrong because a baby cannot understand, make a decision, and become a disciple. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Those baptized during Philip's ministry in Samaria were "men and women," not mere infants. (Acts 8:4-8, 12) Baptism is for those old enough to learn, believe, and exercise faith. (John 17:3; Acts 5:14; 18:8; Hebrews 11:6) In this regard, historian Augustus Neander wrote: "Faith and baptism were always connected with one another; and thus it is in the highest degree probable . . . that the practice of infant baptism was unknown [in the first century C.E.]. . . . That it first became recognised as an apostolic tradition in the course of the third century, is evidence rather *against* than *for* the admission of its apostolic origin."—*History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles* (New York, 1864), page 162.

¹⁸ The Scriptures repeatedly mention the

16. (a) Since baptism does not wash sins away, what does it symbolize? (b) Figuratively, what happens when a person is baptized?

17. Why is infant baptism improper?

18. (a) Scripturally, what is required to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses? (b) What evidence of faith would indicate that a person may be baptized? (c) How is faith in the ransom emphasized for baptismal candidates?

baptism of believers. (Acts 4:4; 5:14; 8:13; 16:27-34; 18:8; 19:1-7) To become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, then, a person must be a believer—one who exercises faith and gets baptized. Even before baptism, such faith manifests itself in godly conduct, trust in Jehovah, participation in the Kingdom-preaching work, and acceptance of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. Faith in the ransom is emphasized for baptismal candidates, for the first of two questions the speaker asks them is: "On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?" Only if the individual answers in the affirmative and also understands that his dedication and baptism identify him as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization can he acceptably undergo water immersion.

Dedication in Prayer

¹⁹ Those undergoing baptism must have faith in God and Christ. But why do Jehovah's Witnesses say that a dedication to God should be made in prayer? Because it is fitting to express to Jehovah in prayer our decision to give him the exclusive devotion he deserves. (Deuteronomy 5:8, 9; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13) It was evidently in prayer that Jesus made known his desire to render sacred service exclusively to his heavenly Father. (Hebrews 10:7-9) Why, Jesus "was praying" even while being baptized! (Luke 3:21, 22) So it is clear that a dedication to God should be made in prayer.

²⁰ Early Christians apparently urged new disciples to make a dedication in prayer, for even later Tertullian said: "They who are

19. Why make a dedication to Jehovah in prayer?

20. Why is it likely that the early Christians urged new disciples to make a dedication to God in prayer?

about to enter baptism ought to pray with repeated prayers, fasts, and bendings of the knee." Earlier, Justin Martyr (c. 100-165 C.E.) wrote: "I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ . . . As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them."

²¹ If making a dedication in prayer was not stressed when you were baptized years ago, that does not necessarily invalidate your baptism. Even in those days, doubtless many were like one man who vividly recalls kneeling and making his dedication to Jehovah in earnest prayer while still a mere lad more than 40 years ago. And at that time, even if a person had not made a dedication in a formal prayer earlier, he did make it a prayerful matter as baptismal candidates and others prayed together when the baptism talk was given on the day of his immersion.

Why Some Hold Back

²² Since being a dedicated witness of Jehovah is such a blessed privilege, why do some hold back from getting baptized? Lack of true love is one reason why some do not obey God's Word, follow Jesus' lead, and get baptized. (1 John 5:3) Of course, unbaptized persons usually do not say that they will not follow Jesus' example or obey God. Rather, they remain so involved in worldly affairs that they have little time for spiritual pursuits. If this could be your

21. What is probable, even if making a dedication in prayer was not stressed when you were baptized some years ago?

22. Why do some hold back from getting baptized?

problem, would it not be wise to change your affections, interests, and aspirations? Those who really love God cannot also be loving this world. (1 John 2:15-17) And do not allow yourself to be lulled into a false sense of security through "the deceptive power of riches." (Matthew 13:22) True security is found only in a dedicated relationship with Jehovah God.—Psalm 4:8.

²³ Others claim to love God but hold back from making a dedication because they feel that they thus avoid responsibility and will not be held accountable. They would like to live in Paradise, but so far they are doing little or nothing about it. (Proverbs 13:4) Such individuals cannot avoid accountability because responsibility came upon them when they heard the word of Jehovah. (Ezekiel 33:7-9) If they were to make a dedication, they would demonstrate that they understand God's will and are eager to do it. Instead of placing a heavier load upon them, such obedience would call forth Jehovah's blessing and would result in joy because they would be

23. Why do others refrain from making a dedication to Jehovah and symbolizing it by water immersion?

Questions for Review

- ☐ Why could the Ethiopian eunuch be baptized so soon?
- ☐ What was the mode of baptism among the early Christians?
- ☐ Being baptized 'in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit' means what?
- ☐ What does Christian baptism symbolize?
- ☐ Why make a dedication to Jehovah in prayer?
- ☐ For what reasons do some hold back from dedication and baptism?

living up to their claim that they love him.

²⁴ A feeling that they do not know enough to explain the Scriptures causes still others to avoid baptism. But the Ethiopian eunuch was ready to symbolize his dedication to God after a discussion with Philip during a chariot ride. Surely, the Ethiopian could not initially answer all the questions of those to whom he spoke the truth. But his heart overflowed with gratitude for what he had heard, and he did not hold back in fear. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love throws fear outside." (1 John 4:18) Not a head full of answers but a heart full of love moves a person to

24. For what reason do still others hold back from getting baptized?

make a dedication to God and get baptized. —Luke 10:25-28.

²⁵ If you are not yet baptized, ask yourself: What does God expect of those who say they love him? He wants exclusive devotion and is looking for those who will worship him "with spirit and truth." (John 4:23, 24; Exodus 20:4, 5; Luke 4:8) The Ethiopian eunuch rendered that kind of worship, and he did not delay when afforded an opportunity to undergo baptism. Should you not make dedication to Jehovah a matter of earnest prayer right now and ask yourself: "What prevents me from getting baptized?"

25. What does Jehovah God expect of those professing to love him?

How Baptism Can Save Us

"Immersion . . . saves us."—1 PETER 3:21, *The Emphatic Diaglott*.

JEHOVAH has specific requirements for those seeking salvation. They must acquire accurate knowledge, exercise faith, repent of their sins, be converted, make a dedication to God, and undergo baptism as believers. (John 3:16; 17:3; Acts 3:19; 18:8) Baptismal candidates must acknowledge publicly that on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice they have repented of their sins and have dedicated themselves to Jehovah. They must also understand that dedication and baptism identify them as Jehovah's Witnesses.

² The entire baptismal arrangement, including this public expression of faith, is essential for salvation. (Romans 10:10) This was confirmed when the apostle Peter

1, 2. What is required before a person undergoes water baptism?

wrote: "Immersion . . . saves us." (1 Peter 3:21, *ED*) But exactly how should we understand these words? What does the context show?

How Baptism Saves

³ Peter indicated that as a resurrected spirit, Jesus preached a condemnatory message to the wicked spirits in prison, demons reserved in eternal bonds for the judgment of Jehovah's great day. They disobeyed by materializing fleshly bodies and cohabiting with women "when the patience of God was waiting in Noah's days, while the ark was being constructed, in which a few people, that is, eight souls [Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives],

3. In your own words, how would you summarize 1 Peter 3:18-21?

were carried safely through the water.” Peter added: “That which corresponds to this is also now saving you, namely, baptism, (not [just the necessary] putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the request made to God for a good conscience,) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”—1 Peter 3:18-21; Genesis 6:1, 2; 2 Peter 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

⁴ What did Peter mean when he said, “That which corresponds to this”? He meant that baptism founded on faith corresponds to the preservation of Noah and his family, who were carried safely through the floodwaters that destroyed those outside the ark. As Noah needed faith to build the ark, all who become baptized disciples of Jesus Christ and witnesses of Jehovah must have faith to withstand pressures brought against them by this faithless world and its god, Satan the Devil.—Hebrews 11:6, 7; 1 John 5:19.

⁵ Baptism itself is not what saves. And though we must ‘put away the filth of the flesh,’ that alone does not save us. Rather, salvation is “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Baptismal candidates must

have faith that salvation is possible only because God’s Son died a sacrificial death and was resurrected. They must also accept Jesus as their Lord having authority to judge the living and the dead. “He is at God’s right hand,” said Peter, “for he went his way to heaven; and angels and authorities and powers were made subject to him.”—1 Peter 3:22.

⁶ Peter also associated baptism with “the request made to God for a good conscience.” To acquire a good conscience, an immersion candidate must repent of his sins, turn around from a wrong course, and make an unreserved dedication to Jehovah God in prayer through Jesus Christ. If a baptized person maintains that good conscience by conforming to God’s standards, he remains in a saved condition that does not call for Jehovah’s condemnatory judgment.

6. To acquire a good conscience, what must a baptismal candidate have done?

4. To what was Peter referring when he said, “That which corresponds to this”?

5. How is it that salvation is “through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”?



Do you know how baptism corresponds to the preservation of Noah and his family in the ark?

Qualifying for Baptism

⁷ When Jesus commissioned his followers to baptize disciples, he did not tell them to sprinkle unbelievers by the thousands. But what have Christendom's missionaries done? Regarding India, Jesuit Francis Xavier wrote in 1545: "In the kingdom of Travancore . . . in the space of a few months I have baptized more than ten thousand men, women, and children. . . . I went from village to village and made Christians of them." That is not Jesus' way to 'make Christians.' People must qualify for baptism.

⁸ Even certain professed Christians of the post-apostolic period believed that those presenting themselves for baptism had to meet strict requirements. Concerning such baptismal candidates, non-Biblical canons, erroneously ascribed to the apostle Paul, say: "Let their manners and their life be inquired into . . . If they be unmarried, let them learn not to commit fornication, but to enter into lawful marriage. . . . If a harlot come, let her leave off whoredom, or else let her be rejected. If a maker of idols come, let him either leave off his employment, or let him be rejected. . . . He that is guilty of sins not to be named, . . . a magician, an enchanter, an astrologer, a diviner, an user of magic verses, . . . one that makes amulets, a charmer, a soothsayer, a fortune-teller, an observer of palmistry . . . , let these be proved for some time . . . and if they leave off those practices, let them be received; but if they will not agree to that, let them be rejected."

⁹ Jehovah's Witnesses do not follow unscriptural writings, such as that just quot-

ed, but elders do hold discussions with those desiring to be baptized. Why? To make sure that these persons are believers who meet divine requirements and who have made a dedication to Jehovah. (Acts 4:4; 18:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:2) Discussing questions in the book *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry* helps to determine whether a person qualifies for baptism. If some points are not clear to him, or he has not brought his life into harmony with divine standards, the elders are pleased to render spiritual assistance.

¹⁰ If we appreciate God's kindness in helping us to learn about his purposes, we will be like people to whom Paul preached in Antioch, Asia Minor. Despite Jewish opposition, "when those of the nations [Gentiles] heard [of the opportunity to be accepted by God], they began to rejoice and to glorify the word of Jehovah, and all those who were rightly disposed for everlasting life became believers." (Acts 13:48) Such believers got baptized.

Baptism in Youth

¹¹ Those "rightly disposed for everlasting life" include some young people. It may be noted that although Samuel and John the Baptizer were devoted to God before birth, parents cannot make a dedication for their children. (1 Samuel 1:11, 24-28; 2:11, 18, 19; Luke 1:15, 66) But as a result of good Bible training, many young people progress to baptism. A missionary sister baptized as a teenager wrote: "It seems to me that I was dedicated to serve my Creator from the very age of realization that he existed, but with the acquisition of some accurate knowledge of him and his purposes, I wanted to be baptized in outward testimony of that fact. Nevertheless,

10. If we wish to be baptized, what attitude should we have?

11. Is it proper to make a dedication to God as a young person, and why do you so answer?

7. As to baptism, what have Christendom's missionaries done?

8. What did the so-called canons of Paul say about those presenting themselves for baptism?

9. Why do congregation elders hold discussions with a person desiring to be baptized?



***Dedication and baptism benefit young persons.
Do you know how?***

Mother doubted that I knew what I was doing, so she suggested that I wait until someone else was ready to be baptized." A woman desiring baptism was found, and the sister adds: "There were no classes of special instruction for the candidates in those days, although the Society-appointed Service Director . . . did talk to me kindly about the seriousness of the step I was taking. I eagerly agreed to all the terms laid down, and on a bright Sunday morning in May 1921 [the woman] and I were baptized."

¹² In 1914, C. T. Russell (then president of the Watch Tower Society) received a letter in which a fellow Christian asked if his 12-year-old son should be urged to make a dedication to God. "If I were you," Russell responded, "I would not press consecration [dedication] upon him, but I would hold it up before his mind as the only proper course for all intelligent people who have come to a knowledge of God and his gracious purposes . . . Without consecration none will ever gain everlasting life . . . Your son cannot be

12. How did Brother Russell view dedication by a minor?

injured by consecration, but may be greatly helped. . . . Who shall say that a child of ten may not very fully and completely come to an appreciation of full consecration in thought and word and act? Looking back I can see that my whole consecration was first made at a little advance—beyond twelve years of age."

¹³ *Zion's Watch Tower* of July 1, 1894, said: "To all the dear children and young people who have given their hearts to God, and who are trying daily to follow Jesus, the *WATCH TOWER* sends its greeting. We know some of the very little ones who love Jesus, and who are not ashamed to stand up for Jesus among other children who do not love him or try to please him; and who are brave and true to God, even when laughed at and thought peculiar by their schoolmates to whom they tell the good news of the kingdom. And we are rejoiced to see some young people, who have bravely renounced the world and its ambitions and pleasures, among the most faithful of those who have [dedicated] their lives to the Lord. Some of our office helpers, as well as many of the successful colporteurs, are still young in years." Even if you are still young, why not talk to your parents about dedication to Jehovah God?

The Role of Parents

¹⁴ Consider benefits enjoyed by children who receive parental guidance that leads to baptism. (Ephesians 6:4) Thinking on spiritual

13. What did this journal say to young ones some 94 years ago?

14. What benefits are enjoyed by young people who make a dedication to Jehovah?

matters helps them to escape worldly snares and entanglements. (1 John 2: 15-17) They do not reap the bitter harvest that results from 'sowing with a view to the flesh.' (Galatians 6:7, 8) Since they have been taught to live a godly life, they display the fruits of God's spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23) Being dedicated to God, they enjoy a close relationship with him. And because they have learned to "trust in Jehovah," they are guided by heavenly wisdom and walk in ways of pleasantness and peace.—Proverbs 3:5, 6, 13, 17.

¹⁵ Since dedication to Jehovah is so beneficial to young people, Christian parents should do all they can to shape the lives of their children. Like Timothy, young ones can be taught the Scriptures from infancy so that they 'continue in the things they have learned and were persuaded to believe.' (2 Timothy 3:14, 15) Godly parents can surround their offspring with the influence of their own exemplary lives, imparting to their young ones such knowledge as their own relationship with God, experience, and mature judgment can provide. When properly directed, these efforts are not lost on the young.—Proverbs 22:6.

¹⁶ By example and teaching, help your children to see how clearly the line is drawn between Jehovah's organization and that of Satan. Show them that there can be no compromising with this world, that Christians must renounce its underhanded things, godless pleasures, ambitions, and associations. (1 Corinthians 15: 33; 2 Corinthians 4:2) By your attitude, as well as your teaching and example, let your young ones see how hollow worldly pleasures are, how deluded people of the world are when compared with Jehovah's Witnesses. Explain how God has led you

by means of his holy spirit, has kept you from straying onto paths that would lead to distress, has sustained you in times of affliction and sorrow. Never make the mistake of thinking that if your young ones are allowed to run in worldly paths of pride, ambition, frivolity, and folly, they will become believers. Before this world can ensnare your children, shield them from its vile influences and help them to center their affections and hopes in Jehovah.

Looking Beyond Baptism

¹⁷ Whether young or old, undoubtedly a baptismal candidate wants to remain faithful to Jehovah. So why do some baptized Christians experience a spiritual relapse? Though various factors may be involved, there seems to be one fundamental cause—a failure to understand all that is meant by dedication. It is not a matter of dedicating ourselves to a *work*. That would keep us busy but would not make us spiritual persons. We need to remember that we are dedicated not to a work but to a *Person*—Jehovah God. This helps us to avoid the mistake of viewing our dedication as a perfunctory step we had to take before getting on with the work. Making a dedication should be viewed as entering into a vital *relationship* that must always be guarded and maintained. In this respect, we have the example of Jesus Christ. Expressing his heartfelt attitude when presenting himself to Jehovah are the prophetic words: "I have come . . . To do your will, O my God, I have delighted, and your law is within my inward parts." —Psalm 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-10.

¹⁸ How was it that Jehovah's law was

15. What can Christian parents do to shape the lives of their children?

16. What should your children see in your example and teaching?

17. (a) Why do some baptized Christians suffer a spiritual relapse? (b) How should we view our dedication?

18. How was God's law within Jesus' "inward parts"?

within Jesus' "inward parts"? He told a Jewish scribe that Jehovah our God is one and there is no other, thus stressing Jehovah's supremacy. Then Jesus showed that the essence of God's law consists of loving Jehovah with our whole heart, understanding, and strength, while loving our neighbor as ourselves. (Mark 12:28-34) That is the basic reason why Jesus could say, 'I delight to do God's will.' He was able to stick to his course faithfully despite the greatest tests and sufferings, not just because he saw this as a good work but because he had a close relationship with Jehovah God. If we similarly acknowledge Jehovah's supremacy and love him with unbreakable attachment, we will live up to our dedication and baptism.

¹⁹ There is, of course, a connection between our relationship with God and the work we do. We manifest love for Jehovah by doing the Kingdom-preaching work. In this regard, the late Grant Suiter, a former member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, once wrote: "As I listened to [a certain traveling overseer] speak of the privileges of serving Jehovah and the responsibility to do so, I realized what I should do and what I *wanted* to do. Thus I made a personal dedication to Jehovah, and about the same time the other members of my family did also. On October 10, 1926, in San Jose, California, all of us together symbolized our dedication to Jehovah God by undergoing water immersion. . . . After the baptism . . . my father said to the elder overseeing the baptism: 'You folks go out with the literature, don't you? We want to do that work, too, now.' So our family started out in the field ministry." Today, qualified persons begin to have a meaningful share in field service even before getting baptized.

19. What connection is there between our relationship with Jehovah and the work we do?

Baptism Can Save Us

²⁰ By our works, we can show that "we belong to Jehovah." Why, salvation depends on working faithfully as his dedicated slaves! (Romans 6:20-23; 14:7, 8) In ancient times, slaves were often marked on the forehead. By the preaching work today, the antitypical 'man clothed in linen'—the remnant of Jesus' anointed followers—is 'marking' those who will survive the end of this system. In this work the anointed are assisted by their associates, the "other sheep." (Ezekiel 9:1-7; John 10:16) And what is the "mark"? It is the evidence that we are dedicated to Jehovah and are Jesus' baptized disciples who have a Christlike personality.

²¹ Especially now is it vital that we have the "mark" and retain it, for we are deep into "the time of the end." (Daniel 12:4) To be saved we must 'endure to the end' of our present life or of this system. (Matthew 24:13) Only if we thus remain faithful as witnesses of Jehovah will baptism save us.

20, 21. (a) In what way are slaves of Jehovah 'marked'? (b) What is this "mark," and possessing it means what?

Questions for Review

- ☐ To be saved, what is required of us?
- ☐ Why do elders hold discussions with those wishing to be baptized?
- ☐ What can parents do to give their children spiritual guidance that leads to baptism?
- ☐ Do we make a dedication to a work?
- ☐ How can baptism save us?

THE ancient custom of paying a bride-price is still practiced in many lands. In most cases, payment is in the form of money, along with gifts of valuables. The value varies from place to place and from family to family, depending on social status, education, and other factors. It is set by law in some countries, although few people observe the fixed price.

Careful consideration shows that the modern custom involves more than paying a bride-price. Hence, it is wise to consider how this can affect you as a Christian.

BRIDE-PRICE

How Should Christians View It?



In Papua New Guinea, the bride-price payment is like a transfer of assets from one family group, the bridegroom's extended family, to the corresponding group on the bride's side of the marriage. The payment can range from \$100 to \$46,000, depending on the affluence of the bridegroom's family. In Sri Lanka, the situation is the reverse. The parents of the bride have to give a dowry to the bridegroom. This may include jewelry, property, house, and cash. So that the property will not get out of the family, it is customary to marry a first cousin.

In many parts of Africa, the payment is one of the customary requirements that makes a contract of marriage complete

and valid. "Among the Igbos," says a Nigerian father whose daughter was being prepared for marriage, "payment of the bride-price is essential for the marriage to have cultural recognition. Acceptance of it is a token of the consent of the girl's family. It satisfies the people's concept of marriage. For this reason, even a marriage contracted in a church or in the government registry would not be recognized in the local community unless the bride price was paid."

How It Can Affect the Father

Among these African people, the payment used to be a symbolic gesture demonstrating the man's ability to maintain a family. Members of his family would visit the girl's parents for token bargaining over the bride-price. In many areas this is no longer the case, as fathers now actually bargain for the highest price they can possibly get. Amounts ranging from about \$12, which is set by law in some areas of Nigeria, to \$1,400 or more are demanded. Money or gifts may even be expected before the initial visit of the suitor's parents. Then, as in Zaire, more may have to be paid to "unlock the father's mouth," that is, to induce him to negotiate the price for his daughter. Even after a certain sum is paid, other payments and gifts can be demanded.

Such practices can encourage greed for money. Yet, the Bible says: "The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things." (1 Timothy 6:10) Because of greed, people can become extortioners, and this brings God's disfavor. The Bible tells us that no "greedy person—which means being an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and of God."—Ephesians 5:5; compare Proverbs 20:21; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10.

Yet, there is nothing improper in giving a bride-price to the father as a token compensation for the loss of a daughter he

reared and educated. A prospective son-in-law could properly view this payment as a symbol of his appreciation for the training given his fiancée. However, some parents try to recover all that they spent, feeling that their married daughters will not help in educating the younger children. Such parents look for the highest bride-price possible, as if their daughters were mere commodities for sale. But they owe their children a good upbringing. Their pride should be in fulfilling this obligation, not in seeing how much they can get back in terms of money or prestige through an exorbitant bride-price. Instead of leading parents to think of material advantages that children can bring, the Bible says: "Children ought not to lay up for their parents, but the parents for their children."—2 Corinthians 12:14.

Demands made by some professed Christian fathers disregard the financial means of young Christian suitors. Why, there are cases in which such fathers have refused reasonable offers made by Christian brothers because worldly men offered more! Some even leave negotiations to worldly relatives, who then demand an exorbitant price. While this bargaining goes on, the situation could push the young people into fornication. This is what takes place among worldly people. It often happens that a frustrated young couple will use pregnancy as the easiest means of forcing the girl's family to accept what the suitor can afford to pay.

Christians should not act in this way. God's Word forbids fornication, and those committing it may be expelled from the congregation. (1 Corinthians 6:9; Hebrews 13:4) A father cannot absolve himself of blame if his extortionate demands contribute to his daughter's falling into immorality. Such blame could seriously affect his standing in the congregation. Likewise, accepting bride money in any amount

from a worldly person in order to marry a dedicated Christian daughter to him is untheocratic. Doing this disqualifies a brother at least for certain special privileges in the congregation. Christian parents should want their young people to remain strong in the Christian congregation and should help them to maintain chaste conduct. They should desire their daughters to be happily married "only in the Lord," to husbands who also love Jehovah and have deep respect for his laws and principles.—1 Corinthians 7:39.

It is unchristian to treat the bride-price as a means of making money off one's own child, extortionately charging more than what is right. A Christian father must guard against greed and selfishness, as this could seriously affect his spirituality and the privileges he enjoys in the congregation.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

Happily, many Christian fathers have shown consideration in what they have requested as a bride-price, and this reveals a fine attitude. Some have even chosen not to require a bride-price at all, in order to guard against abusing the custom and causing spiritual troubles.

How It Can Affect the Bride and Groom

A girl's greed has, in a number of cases, influenced the amount the parents set as a bride-price. There are those who ask for a very costly and showy wedding, even nagging their parents constantly for this. Others demand that their parents buy costly utensils for use in the new household. In order to take care of such demands, a father may feel it necessary to increase the bride-price.

This, in turn, forces the bridegroom to begin his married life under a burden of debts incurred for a costly wedding and expensive furniture. God's Word says that "the wisdom from above is . . . reasonable." Young couples should let their

“reasonableness become known to all men” by planning a wedding that does not put a heavy financial burden on anyone.—James 3:17; Philippians 4:5.

After the wedding, a wife could begin to measure her husband’s love for her by the amount he paid as the bride-price. She may feel insecure if he made a small payment. She could reason that if he should get tired of her and wish to send her away, he would readily do so, being willing to forfeit the small amount he paid. It is true that some husbands have sent their wives back to their parents for various reasons, such as not being able to produce children or showing a rebellious spirit. This is unwittingly encouraged by those who say to a young man who has just paid the bride-price: “You have bought a wife.” If he had paid a high price, he could be tempted to view his wife as a purchased servant instead of his most intimate friend. Also, for various reasons, fathers have returned the bride-price and compelled their daughters to leave their husbands.

There are those who argue that a high bride-price helps to discourage this because of the difficulty of recovering or refunding a large amount of money. They also feel that a high price cuts down on early marriages, since it takes longer for a man to save toward getting married. These considerations, they feel, result in mature and responsible husbands and more stable marriages.

True as this may be in some cases, the stability of a Christian marriage should not be based on such materialistic considerations. A Christian husband’s faithfulness should not depend on what he may lose materially if the marriage breaks up. Rather, he should be governed by the Scriptural principle: “What God has yoked together let no man put apart.” (Matthew 19:6) Instead of viewing wives as purchased property, husbands are command-

ed to ‘assign them honor.’ (1 Peter 3:7) Jesus said that a man and a woman become “one flesh” when they marry. (Matthew 19:5; Genesis 2:24) The Bible counsels husbands to love their wives, to cherish them and care for them, just as they do their own bodies. (Ephesians 5:28, 29) Furthermore, the real measure of a man’s love should be the way he treats his wife during the years after the wedding. Whether a husband has paid any bride-price or not, if he takes good care of his wife and is loyal in his love, could anyone doubt that he loves her?

The bride-price can also affect the way a husband views his wife’s parents. Having paid a high bride-price, he could conclude that he no longer owes them anything, even if they fall into need. Yet, the Bible says: “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.” (1 Timothy 5:4) Christians follow this counsel, but a problem can develop if a husband allows the fact that he paid a bride-price to distort his sense of responsibility.

Maintain a Balanced View

Certain practices connected with the bride-price could create special problems for a young man who is going to marry a spiritual sister whose parents are not Christians. They could require him to participate in rites based on ancestor worship and belief in the immortality of the soul. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4) But could he do this without losing God’s favor and the blessing Jehovah reserves for those who have ‘purified their souls by their obedience to the truth’? (1 Peter 1:22; Revelation 18:4) Facing such demands, a dedicated Christian must always

be determined to "obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:29.

The foregoing comments about extortion, avoiding fornication, and marrying only fellow believers apply equally when the bride's family provides a dowry. A Christian girl and her parents should not be guided by worldly standards in the choice of a husband. Marrying a non-Christian is an act of disobedience to God. Through Moses, He told the Israelites: "You must form no marriage alliance with them. Your daughter you must not give to his son, and his daughter you must not take for your son." (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 7:39) Obviously, it would be inappropriate for young Christian men or

women to advertise themselves in public newspapers as seeking eligible marriage partners. It is among their Christian brothers and sisters that they should look for suitable mates.

Marriage is a sacred arrangement of Jehovah, and all of us should be guided by what he says about it in his Word. Intense love for Jehovah, our children, and our fellow believers should lead us to steer clear of all practices that violate what is right and good. (Psalm 119:105; Hebrews 4:12) The blessing of Jehovah is certain to continue with those who let his Word guide them in decisions regarding not only bride-price and dowry but also all other affairs of life.—Proverbs 10:22.

The Grand Artist **JEHOVAH!**

"**A**RTISTS paint countless sunrises and sunsets, and their works sell for hundreds, even thousands, of dollars. Yet, Jehovah God, the Grand Artist and Originator of sunsets and sunrises, gives us one each day—free. The originals far surpass the copies. Should that not give us cause to appreciate him as the Creator?" So reasoned a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses in Hawaii during one of his talks to a congregation.

An atheistic woman, visiting the Kingdom Hall for the first time, was in the audience. She took note of the minister's reasoning, but strong doubts about the existence of God still lingered. However, as she was driving home from work almost two years later, she was caught in rush-hour traffic. This caused her to notice a particularly spectacular sunset. Her thoughts returned to that traveling overseer's talk.

She relates: "Instead of being upset about being caught in traffic, I noticed the beautiful sunset, and it reminded me of what the speaker had said about appreciating Jehovah God as an Artist and a Creator. It got me thinking, 'Perhaps what he said is true; maybe there really is a Creator.' I thought about it as I continued home, and that night I called my friend who had originally invited me to the Kingdom Hall. I started studying the Bible, and now I worship Jehovah as my God and Creator."

Like the psalmist, this woman not only came to appreciate Jehovah as the Grand Artist of creation but also came to sing his praises. Wrote the psalmist: "Praise Jehovah from the heavens . . . Praise him, you sun and moon. Praise him, all you stars of light. . . . Let them praise the name of Jehovah; for he himself commanded, and they were created."
—Psalm 148:1-5.



DIVINE JUSTICE



A Cause for Rejoicing!

“COME sing with us . . . ‘Jehovah reigns; let earth rejoice.’” Those words were part of a song on the lips of some 9,000 Arabic, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish delegates to the “Divine Justice” District Convention in Montreal, Canada. The conventioners swarmed onto the field at Olympic Stadium for the closing moments of this four-day convention to join in song with 36,900 delegates already in the stadium.

The other language groups had been present for the same convention program

in nearby arenas and auditoriums. Now they joined the French and English conventioners in a moving display of brotherhood and loyalty—something that could be realized only among servants of the God of true justice, Jehovah. In view of widespread injustice in the modern world, the convention theme—“Divine Justice”—was a timely one indeed. Interwoven throughout the program, this theme enhanced our appreciation for this cardinal attribute of Jehovah God.





1, 2. The publications *Insight on the Scriptures* and *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* being released at Yankee Stadium, New York City, by Governing Body members J. E. Barr and W. L. Barry

3, 4. Scenes from the Bible drama "Jehovah's Judgments Against Law-Defying People"

5. Thousands were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah God

"Happy Are Those Observing Justice"

This was the theme of the first day of the convention. (Psalm 106:3) The chairman's address of welcome made it clear that divine justice is not just the cold legal exercise of a judicial function. Rather, it is the maintaining of what is right in an impartial and fair way according to God's standards. Jehovah sets the highest standards and is perfect in justice because he adheres to these. Hence, it can be said that "all his ways are justice."—Deuteronomy 32:4.

This was further highlighted in the keynote address, entitled "Justice Marks All of God's Ways." Jehovah has never deviated from his righteous standards but has em-



6. Scene from the modern-day drama "Marked for Survival"

7. Visiting missionaries, such as John Cutforth of Papua New Guinea, shared their experiences with conventioners

At over 125 conventions in the United States and Canada alone, 1,440,932 persons were present and 19,878 were baptized



ployed the same just ways in dealing with all imperfect mankind. (Malachi 3:6) Though some may falsely accuse God of being unjust because they see wholesale lack of justice in human society, he is not responsible for the waywardness of corrupted mankind.

Since Jehovah is a lover of justice, he expects us to exercise this quality by doing what is right and fair. We must do this toward our fellowman and our families, within the congregation, and in all aspects of our worship. This brings rich blessings, as can be seen from what was presented on the program during the remaining three days of the "Divine Justice" District Convention.

"Receive the Discipline That Gives Insight"

The second day of the convention had the foregoing theme, based on Proverbs 1:3. We were urged to "Accept Discipline and Become Wise," that being the title of an early part on the program. Discipline from Jehovah marks a way of life that includes the refining of our mental faculties and moral makeup. It is also an expression of God's love for us. (Hebrews 12:4-11) Such discipline keeps us sensitive to the highest standards of justice—divine justice.

These positive expressions were followed by the talk "Be Clean in Mind and Body." How thought-provoking it was! It impressed on us the need to present ourselves to God as pure, clean, and holy people. Why? Because Jehovah is supremely clean and holy—a condition that sets him apart from all the filthy gods of the nations. Reflecting on this talk, one young brother remarked: "Everything about our mental, moral, physical, and spiritual cleanness was examined. Our dress, grooming, home, car, and personality were all given attention." An elder observed: "Putting such counsel into practice will make our broth-

ers stand out more than ever from the people around them and will provide a measure of health unknown by the world in general."

The modern-day drama "Marked for Survival" added a sense of urgency to the program, for divine justice must soon be satisfied. This touching presentation vividly showed that it is urgent for all to open their eyes to the significance of our times. Indeed, before false religion is struck down, we must run to the place of refuge and be definitely marked for survival.

In the afternoon, a symposium of speakers attested to the need for "Disciplining in Righteousness Within the Family Circle." Husbands and fathers were admonished to have a spiritual program in the home, taking the lead in prayer, study, and sacred service. The manly qualities of the father and how he handles his headship have a telling effect on a child's view of authority, both divine and human. Therefore, Christian fathers must be fair and consistent in their discipline. They need to display empathy and warmth, thus keeping open the lines of communication with their children.

Parents were encouraged to adapt their instruction to the children. It is important to give children insight by considering how to teach and what to teach in order to reach their hearts. The objective is to have the truth influence the entire family in a wholesome way.

The final speaker of this symposium made a warm appeal to children to do what Jehovah expects of them within the family arrangement. Youths were urged to avoid the rebellious spirit of today's permissive society and to rejoice in the discipline that gives insight.

In remarks based on Proverbs 2:1-9, conventioners were encouraged to "Keep Searching as for Hid Treasures." It was illustrated that spiritual gems can be found through diligent study and research.

Speaking on the subject "Look to Jehovah for Insight," the next speaker explained that insight is the ability to see into a situation, to look beyond the obvious and get the sense of something. (Matthew 13:13-15; Romans 3:11; Ephesians 5:17) This thrilling day then came to a climax when the Olympic Stadium was tied in by telephone with many other cities in Canada and the United States. The two-part symposium was highlighted by the release of the two-volume publication *Insight on the Scriptures*, containing more than 2,500 pages of informative articles and illustrations that will deepen our appreciation of spiritual matters.

"His Judgments Are True and Righteous"

On the third day, which had this theme based on Revelation 19:2, there was much to make us rejoice. The talk "Moral Cleanliness Is the Beauty of Youth" made a strong appeal to young people. They were urged to prize the beauty associated with maintaining God's standards of physical, moral, and spiritual cleanness. Sexually explicit songs, immoral television programs, pornographic movies and literature, and peer pressure constantly bombard Christian youths. According to one source, only an exceptional young person has not had premarital intercourse by 19 years of age. But the audience applauded warmly when the speaker commended the thousands of Witness youths who show themselves exceptional by maintaining a high standard of righteousness. Early marriages are fraught with problems, and it was shown that Paul's words about marrying because of being "inflamed with passion" are addressed not to teenagers but to those "past the bloom of youth."—1 Corinthians 7:9, 36.

"Do Not Yoke Yourselves With Unbeliev-

ers" was the next topic. Obeying God's command to marry "only in the Lord" spares us painful consequences. (1 Corinthians 7:39) Moreover, nothing is more strengthening to a marriage than shared devotion to Jehovah and adherence to his righteous standards. We were next helped to see how we should be "Acting With Respect and Godly Fear."

Then came an exciting highlight—the talk "Baptism That Leads to a Favorable Judgment," followed by the immersion of newly dedicated persons. It was stressed that more was expected of them than merely putting away the filth of the flesh. Repentance, conversion, and a lifetime of sacred service must be associated with their dedication and baptism if they are to enjoy a favorable judgment from Jehovah.

The afternoon program surely was memorable. Again by telephone hookup, members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses electrified audiences across North America with the stirring presentation of the symposium "The Appointed Time Is Near." For decades, Jehovah's anointed witnesses have proclaimed divine judgment messages against Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. At this convention, however, these messages took on a stronger tone. Babylon the Great has been guilty of violating Jehovah's righteous commandments. She merits destruction, for "her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind." Thus, as Jehovah's angel declares, "in one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine, and she will be completely burned with fire, because Jehovah God, who judged her, is strong."—Revelation 18:5, 8.

Speaking on the subject "The Infamous 'Harlot'—Her Fall and Destruction," the last speaker of this symposium drew atten-

tion to the grand climax of Revelation. This climax is reached with the marriage of the Lamb, who unites with his bride, the holy city, in blessing mankind with eternal life. Jehovah's name is sanctified! The symposium concluded with the moving statement that the appointed time is nearer than we may think! Indeed, the grand climax of Revelation is at hand!

While the audience was still applauding, there came the release of the new 320-page book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* What a cause for rejoicing! This publication surely will be an effective means of announcing that Babylon the Great is doomed, that the nations now face Armageddon, and that Jehovah is about to execute judgment. Let all appreciative ones answer the invitation of "the spirit and the bride" to "come" to the waters of life. (Revelation 21:2, 9; 22:17) This thrilling printed release was followed by another cause for rejoicing. With joyful conviction, convention audiences unanimously adopted a very clear and frank resolution stating our abhorrence of Babylon the Great.

"Justice—Justice You Should Pursue"

Based on Deuteronomy 16:20, this was the theme of the final day. The speakers of the morning emphasized the fact that to benefit from divine justice, we must be different from the world. Consider the talk "Maintaining Spiritual Health in a Sick World." It showed how we can avoid contamination from a spiritually unhealthy world by guarding against fleshly weaknesses, worldly influence, and "the machinations of the Devil." (Ephesians 6:11, 12; Romans 7:21-25; 1 John 2:15-17) The talk "Does Your Faith Condemn the World?" showed that if we have faith like that of Noah, we will stand out as different from the world. In Noah's day, there was a marked difference between the Flood sur-

vivors and those who perished. The same is true today.

This important point was highlighted in the Bible drama "Jehovah's Judgments Against Law-Defying People." It vividly compared the law-defying people in the days of Noah and Lot with those living in our time. Noah and Lot stood out in sharp contrast, and their faith condemned their contemporaries. Do we personally stand out as different from people today who are preoccupied with material things and are lovers of what is bad?

The public talk, "Justice for All by God's Appointed Judge," was an absorbing analysis of the apostle Paul's speech to men of Athens on the Areopagus, or Mars' Hill. Surrounded as we are by gross injustices and false religion, the apostle's words have great meaning for us. Especially do we have reason to rejoice because we are living at a crucial time of judgment when we can take action to have God's approval. Yes, as Paul said, Jehovah purposes "to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man [Jesus Christ] whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from the dead."—Acts 17:31.

As the program drew to a close, we were urged to "Keep Pursuing Justice as the Climax Nears." This splendid four-day convention filled us with determination to do so. The program also impressed us with the scope of our international brotherhood. For instance, what a joy it was to hear from visiting missionaries who had been serving faithfully in their assignments for years!

We left the convention with renewed determination to remain separate from this world and to keep clean spiritually, morally, mentally, and physically. As we joined harmoniously in closing song, we were glad to sing Jehovah's praises, grateful that divine justice gives us great cause for rejoicing.

Insight on the News

"Not By Sight"

Recent scientific tests have confirmed that the Shroud of Turin is a 14th-century fake. Yet, "Catholics were encouraged to continue their veneration of the shroud as a pictorial image of Christ, still capable of performing miracles," reports *The New York Times*. Anastasio Ballestrero, the archbishop of Turin, stated: "The exceptional evocative power of the image of Jesus Christ should be preserved."

What does this mean? It means that although the church has admitted that the stained image of a man's body on the shroud is *not* that of Jesus Christ, faithful Catholics should nevertheless continue to view it as if it were the Christ and thus as something holy. Why? According to Adam Otterbein, a Roman Catholic priest in charge of the Holy Shroud Guild, relics like the shroud can assist believers to render honor to the one the image represents.

It is not surprising that, despite its lack of authenticity, the shroud would remain a powerful symbol of faith for the Catholic Church. "Statues, paintings and icons . . . are given a revered place in Catholic practice," notes *The New York Times*.

Does the Bible support the use of such images in worship? No! God's Word clearly says: "Flee from idolatry." (1 Corinthians 10: 14; compare Exodus 20:4-6.) Christians are admonished to worship God "with spirit and truth," not with the help of some image or relic. (John 4:24) Appropriately, Paul wrote that true Christians "are walking by faith, not by sight."—2 Corinthians 5:7.

Wrong Thinking

In keeping with an apparent trend toward the relaxation of Biblical standards among religionists, "a growing number of U.S. theologians are arguing that Christian churches need a sexual revolution," reports the *Star Tribune*. This Minnesota newspaper cites views expounded by such notables as John Spong, the bishop of Newark for the Episcopal Church of America, and James Nelson, sexual ethics expert at United Theological Seminary in New Brighton. The paper claims that these and other theologians feel that churches should "bless homosexual couples in church ceremonies, acknowledging their commitment to one another in a loving, moral relationship; . . . offer young betrothed adults the church's blessing if they live in loving, committed relationships, although not married"; and "consent when mature adults are sexually active in responsible ways, although not married to one another." Why do these theologians believe that such changes are needed? Spong claims that "we give our consent to promiscuous living" if such unions are not blessed.

What Spong and others fail to observe, however, is that it is the very blessing of such unions that establishes the churches' consent to such "promiscuous living." God's Word is clear. "Neither fornicators, . . . nor adulterers, . . . nor men who lie with men . . . will inherit God's kingdom." Followers of Christ are not only commanded to "quit mixing in company" with such ones but are also told to "remove the wicked man" from among them-

selves.—1 Corinthians 5:11, 13; 6:9-11.

A Paramount Need

This year, the statistical report of Britain's Free Church Federal Council has revealed a further drop for its 15 affiliated denominations. For the first time, membership has plummeted below the one million mark, reports the *Church Times*, a Church of England newspaper. The reason? Although the churches say that they are committed to "the vast majority . . . whose paramount need is for redemption," the article notes that "the Free Churches have continued to devote too much time and energy to . . . socialities." According to the *Church Times*, "if the Churches are in decline, it is not because their annual bazaars are a flop or their dramatic-society productions are not patronised: it is because they have not taken their ministry of redemption seriously enough."

Religious leaders of Jesus' day did not take their ministry seriously either. Jesus rightly criticized them for having made "the word of God invalid" by their traditions. He said that they were hypocrites, who "honored God with their lips though their hearts were far removed from him."—Mark 7:6, 7, 13.

True ministers of Jehovah God, however, are devoted "to the ministry of the word." They take seriously Jesus' command to "make disciples," and they follow the example of the apostles, who "continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ." To true Christians, this work is of paramount importance.—Acts 5:42; 6:4; Matthew 28:19, 20.

Questions From Readers

■ Why did Jesus promise that those putting faith in him 'would never die at all,' when in fact all his listeners did die?—John 11:25, 26.



Jesus' words to grieving Martha give us hope of life eternal

When Jesus spoke about not dying, or of living forever, he clearly did not mean that his listeners back then would never experience human death. The basic point Jesus was making was that faith in him could lead to everlasting life.

In one instance, Jesus called himself "the bread of life." Then he added: "This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever."—John 6:48-51.

Looking at only those words, a person might conclude that Jesus was telling his audience that they could avoid the experience of death. The context, however, does not support that conclusion. Jesus had just said: "This is the will of him that sent me, that I should lose nothing out of all that he has given me *but that I should resurrect it at the last day.* . . . Everyone that beholds the Son and exercises faith in him should have everlasting life, and *I will*

resurrect him at the last day. . . . No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him; and *I will resurrect him in the last day.*" (John 6:39-44) And later he added: "He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life, and *I shall resurrect him at the last day.*" (John 6:54) Hence, Jesus' promise of 'living forever' could not justifiably be understood to mean that his listeners would never experience death.

It is similar with Jesus' well-known promise to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life; and everyone that is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all." (John 11:25, 26) Jesus obviously did not mean that the faithful apostles, for example, would never die as did other humans. Within a year, they would be anointed with holy spirit and would be given the hope of reigning as kings in heaven. To receive that reward, they would have to die as humans.

(Romans 8:14-23; 1 Corinthians 15:36-50) And note that Jesus had said: "He that exercises faith in me, *even though he dies*, will come to life."

Jesus' promise will be fulfilled toward devoted servants of God who have lived and died before the time when everlasting life begins to be provided. Such faithful ones are in line for a future resurrection. By remaining faithful after they are raised, they will never experience "the second death," eternal death.—Revelation 20:15; 21:8; John 8:51.

But Bible prophecy indicates that we today have a special opportunity. Living as we are in the conclusion of the system of things, we may survive the coming "great tribulation" and pass right on into the new world. Such ones who have the hope of everlasting life on a paradise earth and who maintain their loyalty to God will not have to experience human death at all. Surviving "the great tribulation," they will be guided "to fountains of waters of life."—Revelation 7:9-17.

In Our Next Issue

■ **True Beauty—You Can Develop It**

■ **Will You Benefit From God's Covenants?**

■ **If We Do God's Will, He Will Never Abandon Us**

"THE WATCHTOWER" ON CASSETTE APPRECIATED



More and more people have been expressing such appreciation. A youth from Alberta, Canada, writes:

"I am a 17-year-old girl who suffers from dyslexia, a learning disability. I have always had the problem of being able to understand very little of what I read. Yet, if someone took the time to read the information to me, I could understand it right away.

"In the past, it has always been frustrating, even discouraging, to read *The Watchtower*. Now this has changed dramatically. I have just finished the cassette covering the January 1st issue. Words cannot describe how thrilling it is to understand what I have read, from cover to cover! I am so very thankful, grateful, and appreciative for this new provision."