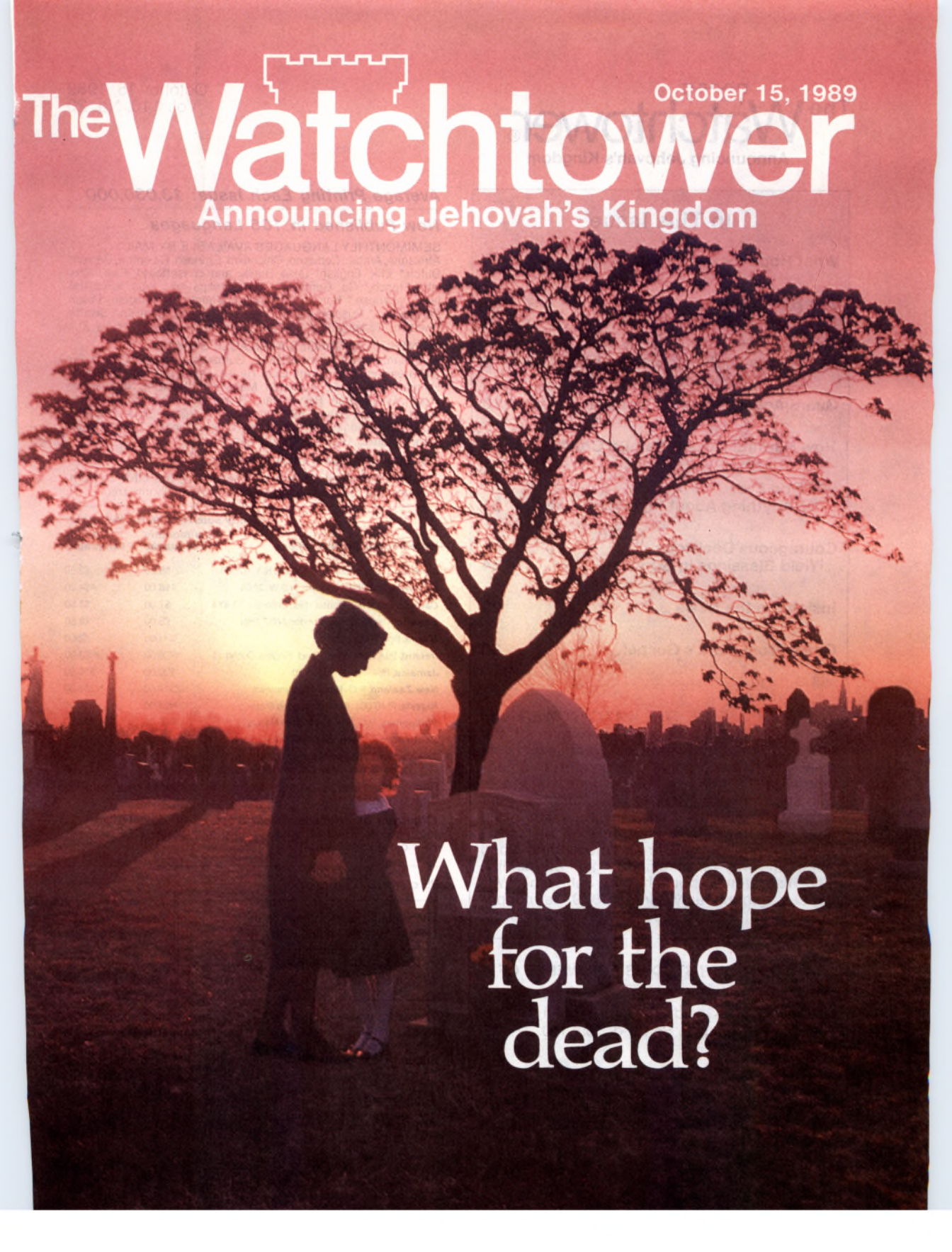


A woman and a young child are walking through a cemetery at sunset. The woman is holding a book, and they are both looking down at it. A large, leafy tree stands behind them, and its shadow is cast on the ground. In the background, several tombstones are visible, and a city skyline with a prominent tower can be seen on the horizon. The sky is a deep orange and red, suggesting the sun is low. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

The Watchtower

October 15, 1989

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

What hope
for the
dead?

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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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What hope for the dead?

A YOUNG family was traveling to the South African east coast for a vacation. The wife's parents were in another car just ahead. Suddenly, a tire burst. While they were preparing to change it on the side of the road, a drunken driver plowed into the two cars. The elderly man and his wife died. The younger man died a few days later. His wife suffered broken ribs and other injuries. Her baby suffered paralyzing brain damage.

What a tragedy for this unfortunate family! When Carolann, the young wife's sister, heard the news, she felt numb.

Tragedies like this happen in all countries. Grief-stricken relatives and friends often wonder, 'Are the dead really dead,' or . . .

'Are the Dead Alive?'

Almost all religions teach that the soul is immortal. Hence, their followers believe that those who die are not really dead but are still alive in heaven, purgatory, or hell. As taught in many churches, those in the latter place suffer horribly for all eternity. But would a God of love really inflict such suffering on his creatures?—1 John 4:8.

It would seem not, but how can we be sure? Consider carefully the following Bible proof. "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) Does this inspired statement say that the first man, Adam, was *given* a soul? No, he *came to be* a soul, a living person. This is confirmed by the apostle Paul, who wrote: "The first man, Adam, as scripture says, *became a living soul*." Paul was quoting from Genesis.—1 Corinthians 15:45, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

Can the human soul die? The prophet Ezekiel wrote: "All the souls—to me they belong. As the soul of the father so likewise the soul of the son—to me they belong. The soul that is sinning—it itself will die." (Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) Obviously, if the soul is dead, then the person knows nothing, hence cannot be suffering. In his first public talk after Pentecost 33 C.E., the apostle Peter declared: "Indeed, any soul that does not listen to that Prophet [Jesus] will be completely destroyed from among the people." So the soul is mortal.—Acts 3:23.

Will the Dead Live Again?

All those who believe that the Bible is true know that Jesus died and was resurrected on the third day. (Acts 10:39, 40)

How could this happen? By the power of God's holy spirit.

Was the resurrection of Jesus an exception? No. As Paul wrote to the congregation in Corinth: "Christ has been raised up from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death. For since death is through a man, resurrection of the dead is also through a man . . . Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:20-22) Hence, many will be raised from the dead. Jesus

also said: "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life." (John 5:28, 29) This guarantees the resurrection of millions.

If the above explanation has aroused your interest in the resurrection, you may ask, 'For whom is the resurrection, and when?' Let us consider those vital questions.

The resurrection —for whom and when?



IT HAPPENED in the year 32 C.E. at Bethany, where Lazarus lived with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. The sisters had sent a message to Jesus that Lazarus was sick. Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters, so He set out for Bethany. On the road, Jesus informed his disciples: "Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying there to awaken him from sleep." The disciples thought that Jesus meant literal sleep. So Jesus stated plainly: "Lazarus has died."—John 11:1-15.

The visitors arrived four days after Lazarus' death. When Jesus saw Mary and others weeping, he "gave way to tears," showing his deep love and compassion. (John 11:17, 35) Lazarus' dead body had been entombed in a cave. Jesus directed

that the stone closing the entrance of the tomb be taken away. He prayed to his Father and then cried out loudly: "Lazarus, come on out!" Lazarus came out. What joy this must have brought his sisters! —John 11:38-45.

This event provides real hope of a resurrection. However, in general, death is a terrible enemy that takes our loved ones without the prospect of Jesus' immediately resurrecting them. As we well know, many of these dear people are good and very kind. Hence, an obvious question arises . . .

Why Do People Have to Die?

If we want an accurate, reliable answer, we have to look back to mankind's beginning in the garden of Eden. Testing Adam's obedience, God there commanded

him not to eat the fruit of a certain tree. If he and Eve ate of the fruit, God said, they would “positively die.” (Genesis 2:17) When tempted by Satan, they disobeyed God and failed in that crucial test. Death resulted.

Why such a punishment for a seemingly small crime? Their action was small, but the crime was deadly serious—a rebellion by perfect people, Adam and Eve, against their Creator. They were no longer perfect, and God passed sentence of death. Yet, God has arranged for that just sentence to be reversed for descendants of Adam. How? Paul wrote that “Christ Jesus . . . gave himself a corresponding ransom for all.”—1 Timothy 2:5, 6; Romans 5:17.

What Is the Condition of the Dead?

Lazarus was dead for four days. If you had died but had really been alive in the spirit realm for four days and then were resurrected, would you not want to tell others about it? But Lazarus said nothing about having been alive in some other realm. The Bible says: “As for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all.”—Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 146:3, 4.

Consider the implications of that. Millions of people believe in purgatory, though the word does not appear in the Bible. Many more believe that there is a fiery hell. However, you would not burn even an enemy in a fire for eternity. If you would refuse to do such a cruel thing, would our loving Creator do so by making individuals suffer in hellfire? But reflect, please, on the comforting Biblical assurance mentioned above—the dead “are conscious of nothing at all.”

According to the Scriptures, the number who will reign with Christ in heaven is relatively small. Jesus described them as a “little flock.” (Luke 12:32) The apostle John saw “the Lamb [Jesus Christ] standing upon [heavenly] Mount Zion, and with

him a hundred and forty-four thousand . . . who have been bought from the earth.” (Revelation 14:1-3) This means, then, that such persons had been humans, had died, and later were resurrected to live in heaven with Christ.

As you can imagine, people have been helped by understanding these Bible truths—that there is no purgatory nor a burning hell and that there is a hope that dead persons can be resurrected to heaven. However, if those resurrected to heaven are so few, what hope is there for others?

The Earthly Resurrection

Jesus Christ opened, or inaugurated, the way to being resurrected to life in heaven. (Hebrews 9:24; 10:19, 20) Consequently, John the Baptizer will not take part in the heavenly resurrection because he was murdered before Jesus died and opened the way to heavenly life. Jesus said: “There has not been raised up a greater than John the Baptist; but a person that is a lesser one in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he is.” (Matthew 11:11) What reward does God hold out for this faithful man and for others like him who have died?

Turn your Bible to Luke 23 and read verses 39 to 43. One of the evildoers who was impaled beside Jesus said: “Jesus, remember me when you get into your kingdom.” Jesus assured him that he would be in Paradise. That is not heaven, but it is an earthly paradise, as was the first Paradise.

The Resurrection —A Source of Comfort

That valid Biblical prospect should be very comforting, as we have reason to expect. Why? Because Jehovah is love. (1 John 4:8) When he allowed his Son to die a shameful death, God was actually manifesting his marvelous quality of love. Sometime before, Jesus had said: “God

loved the world [mankind] so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

Jesus too showed exceptional love in giving his life as a ransom for believing mankind. He himself said: "The Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many."—Matthew 20:28.

Carolann, who was mentioned in the first article as having lost a number of her loved ones in a terrible accident, felt numb afterward. But she was comforted by knowing that those dead loved ones were not suffering. What additionally helped her to cope? The love and genuine condolences shown by her spiritual brothers, Jehovah's Witnesses, proved very helpful.—Psalm 34:18.

Prayer to Jehovah also helped very much. Many nights she would wake up and think that it was all a bad dream, but then the reality would hit her. Supplication to Jehovah would calm her, and she more deeply appreciated what Paul wrote: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus."—Philippians 4:6, 7.

Shirley provides another example of how comforting the resurrection hope is. Her young son Riccardo was killed instantly when a heavy piece of concrete fell on his chest, rupturing his little heart. After this tragedy, in January 1986, Shirley told friends: "It was like a nightmare." In the Catholic Church she heard these words: "God will judge the living and the dead." Shirley began to think, 'If God is going to judge the living and the dead, then how can one know where people go after death?

And if they are in heaven, why later resurrect them to be judged? Furthermore, how can they be resurrected if they are alive in heaven?' Nowhere does the Bible mention the resurrection of the living but only of the dead.

Shirley asked her husband about this problem, since he was acquainted with the Bible. Once she understood some of what the Scriptures say on the subject, Shirley never went back to church. A relative who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses began studying the Bible with Shirley and her husband in March 1986, and before long they were baptized. She now concludes: "It is so wonderful to know the truth, to know about the resurrection, and to know what a wonderful person Jehovah is."

The Resurrection—When?

In vision, the apostle John saw "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9) That the great crowd is 'standing before God's throne' is consistent with the fact that they are due to live on earth. (Isaiah 66:1) If some of them die now, when will they be resurrected? The Bible does not give a date, but it will be after the approaching war in which God will eliminate from the earth all those unwilling to live by his righteous standards. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9) That will open the way for Judgment Day and the resurrection of all whom God views as in line for an earthly resurrection. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) The fulfillment of Bible prophecy proves that these exciting and marvelous developments will take place soon!—Revelation 16:14-16.

Jesus' disciples once asked him: "What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" In reply Jesus mentioned wars, food short-

*The Bible says that just as a tree
may be cut down and yet sprout again,
God can raise from the dead those in his memory.
—Job 14:7-9, 14, 15*

ages, earthquakes, pestilences, and the earth-wide preaching of the good news of the Kingdom.—Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 21:7-11.

This remarkable prophecy has been in fulfillment since 1914, when World War I began. It killed millions and produced famine and food shortages in many countries. The world situation during and after World War II was much worse.

Concerning pestilences, many feel that the worst example is AIDS. "The epidemic is so widespread and so lethal that experts

are comparing it to the Black Death that killed a quarter of Europe's population in the fourteenth century."—*Reader's Digest*, June 1987.

In view of such present horrors, what a marvelous event the resurrection will be! It will be a time of irrepressible joy when families broken apart by death, such as those of Carolann and Shirley, will be reunited! Clearly, the sensible course for each of us is to order our lives now in accord with God's will and thus qualify to be present when the resurrection occurs.



At Bethany, in the House of Simon

WHEN Jesus leaves Jericho, he heads for Bethany. The trip takes most of the day, since it is a climb over difficult terrain of some 12 miles. Jericho is about 820 feet below sea level, and Bethany is some 2,500 feet above sea level. Bethany, you may recall, is the home of Lazarus and his sisters. The little village is about two miles from Jerusalem, being located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

Many have already arrived in Jerusalem for the Passover. They have come early to cleanse themselves ceremonially. Perhaps they have touched a dead body or done something else that makes them unclean. So they follow the designated procedures to cleanse themselves in order to celebrate the Passover acceptably. As these early arrivals gather at the temple, many speculate about whether Jesus will come to the Passover.

Jerusalem is a hotbed of controversy regarding Jesus. It is common knowledge that the religious leaders want to seize him to put him to death. In fact, they have given orders that if anyone learns his whereabouts, they are to report it to them. Three times in recent months—at the Festival of Tabernacles, at the Festival of Dedication, and after he resurrected Lazarus—these leaders have tried to kill him. So, the people wonder, will Jesus expose himself yet another time? "What is your opinion?" they ask one another. "That he will not come to the festival at all?"

In the meantime, Jesus arrives at Bethany six days before the Passover, which falls on Nisan 14 according to the

Jewish calendar. Jesus reaches Bethany sometime Friday evening, which is at the beginning of Nisan 8. He could not have made the trip to Bethany on Saturday because travel on the Sabbath—from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday—is restricted by Jewish law. Jesus probably goes to the home of Lazarus, as he has done before, and spends Friday night there.

However, another resident of Bethany invites Jesus and his companions for an evening meal Saturday evening. The man is Simon, a former leper, who earlier had perhaps been healed by Jesus. Lazarus is among those reclining at the table with Jesus. In keeping with her industrious character, Martha is ministering to the guests. But, typically, Mary is attentive to Jesus, this time in a way that stirs controversy.



Jesus' Life and Ministry

Mary opens an alabaster case, or small flask, that holds about a pound of perfumed oil, "genuine nard." This is very precious. Indeed, its value is equivalent to about a year's wages! When Mary pours the oil on Jesus' head and on his feet and wipes his feet with her hair, the aromatic scent fills the whole house.

The disciples are angry and ask: "Why this waste?" Then Judas Iscariot says: "Why was it this perfumed oil was not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor people?" But Judas is not really concerned about the poor, for he has been stealing from the money box kept by the disciples.

Jesus comes to Mary's defense. "Let her alone," he commands. "Why do you try to make trouble for her? She did a fine deed toward me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want to you can always do them good, but me you do not have always. She did what she could; she undertook beforehand to put perfumed oil on my body in view of the burial. Truly I say to you, Wherever the good news is preached in all the world, what this

woman did shall also be told as a remembrance of her."

Jesus has been in Bethany now more than 24 hours, and word of his presence has spread about. Therefore, many come to Simon's house to see Jesus, but they also come to see Lazarus. So the chief priests take counsel to kill not only Jesus but Lazarus too. This is because many people are putting faith in Jesus because of seeing alive the one whom he raised from the dead! Truly, how wicked these religious leaders are! **John 11:55–12:11; Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; Acts 1:12.**

♦ When does Jesus arrive in Bethany, and where does he likely spend the Sabbath?

♦ What discussion is going on at the temple, and why?

♦ What act of Mary stirs controversy, and how does Jesus defend her?

♦ What illustrates the great wickedness of the chief priests?



GUARD AGAINST HARMFUL GOSSIP!

"In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly."

—PROVERBS 10:19.

NOTHING can change lethal venom into a healthful drink. Malicious gossip, or slander, has well been likened to poison, which can also rob an upright person of his good name. The Roman poet Juvenal called slander "that worst of all poisons." And English dramatist William Shakespeare put these words into the mouth of one of his characters: "He that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed."

² But just what is gossip? How may it differ from slander? Why guard against harmful gossip? And how can this be done?

How They Differ

³ Gossip is "idle talk, not always true, about other people and their affairs." It is "light, familiar talk or writing." Since all of us are interested in people, we sometimes say good, upbuilding things about others. Slander is different. It is "a false report meant to do harm to the good

name and reputation of another." Such talk is generally malicious and is unchristian.

⁴ Harmless gossip may turn into vicious slander. Said writer Arthur Mee: "More often than not the slander that injures a man, and may bring about his ruin, begins in gossip, the gossip that comes, perhaps, from nothing worse at first than idleness."

4. According to one writer, how may slander begin, and from what does it spring?

1. How damaging is malicious gossip, or slander?
2. What questions merit consideration?
3. What is the difference between gossip and slander?



It is one of the greatest evils in the world, but it springs, as a rule, from ignorance. We find it chiefly among those who have very little to do, and have no particular object in life."

⁵ Since idle talk may lead to slander, the apostle Paul spoke out against certain gossipers. After mentioning widows qualified for congregation assistance, he wrote: "Turn down younger widows, for when their sexual impulses have come between them and the Christ, . . . at the same time they also learn to be unoccupied, gadding about to the houses; yes, not only unoccupied, but also gossipers and meddlers in other people's affairs, talking of things they ought not. Therefore I desire the younger widows to marry, to bear children, to manage a household, to give no inducement to the opposer to revile. Already, in fact, some have been turned aside to follow Satan."—1 Timothy 5:11-15.

⁶ Since Paul wrote under divine inspiration, he was not making unfair remarks about those women. What he said is food for very serious thought. No godly woman wants to 'turn aside and follow Satan.' Yet, what if a Christian woman finds that she has a weakness for the kind of talk that could make her guilty of slander? Then she should humbly heed Paul's counsel: "Women should . . . be serious, not slanderous." He also said: "Let the aged women be reverent in behavior, not slanderous." (1 Timothy 3:11; Titus 2:3) Brothers too should soberly apply that wise advice.

⁷ At times, of course, all of us talk about other people, their experiences in the min-

istry, and so forth. Let us never, however, 'sit and speak against our brother.' (Psalm 50:19, 20) Indeed, it is wise not to talk too much because "in the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly." (Proverbs 10:19) So we should guard against gossip, even if it does not seem harmful. We have no need to talk about people all the time, since we have a fine selection of topics if we consider righteous, chaste, lovable, virtuous, and praiseworthy things.—Philippians 4:8.

How Gossip Becomes Slander

⁸ There is no harm in talking about the field ministry and other godly activities of fellow believers if we are accurate and no injury results from what we say. In fact, positive remarks of this sort may encourage others. (Compare Acts 15:30-33.) Some Christians talked about the faithful older man Gaius, to whom the apostle John wrote: "Beloved one, you are doing a faithful work in whatever you do for the brothers, and strangers at that, who have borne witness to your love before the congregation." (3 John 5, 6) So it is not always wrong to talk about fellow Christians.

⁹ However, light talk can turn into slander of the upright if we probe into their private affairs, question their motives, or arouse suspicions about their conduct. We might get into the practice of asking ourselves questions, such as: Would my speech damage another person's reputation? Is what I say true? (Revelation 21:8) Would I say the same thing in his presence? Would it sow discord in the congregation? Might my statements cause him

8. Why is it not always wrong to talk about fellow Christians?

9. (a) How may light talk turn into slander of the upright? (b) What questions might we appropriately ask ourselves?

5. What is the essence of Paul's counsel at 1 Timothy 5:11-15?

6. What should be done to overcome a personal weakness for the type of gossiping that may lead to slander?

7. Scripturally, why would you say that all of us should control what we say?

to lose privileges of service? Could envy be in my heart? (Galatians 5:25, 26; Titus 3:3) Would the fruitage of my remarks be good or evil? (Matthew 7:17-20) Would I have said similar things about the apostles? (2 Corinthians 10:10-12; 3 John 9, 10) Does such talk benefit those who have reverence for Jehovah?

¹⁰ Alluding to those who revere God, Psalm 15:1 asks: "O Jehovah, who will be a guest in your tent? Who will reside in your holy mountain?" Concerning such a person, the psalmist David answers: "He has not slandered with his tongue. To his companion he has done nothing bad, and no reproach has he taken up against his intimate acquaintance." (Psalm 15:3) Here the word "slandered" is from a Hebrew verb meaning "to foot it" and thus "to go about." The Israelites were commanded: "Do not go about spreading slander among your people." (Leviticus 19:16, *New International Version*) Anyone who 'goes about spreading slander' is not God's guest and friend.

¹¹ Friends of God do nothing bad to their companions and will not take up, or receive as truthful, any reproachful tales about upright acquaintances. Rather than spreading false stories about fellow believers and adding to the evil reproaches by the ungodly that they already bear, we should speak well of them. Never would we want to increase the burdens of our faithful brothers and sisters by saying reproachful things about them.

When Difficulties Arise

¹² Being imperfect, we may be tempted to speak against a person with whom we have had a serious disagreement. But con-

sider what happened when the apostle Paul was about to set out on his second missionary journey. Though Barnabas was determined to have Mark accompany them, Paul did not agree, "seeing that [Mark] had departed from them from Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work." At that, "a sharp burst of anger" ensued, and they separated. Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus, whereas Paul had Silas go with him through Syria and Cilicia. (Acts 15:36-41) Later, the breach between Paul, Barnabas, and Mark was evidently healed, for Mark was with the apostle in Rome, and Paul spoke well of him. (Colossians 4:10) Even though there had been a disagreement, there is no evidence that those Christians had gone around gossiping about one another among fellow believers.

¹³ Paul also resisted a possible temptation to resort to damaging gossip when he reproved Cephas (Peter), who had been ashamed to eat with Gentile believers and associate with them because of the presence of certain Jewish Christians from Jerusalem. Instead of talking about Peter behind his back, Paul "resisted him face to face," speaking up "before them all." (Galatians 2:11-14) Peter did not gossip about his reprover either. In fact, he later referred to him as "our beloved brother Paul." (2 Peter 3:15) So even if a fellow believer needs to be corrected, this provides no excuse for gossiping about him. There are very good reasons to guard against such speech and to resist the temptation to spread harmful gossip.

Why Be on Guard?

¹⁴ The principal reason why we should

10, 11. According to Psalm 15:1, 3, what will we not do if we desire to be God's guest?

12. How may Acts 15:36-41 help us if we are tempted to gossip about one with whom we have a disagreement?

13. Under what circumstances involving Peter did Paul resist a possible temptation to gossip about a fellow Christian?

14. What is the principal reason not to listen to or spread harmful gossip?

not listen to harmful gossip or share in spreading it is that we want to please Jehovah, who condemns slander. As noted, the way God views such speech was made clear when the Israelites were commanded: "You must not go around among your people for the sake of slandering. You must not stand up against your fellow's blood. I am Jehovah." (Leviticus 19:16) If we are to enjoy divine favor, then, we must not slander anyone we may mention in our conversations.

¹⁵ Another reason not to engage in harmful gossip is that such could lead to imitating Satan, the foremost slanderer of Jehovah. This archenemy of God was appropriately given the name "Devil" (Greek, *di-a'bo-los*), which means "slanderer." When Eve listened to Satan's slanderous talk against God and acted upon it, the first human pair was separated from their best Friend. (Genesis 3:1-24) Let us never succumb to Satan's designs and become involved in harmful speech that merits divine disapproval and that can, therefore, separate us from our best Friend, Jehovah God.

¹⁶ We should not listen to malicious gossipers, since they separate friends. Often, slanderers exaggerate, misrepresent, lie, and heap up mountains of inflammatory words. Instead of speaking to a person face-to-face, they whisper behind his back. Unfounded suspicions are often aroused. Thus, "a slanderer is separating those familiar with one another."—Proverbs 16:28.

¹⁷ We should guard against becoming deeply involved even in light gossip. Why? Because a remark not meant to hurt anyone may become hurtful when it is repeated.

15. Who is the foremost slanderer, and what effect can engaging in harmful gossip have on our relationship with God?

16. How does a slanderer 'separate those familiar with one another'?

17. Why should we guard against becoming deeply involved in light gossip?

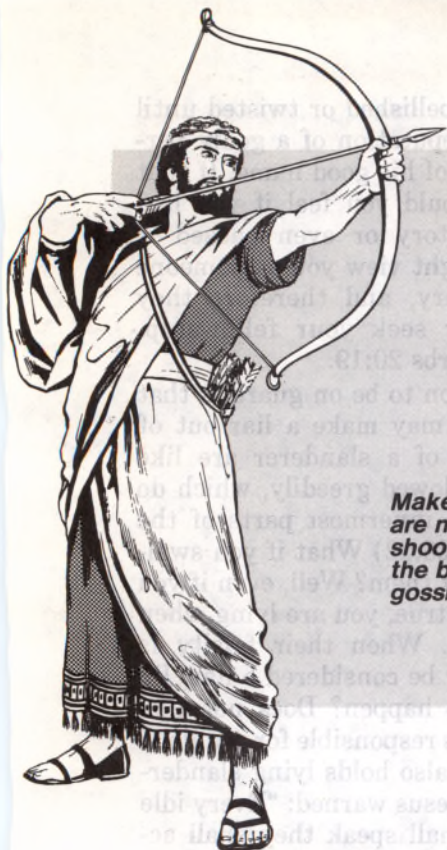
ed. It may be embellished or twisted until it damages the reputation of a godly person, robbing him of his good name. If that occurred, how would you feel if you had originated the story or even passed it along? People might view you as someone likely to do injury, and therefore they might no longer seek your fellowship. —Compare Proverbs 20:19.

¹⁸ Another reason to be on guard is that damaging gossip may make a liar out of you. "The words of a slanderer are like things to be swallowed greedily, which do go down into the innermost parts of the belly." (Proverbs 26:22) What if you swallow lies and repeat them? Well, even if you think the lies are true, you are lying when you spread them. When their falsity is revealed, you may be considered a liar. Do you want that to happen? Does not God hold false teachers responsible for religious lies? Yes, and he also holds lying slanderers accountable. Jesus warned: "Every idle word that men shall speak they shall account for at the day of judgment; for you shall be acquitted on your own words and condemned on your own words." (Matthew 12:36, 37, *Byington*) Since "each of us will render an account for himself to God," would you want to have him condemn you as a lying slanderer?—Romans 14:12.

¹⁹ Still another reason not to spread harmful gossip is that it can be murderous. Yes, it can be deadly, destroying an innocent person's good reputation. Some tongues are 'sharp swords,' and bitter words are like arrows shot at the blameless from ambush. David prayed: "May you [Jehovah] conceal me from the confidential talk of evildoers, from the tumult of practitioners of hurtfulness, who have sharpened their tongue just like a sword, who have

18. How may gossip make a liar out of a person?

19. Why can it be said that harmful gossip can be murderous?



Make sure that you are never guilty of shooting a person in the back by gossiping about him

aimed their arrow, bitter speech, to shoot from concealed places at someone blameless.” (Psalm 64:2-4) Would you want to be responsible for saying such evil things about a fellow human to the point that he felt compelled to pray to God for relief, as did the psalmist? Do you want to be guilty of what amounts to murder?

What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ What is the difference between light gossip and slander?
- ☐ How may gossip become slander?
- ☐ What are some reasons to guard against harmful gossip?
- ☐ Why is slander not involved when we report the gross wrongdoing of another person?

²⁰ Slander can lead to expulsion from God’s organization; a slanderer may be disfellowshipped, perhaps as an unrepentant liar. However, such action is not to be taken against those guilty of light gossip. Elders should weigh matters prayerfully, drawing a sharp distinction between mere gossip and vicious slander. To be disfellowshipped, the wrongdoer would have to be a malicious, unrepentant slanderer. Elders are not authorized to disfellowship anyone for trivial gossip that is motivated by human interest but that is not false or malicious. Matters must not be magnified beyond proper proportions, and there must be witnesses with substantial testimony to prove that slander is unquestionably involved. (1 Timothy 5:19) Unrepentant slanderers are expelled primarily so that malicious gossip will be quenched, and the congregation will be spared from becoming leavened with sin. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8, 13) But never should elders be so hasty that they expel anyone on unscriptural grounds. By means of prayer and counsel, they will often be able to help the person to repent, apologize or otherwise make amends, and make continued progress in taming the tongue.

Is It Slander?

²¹ A wise proverb says: “The one walking about as a slanderer is uncovering confidential talk, but the one faithful in spirit is covering over a matter.” (Proverbs 11:13) Does this mean that if you know that someone is secretly engaging in gross sin, it would be slanderous to say anything about it? No. Of course, you should not gossip about the matter. You should speak to the wrongdoer, urging him to seek the help of the elders. (James 5:13-18) If he does not

20. (a) As far as God’s congregation is concerned, what can happen to an unrepentant slanderer? (b) What caution must elders exercise in connection with gossip and slander?

21. Instead of gossiping about a wrongdoer, what should you do?

do this within a reasonable period of time, concern for the cleanness of the congregation should move you to report the matter to the elders.—Leviticus 5:1.

²² Such a report may result in discipline for the wrongdoer, and that would not seem joyous. Still, a person trained by discipline reaps the fruit of righteousness. (Hebrews 12:11) Wrongdoing should be revealed to those appointed to handle such matters, not to gossipers who may chatter about it. Paul told Christians in Corinth: "The disclosure was made to me about you, my brothers, by those of the house of Chloe, that dissensions exist among you." (1 Co-

22. Why can we say that 1 Corinthians 1:11 does not authorize gossiping?

rinthians 1:11) Were members of that household gossiping about fellow believers? No, but the report was made to a responsible elder who could take steps to assist those needing help to get their feet back on the path of life.

²³ If we help a person to guard against involvement in harmful gossip, we are doing something for his good. A wise proverb says: "The one guarding his mouth is keeping his soul. The one opening wide his lips—he will have ruin." (Proverbs 13:3) Clearly, then, there are good reasons to guard against harmful gossip and wicked slander. Yet, how can harmful gossip be crushed? The following article will tell.

23. What question remains for consideration?

HOW HARMFUL GOSSIP CAN BE CRUSHED

*"Do set a guard, O Jehovah, for my mouth;
do set a watch over the door of my lips."*

—PSALM 141:3.

JEHOVAH gave us a brain, and how wonderful it is! Says the book *The Incredible Machine*: "Even the most sophisticated computers that we can envision are crude compared to the almost infinite complexity and flexibility of the human brain . . . The millions of signals flashing through your brain at any moment carry an extraordinary load of infor-

1. What capacity does our God-given brain have?

mation. They bring news about your body's inner and outer environments . . . As other signals process and analyze information, they produce certain emotions, memories, thoughts, or plans which lead to a decision. Almost immediately, signals from your brain tell other parts of your body what to do . . . Meanwhile your brain is also monitoring your breathing, blood chemistry, temperature, and other essential processes outside your awareness."
—Page 326.

² Surely, such a marvelous gift from God should never be used as a trash barrel or a garbage can. Yet, we can misuse the brain by listening to and spreading harmful gossip. How can we avoid such talk and help others to refrain from engaging in it?

Appreciate Your God-Given Mind

³ Appreciation for our God-given mind will restrain us from listening to harmful gossip and spreading it. Jehovah's spirit would not motivate anyone to fill his mind with such ideas and use his tongue to injure anyone. Rather, God's Word says: "Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts." (Isaiah 55:7) The mind of a wicked person is filled with evil ideas, and he is quick to slander the upright. But we would never expect such speech from those who appreciate their God-given mind.

⁴ Proper appreciation will help us to refrain from using our mind and our tongue to cater to our sinful flesh. Instead, we will keep our thinking and speaking on an elevated plane. We can shun harmful gossip by prayerful reliance on the One whose thoughts are far higher than ours. The apostle Paul counseled: "Whatever things are true [not false or slanderous], whatever things are of serious concern [not petty], whatever things are righteous [not wicked and harmful], whatever things are chaste [not unclean slander or evil suspicions], whatever things are lovable [not hateful and belittling], whatever things are well spoken of [not derogatory], whatever virtue [not badness] there is and whatever praiseworthy [not condemned] thing there is, continue considering these things." —Philippians 4:8.

2. What question now merits consideration?
3. Why would no true Christian engage in harmful talk?
4. If we appreciate our brain and our ability to speak, how will we use our mind and our tongue?



⁵ Paul added: "The things that you learned as well as accepted and heard and saw in connection with me, practice these; and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9) What had others seen and heard in connection with Paul? Things that were chaste and spiritually uplifting. He did not fill their ears with the latest gossip about Lydia or Timothy. You can be sure that Paul did not listen to and spread rumors concerning the older men in Jerusalem.* Likely, respect for his God-given mind helped Paul to refrain from involvement in harmful gossip. We will imitate his example if we really appreciate the mind and the tongue Jehovah has given us.

* Even today it is not advisable to listen to and spread sensational tales (often not based on any fact at all) about what members of the Governing Body or their representatives have supposedly said or done.

5. What had fellow believers seen and heard in connection with Paul?



U.S. Forest Service photo



Respect God and His Word

⁶ Heartfelt respect for God and his Sacred Word will also help us to crush harmful gossip. Indeed, such respect will move us to heed the counsel of the disciple James, who took the tongue to task. (James 3:2-12) If a person could control the tongue, he would be able to bridle his whole body, even as a bit in a horse's mouth can guide that animal. As a mere spark can set a forest ablaze, so the little tongue can be

a fire that sets the wheel of life aflame. Man can tame wild beasts, birds, creeping things, and sea creatures, "but the tongue, not one of mankind can get it tamed," said James. Yet, that is no excuse for making no effort to crush harmful gossip.

⁷ James also said that the tongue sends blessing and cursing out of the same mouth. This is not proper, for a fountain does not bubble forth both sweet and bitter water. A fig tree cannot produce olives, and salt water does not produce sweet water. Of course, as long as Christians are imperfect, the tongue will be beyond taming perfectly. This should make us merciful toward repentant offenders, yet it does not excuse harmful gossip. So far as it depends on us, such poisonous misuse of the tongue will not go on occurring if we truly respect God and his Word.

How Prayer Can Help

⁸ Temptation to listen to hurtful gossip and then to spread it can be very strong. So if you have yielded to such temptation in the past, should you not ask God for forgiveness and help? Jesus taught us to pray: "Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the wicked one." (Matthew 6:13) Christians who earnestly pray that God not abandon them to such tempting but evil talk will not succumb to this device

6, 7. (a) How did James show the effects of the unruly tongue? (b) What will not happen if we respect God and his Word?

8. How can prayer help us to crush hurtful gossip?

of Satan; they will be rescued from the great slanderer.

⁹ If we are tempted to slander anyone, we might pray: "Do set a guard, O Jehovah, for my mouth; do set a watch over the door of my lips." (Psalm 141:3) We could ruin our prospects for eternal life by yielding to temptation and imitating the Devil as a hateful, lying, murderous slanderer. (John 8:44) The apostle John wrote: "Everyone who hates his brother is a manslayer, and you know that no manslayer has everlasting life remaining in him."—1 John 3:15.

Love Banishes Gossip

¹⁰ All of us owe others something, but we do not owe hatred that prompts hurtful gossip. "Do not you people be owing anybody a single thing, except to love one another," wrote Paul. (Romans 13:8) We should be paying on that debt daily instead of speaking against others and damaging their reputation. If we claim to love Jehovah, we cannot be slandering a fellow worshiper, "for he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot be loving God, whom he has not seen."—1 John 4:20.

¹¹ Consider Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. Goatlike ones were told that what they did to Christ's brothers was counted as done to him. Would you gossip about Christ? If you would not speak against your Lord and Master, do not treat his anointed brothers that way. Do not commit error as did the goats, who "will depart into everlasting cutting-off." If you love Jesus' brothers, show it by what you say about them.—Matthew 25:31-46.

9. If tempted to slander anyone, how might we pray?

10. Rather than gossiping about others, what do we owe them?

11. How might Jesus' illustration of the sheep and the goats give us some food for thought regarding hurtful gossip?

¹² Since all of us are sinners and in need of Jesus' ransom sacrifice, if someone wanted to make unfavorable remarks about us, he could find plenty to say. (1 John 2:1, 2) Of course, we may think that we are doing quite well. "All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but Jehovah is making an estimate of spirits." God's scales are not tilted by favoritism or partiality. (Proverbs 16:2; Acts 10:34, 35) He weighs our spirit, noting our disposition and the impulses that motivate us to think, act, and talk. Surely, then, we would not want God to find that we wrongly consider ourselves clean and others soiled and worthy of hurtful remarks. Like Jehovah, we must be impartial, merciful, and loving.

¹³ Applying what Paul said at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 can help us to crush harmful gossip. He wrote: "Love is long-suffering and kind." A sister who is suffering persecution in a divided household may not greet us cheerfully. Or some may be slower physically, perhaps because of poor health. Should not love move us to be patient and kind toward such individuals instead of making them victims of critical gossip? 'Love is not jealous, does not brag, does not get puffed up.' Thus, if another Christian receives a privilege of service we do not have, love will prevent us from speaking against him and suggesting that he is unfit for the work. Love will also keep us from boasting about our attainments, talk that could depress those less privileged.

¹⁴ Paul also said that 'love does not be-

12. What is the essence of Proverbs 16:2, and how should it affect our thoughts, actions, and speech?

13. (a) How can the fact that "love is long-suffering and kind" help in crushing harmful gossip? (b) What will keep us from speaking against someone who receives a privilege of service that we do not have?

14. What else is there about love that would affect what we say about others?

have indecently, look for its own interests, become provoked, or keep account of injury.' Instead of indecently saying unchristian things, we should let love move us to speak well of others and to consider their interests. It keeps us from becoming provoked and speaking against people for real or imagined injuries. Since 'love rejoices not over unrighteousness but with the truth,' it keeps us from engaging in harmful gossip even about opposers who experience injustice.

¹⁵ Love 'believes and hopes all things' found in God's Word and moves us to appreciate the spiritual food provided by the 'faithful slave' class, instead of listening to the slanderous statements of lying apostates. (Matthew 24:45-47; 1 John 2:18-21) Since 'love endures all things and never fails,' it also helps us to remain loyal to God's organization even if "false brothers" or others speak against it or its members. —Galatians 2:4.

Respect Curbs Gossip

¹⁶ Respect for fellow believers also helps to crush hurtful gossip. Since they are acceptable to God, surely we should not malign them. Let us never be like the "false brothers" that Paul encountered. Doubtless, they said evil things about him. (2 Corinthians 11:26) Apostates must also have maligned him. (Compare Jude 3, 4.) In Corinth some individuals said: "His letters are weighty and forceful, but his presence in person is weak and his speech contemptible." (2 Corinthians 10:10) People do not make such remarks about those they love.

15. (a) How should we be affected by the fact that 'love believes and hopes all things'? (b) What facets of love can help us to stick with Jehovah's organization even if others speak against it?

16. How was Paul treated by false brothers in Corinth?

¹⁷ Consider the apostle John, who was spoken against by Diotrephes. "I wrote something to the congregation," said John, "but Diotrephes, who likes to have the first place among them, does not receive anything from us with respect. That is why, if I come, I will call to remembrance his works which he goes on doing, chattering about us with wicked words." (3 John 9, 10) Such chattering was a very serious matter, and if we are listening to or spreading similar talk today, we should stop doing so immediately.

¹⁸ Urging respect for the upright, John told Gaius: "Be an imitator, not of what is bad, but of what is good. He that does good originates with God. He that does bad has not seen God. Demetrius has had witness borne to him by them all and by the truth itself. In fact, we, also, are bearing witness, and you know that the witness we give is true." (3 John 1, 11, 12) Each of us might ask himself: Am I a chattering Diotrephes, or am I a faithful Demetrius? If we respect fellow believers, we will not make negative remarks about them, giving others reason to view us as chatterers.

¹⁹ False brothers did not exist only in the first century. During the 1890's, unscrupulous individuals associating with God's organization tried to get control of the Watch Tower Society. They conspired against Charles Taze Russell, seeking to bring about his end as the Society's first president. After brewing for about two years, the conspiracy erupted in 1894. The false charges centered mainly around Russell's alleged dishonesty in business. Some of the petty charges betrayed the accusers'

17. With what sort of words was Diotrephes talking about the apostle John?

18. How did Demetrius differ from Diotrephes, and how might this contrast affect our conduct?

19. How did false brothers seek to defame C. T. Russell?

intention—the defamation of C. T. Russell. Impartial Christians investigated matters and found him to be in the right. Thus, this plan to “blow Mr. Russell and his work sky-high” was a failure. So, like Paul, Brother Russell was assailed by false brothers, but this trial was recognized as a design of Satan. The conspirators were thereafter considered unfit to enjoy Christian fellowship.

Good Works Stifle Harmful Gossip

²⁰ Paul knew that harmful gossip was often related to idleness, not plenty of good works. He was not pleased that some younger widows had learned “to be idlers going the rounds of the houses, and not only idlers but also chatterers and busybodies, talking of what they ought not.” What was the remedy? Wholesome activity. Thus, Paul wrote: “So I would have younger ones marry, bear children, keep house, not give the opponent any opening toward abusive talk.”—1 Timothy 5:11-14, *Byington*.

²¹ If women manage a household, train children according to God’s standards, and engage in other worthwhile pursuits, they

20. What fault did Paul find with some younger widows?

21. What bearing does 1 Corinthians 15:58 have on avoiding the snares of harmful gossip?

How Would You Reply?

☐ How can prayer help us to avoid slandering others?

☐ How can applying 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 help us to crush harmful gossip?

☐ How can self-respect help us to curb any temptation to gossip about fellow believers?

☐ What bearing can 1 Corinthians 15:58 have on avoiding the snares of harmful gossip?

will have little time for idle talk that can lead to hurtful gossip. Men too will have less time for such speech if they are occupied with good works. “Always having plenty to do in the work of the Lord” will help all of us to avoid the snares of harmful gossip. (1 Corinthians 15:58) Especially will wholehearted involvement in the Christian ministry, congregation meetings, and other godly pursuits keep our minds on spiritual matters so that we do not become unoccupied gossipers and meddlers in other people’s affairs.

²² If we keep busy in godly works and seek to bless others spiritually, we will be loyal friends, not disloyal talebearers. (Proverbs 17:17) And if we avoid damaging gossip, we will have the best Friend of all—Jehovah God. Let us remember that seven things detestable to him are “lofty eyes, a false tongue, and hands that are shedding innocent blood, a heart fabricating hurtful schemes, feet that are in a hurry to run to badness, a false witness that launches forth lies, and anyone sending forth contentions among brothers.” (Proverbs 6:16-19) Gossipmongers exaggerate and twist things, and slanderers have false tongues. Their words set in motion the feet of those eager to bear tales. Almost invariably, contention is the result. But if we hate what God hates, we will shun hurtful gossip that can damage the upright and bring glee to the great slanderer, Satan the Devil.

²³ Therefore, let us make Jehovah’s heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) Let us avoid speech that he hates, refuse to listen to slander, and do our best to crush harmful gossip. Surely, we can do so with the help of our holy God, Jehovah.

22. What does Proverbs 6:16-19 say about God’s view of slanderers?

23. As regards our speech, how can we make Jehovah’s heart rejoice?



WILL GOD EVER DO ANYTHING ABOUT INJUSTICE?

"IT'S just not fair." The young student was visibly upset, filled with indignation after personally experiencing an obvious travesty of justice. "If there really is a God," she continued, "how can he permit such injustice?" Could you have empathized with this young lady? Probably so. But could you also have answered her objection?

When a child, you may at times have felt that your parents allowed you to be treated unjustly. But that apparent injustice hardly proved that they did not exist, did it? Likewise, God's permission of injustice in no way proves his nonexistence.

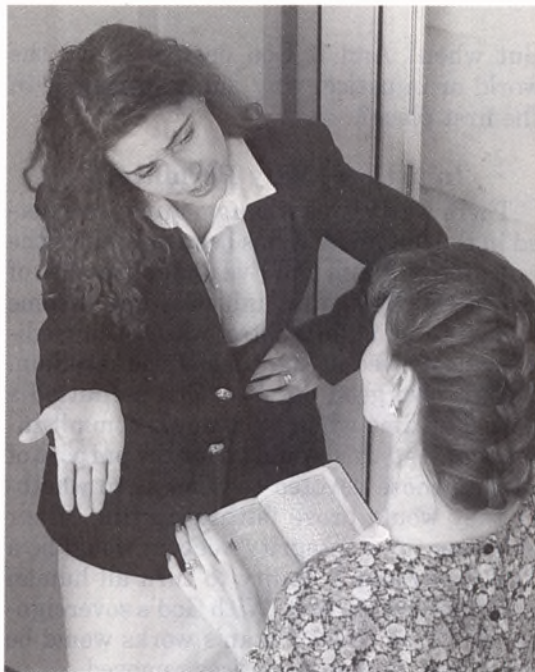
The young student replied, however, that this was quite a different matter. She pointed out that an imperfect human father might even be a bit unjust himself. Or because of not knowing all the facts, he might not recognize injustice when he saw it. Furthermore, because of human limitations, he might be powerless to do anything about the injustices he did see. None of this,

she argued, would apply to a just God who is omniscient and omnipotent.

You too may feel that the permission of injustice is simply not compatible with divine qualities. Yet, could it be that in his ultimate wisdom, God has a credible reason for permitting injustice for a length of time?

Bible writers considered God to be "a lover of righteousness and justice." "All his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice," wrote Moses.—Psalm 33:5; Deuteronomy 32:4; Job 37:23.

Besides viewing Jehovah as a just God who takes no delight in injustice, Bible writers agreed that he would one day do away with it. Isaiah, for example, foretold this condition: "Look! A king will reign for righteousness itself; and as respects princes, they will rule as princes for justice itself. And in the wilderness justice will certainly reside, and in the orchard righteousness itself will dwell." (Isaiah 32:1, 16)



But when? And if God desires to rid the world of injustice, why did he permit it in the first place?

Injustice—Why Permitted?

There was a time when no injustice existed in the universe. It has been only since the rebellion of Adam and Eve under pressure of Satan the Devil that injustice has become known to mankind. Satan was not immediately destroyed at the time of the rebellion. For his own good purpose, God permitted a period of time when man would commit injustices, and this would be for the purpose of testing those devoted to Him, as to whether they would prove faithful to Him. Their choosing to be integrity keepers would be a denial of Satan's ability to turn all human creation against God. With God's sovereignty thus vindicated, Satan's works would be destroyed, and all injustices removed.

In the meantime, were God forcibly to prevent people from dealing unjustly, he would be robbing them of freedom of choice. Besides, by allowing people to feel the unjust consequences of others' wrong actions, God illustrates how detrimental it was that Adam and Eve unjustly rebelled against divine regulations, replacing these with their own faulty standards. By allowing mankind to reap what it has sown, God helps honest people to realize the superiority of doing things his way.—Jeremiah 10:23; Galatians 6:7.

In addition, the acts of justice or injustice that individuals perform provide revealing evidence. These acts provide God with an accurate basis upon which to judge who is worthy of living on earth in a new world when full justice has been restored. Suggesting that, we read: "Now as regards someone wicked, in case he should turn back from all his sins that he has committed and he should actually keep all my statutes and execute justice and righteousness, he will positively keep living."—Ezekiel 18:21.

When Will Injustice End?

Jehovah God's dealings with mankind have always been just and marked by loving-kindness. Illustrating that, when God's faithful servant Abraham could not understand why something was happening, he said of God: "It is unthinkable of you that you [would] put to death the righteous man with the wicked one so that it has to occur with the righteous man as it does with the wicked! It is unthinkable of you. Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?" (Genesis 18:25) With the coming of Christ, God's qualities of justice and loving-kindness were magnified. The ransom sacrifice arrangement by means of Christ Jesus opened up the way for everyone, Jew and non-Jew alike, to gain everlasting life. This led the apostle Peter to say: "For a certainty I perceive that God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him."—Acts 10:34, 35.

Jehovah's Witnesses are active in proclaiming that God's Messianic King has begun his rule and that the time is near when justice will be restored to our earth in perfect measure.* This will be accomplished when that King destroys the present unjust world and breaks the power of its invisible god, Satan the Devil. The Bible shows that this will occur soon at "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," which is generally called Armageddon.—Revelation 16:14, 16.

"God is not unjust when he vents his wrath," so Armageddon will be a just war. (Romans 3:5) Afterward, Christ Jesus and his corulers, such as the apostles, will reign

* For evidence that God's Kingdom began its invisible rule over the earth in 1914, see pages 134-41 of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. This book also contains a chapter on the subject "Why Has God Permitted Wickedness?"



***The permission of
injustice can in no
way be used to
prove God's
nonexistence***

***Is God at fault for a
drunken driver's
refusal to use the
qualities of common
sense, self-control,
and consideration?***

***The time is near
when full justice will
be restored to our
earth***

from heaven for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:4) Millions of people who have suffered injustices in the past will be resurrected into a righteous system on earth, mankind's original home, to experience perfect justice for the first time in their lives.

“Does It Follow That God Is Unjust?”

The apostle Paul asked that regarding one of God's dealings. The answer? “Of course not,” wrote Paul. Likening humans to clay that has been shaped by a potter into vessels deserving either wrath or mercy, Paul explained: “Although God is ready to show his anger and display his power, yet he patiently puts up with the people who make him angry, however much they deserve to be destroyed. He puts up with them

for the sake of those other people, to whom he wants to be merciful, to whom he wants to reveal the richness of his glory.”—Romans 9:14, 20-24, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

As with the young student mentioned earlier, you may at times find it difficult to understand why God permits injustice in general or some specific wrong. But who are we—the moldings of his hand—to question his patience and wisdom in doing so? Jehovah God said to Job: “Really, will you invalidate my justice? Will you pronounce me wicked in order that you may be in the right?”—Job 40:8.

Never will we want to be guilty of doing that. Rather, we will want to rejoice in knowing that although injustice is still with us, the God of justice will soon remove it from the entire earth.

COURAGEOUS DECISIONS YIELD BLESSINGS IN Suriname



AT ONE time, Suriname was “one of the richest Caribbean states,” noted the international news magazine *South*. Income from bauxite, shrimps, rice, bananas, and plywood, supplemented by development aid, provided the 400,000 inhabitants of this former Dutch colony more prosperity than most of their neighbors.

During the 1980's, however, the economy slumped. Abundance turned into shortage, and long food lines became a familiar sight. In 1986 the outbreak of guerrilla warfare forced some ten thousand inhabitants to flee from eastern Suriname to neighboring French Guiana, there to start life anew in refugee camps. Meanwhile, large parts of the jungle—home of about 50,000 Bush Negroes and Amerindians—came under guerrilla control, making normal travel into the interior dangerous. These changes, commented *South* magazine, left the country crippled.

Did those conditions also cripple the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses? On the

contrary, they have stepped up their work. For instance, the number of Witnesses has risen from 920 in 1980 to over 1,400 today. In April 1989 there were 338 auxiliary pioneers—nearly 25 percent of the Witnesses then. Such blessings, however, came only as a result of the courage, integrity, and love that the Witnesses demonstrated under trial. Here are some recent examples of how courageous decisions brought rich blessings in Suriname.

A Decision That Saved His Life

Lumey Hoefer, a husky police officer in his late 30's and one of Jehovah's Witnesses, decided that he would quit his job despite the bad economy. Why? Lumey explains:

“Ever since I read a *Watchtower* article alerting us to the dangers connected with carrying firearms, I knew I would have to give up this work.* I hesitated, though, because I have a wife and children to care

* See the article “Seek Peace and Pursue It” in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1983, pages 21-6.

for. However, the longer I postponed my decision, the more my conscience bothered me. 'If Jehovah's organization urges me to consider seriously the appropriateness of this line of work, there must be a good reason,' I reminded myself. So in January 1986, I made up my mind."



Two views of a fine Kingdom Hall in a remote part of the country

But the police chief did not want to let him go, even promising to assign him to Tamanredjo, a much sought-after station close to the capital. But Lumey was determined. He wrote to the minister of police, explained his religious beliefs, and asked for a dismissal. In April 1986 the reply came: 'Request granted!'

Soon Lumey found a job at the Forestry Department. The pay was not as good, but he had more time to accompany his family to meetings at the Kingdom Hall. Ten months passed. One day, after working all day on the family farm, Lumey and his brother were on their way home. He relates:

"Approaching the farmhouse, I noticed two men in shabby clothes, with scarves tied around their heads. '*Kon dja* (Come here),' they called in Surinamese. As I walked toward them, a third man with a carbine dangling from a shoulder strap appeared. Only then did it dawn on me: guerrillas!

"They looked me up and down. Then one

of the men with the scarf shouted: 'I know this fellow. He is a policeman!' Their faces tensed up. For a few seconds, we stared at one another. I held my breath. Then I heard a low sound. Click, clack—the third man cocked his rifle. Slowly, he aimed it at my breast, ready to execute me. 'Don't shoot! You're making a mistake. I'm no longer a policeman,' I blurted.

"Then I saw a dozen more armed guerrillas behind the house. One of them—a muscular man wearing a loincloth, two cartridge belts crisscrossed over his bare chest, and holding an automatic weapon in his hand—stepped forward. 'You say you're no longer a policeman. Why not?' he demanded. I quickly identified myself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. 'Witnesses do not bear arms,' I explained, 'so I quit my job as a policeman and now work at the Forestry Department. We are neutral in all politics,' I added.

"Upon hearing that I was a Witness, his facial expression relaxed a bit. 'Will he believe me?' I wondered. Then my younger

brother arrived. The man in the loincloth, evidently the commander, began questioning him. After my brother confirmed my statement, the commander seemed satisfied. 'Saka yu gon! (Lower your gun)' he ordered the other guerrilla. I felt relieved. 'Thank you, Jehovah, for protecting me!' I prayed."

A few days later, Lumey had another shock. Unknown gunmen had executed three police officers at the Tamanredjo police station, the very one where the chief had offered to assign him! "If I had ignored the advice from that *Watchtower* article, I would be a dead man now," says Lumey. Then he adds gratefully: "Jehovah truly protects his servants."

Love Moved Him to Rescue His Brothers

When fighting broke out between government troops and the guerrillas in the bauxite-mining town of Moengo in October 1986, Frans Salaoema, a Bush Negro in his 40's, had to decide what to do. Finally, he, his pregnant wife, and his seven sons, along with others from the town, escaped over jungle trails and across the wide Maroni River to safety in French Guiana.

Still, Frans worried. He did not find any Witnesses from his congregation among the refugees. 'Where are they? Shall I go back to find them?' he wondered. But that would be risky. The guerrillas were mostly Bush Negroes. 'If government soldiers spot me sneaking through the jungle, I'm finished,' he thought. Nevertheless, he decided to return to find his Christian brothers. He told several of the Witnesses in French Guiana: "Next week, cross the river to pick me up."

One week later they went across, but Frans was not there. They waited till the next day. Still no Frans. "Let's stay one more night," they decided. Then Frans and a group of Witnesses showed up. What had happened?

"After finding the brothers," Frans related, "we crossed through the thick of fighting, slipped into the jungle, and headed for the border." But why the delay? Frans pointed to three cartons he had brought along. He had gone to the capital to collect a supply of Bible literature for the refugee Witnesses. The waiting brothers were delighted. That same day, Frans,

Typical dugout boat in Suriname



the rescued Witnesses, and the three cartons crossed the border safely.

Later Frans made another trip to help more Witnesses. Eventually, 37 Witnesses crossed the border and settled in refugee camps. Frans was placed in a former leper colony in French Guiana, where the refugees are not supposed to do anything more than sway in their hammocks and ward off mosquitoes.

Frans and his family, however, were not idle. Shortly after arriving in the camp, Frans (by now also the father of a daughter) got busy preaching the Kingdom good news to the unfortunate residents. For his good influence, he was even given permission to travel by motorbike to preach in the other camps. The result? Today he conducts 14 Bible studies with fellow refugees. Three of them are already baptized!

He Did Not Compromise

"I'll be back in two weeks with new supplies," declared Victor Wens, a 58-year-old special pioneer. He was leaving his wife and some Bible students in a jungle village in central Suriname. That was in June 1987, as he headed for the capital.

When Victor's wife and the others waved good-bye, their bags of rice were about empty. The guerrilla war had cut off all supplies. Soon there would be hunger. They realized, though, that Victor's canoe journey was risky. He could be caught in cross fire or be mistaken for a guerrilla. 'Will he return safely?' they wondered as the sound of the canoe's engine faded away.

Two weeks later, Victor's wife scanned the river—but no sign of Victor. More weeks went by. Food ran out, and she fell ill. "Please, Jehovah, guard my husband," she prayed. "May he come back!" Three months passed. Still no Victor. What had gone wrong?

"After reaching the capital," relates Victor later, "I got permission to buy a six-months' supply of food and gasoline. Then I asked for a permit to travel home. The official in charge said: 'You can go, but find out where the guerrillas are hiding, and return to inform us.' My heart sank. 'I cannot do this,' I said, 'Jehovah does not want us to take sides in politics. We Witnesses are neutral.' He replied: 'In that case, you don't go home.'"

"Every week I went back to ask for permission, but the answer remained the same. Meanwhile, I heard that my wife was ill. I wished to go home and care for her. Yet, I did not want to compromise. I felt helpless.

"When I went back yet again, to my surprise they said I could go. They explained that they had given permission to some Pentecostal pastors from my area to travel back, and I could go with them. Delighted, I began making preparations until I learned from a friend that these clergymen had agreed to be spies. As I did not want to give the impression that Jehovah's Witnesses were part and parcel to that arrangement, I canceled the trip. Again I was stuck."

Finally it dawned on the officials that Victor was not about to give up his convictions. The next time he approached them, they granted permission.

At last, in October 1987, the little group of Witnesses heard the outboard and saw a heavily laden canoe appear. "I felt sad when I saw my wife," Victor relates. "She looked so skinny. Yet, she too was happy that I did not compromise."

"Victor's courageous decision has been a blessing for us," comments a traveling minister working in the interior. "Officials and guerrillas have learned that Jehovah's Witnesses are neutral. Now they respect our view, and our work is thriving."

Married on Wednesday, Baptized on Saturday

"Don't be fools," pressured the relatives. "Don't get married!" The six men of the Aucaner Bush Negro tribe, in the country's southeastern corner, understood their relatives' feelings. After all, tribal custom dictates that a man not marry, thus he can leave the woman whenever he pleases. However, having learned from their Bible study Jehovah's view on fornication, these men had adjusted their thinking, withstood the community's pressure, and courageously decided to get properly married.

Still, there were obstacles. War conditions had closed the Registry Office in the interior, and travel to the capital was virtually impossible. The six future brides also desired to wear real bridal gowns on their wedding day. This reflected a local interest in such apparel, even though such dress is not really necessary for Christians.* 'Where are we to find wedding gowns in a rain forest?' wondered the men. Nonetheless, courageous decisions made in line with Bible principles brought blessings. On Wednesday, September 16, 1987, six brides in gorgeous gowns and six grooms in smart suits were married. How was that possible?

"In September, we arranged a district convention in St. Laurent, French Guiana, and asked the Witnesses living in the interior to attend," explains Daniël van Marl, one of the traveling ministers who performed the weddings. "That convention provided the opportunity to get married."

Cecyl Pinas, a Branch Committee member caring for the work in the interior explains: "I visited the Bethel family in the Netherlands earlier that year and

mentioned those upcoming weddings. After I mentioned that we use one gown over and over, always adjusting it to fit the next bride, four Bethel sisters spontaneously gave me their wedding dresses as gifts for their 'sisters' in Suriname. I was very touched. Later, at an assembly in the Netherlands, more gowns were donated."

On the morning of the wedding day, some alterations still had to be made. "We quickly widened the waist of some dresses and adjusted the length of others, but we finished just in time," says Margreet van de Reep.

With the marriages performed, five of the newlyweds were ready for another step. On Saturday that same week, they were baptized in the Maroni River. They were eager to return as married couples to their jungle villages to do their share in the preaching work. Did Jehovah bless their decision?

"Those couples showed the community that we Witnesses practice what we preach," says Nel Pinas, who started the preaching work in that same area in 1967. "Their decision to marry in order to become true Christians has aroused interest in faraway villages. Witnesses there are now steering their canoes into rivers where we never preached before, finding more people who are willing to learn about Jehovah."

Indeed, the courageous decisions of Lumey, Frans, Victor, and many others have brought rich blessings for them and their fellow Christians in Suriname and elsewhere. Experiences like these prove time and again the truth of the Bible proverb: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight."—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

* See "Christian Weddings That Bring Joy," in *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1984, pages 11, 12.

Insight on the News

Preventing Violence

Reflecting the steady increase in violence among teenagers, *American Health* journal reports that "fights with friends, classmates and neighbors constitute the No. 1 killer of urban adolescents and the No. 2 killer of all adolescents in America."

In an effort to counter violent tendencies, a Boston counseling center offers a course that enables its students to act out short documentary dramas on violence. In this way, they "begin to recognize the patterns associated with violence" and, explains the program director, are able to "see those angry patterns in themselves."

The students learn of the physiological response to anger, of the increased flow of adrenaline that overrides self-control, and the value of communication in cooling anger "before the body reacts biochemically." They learn that by asking questions and talking calmly and deliberately, a heated confrontation can be avoided.

Bible students have long recognized that violence begets violence and that, "an answer, when mild, turns away rage." (Proverbs 15:1) The Bible advises us to flee, right at the outset, when we are faced with a potentially explosive confrontation. Wise King Solomon wrote: "The beginning of contention is as one letting out waters; so before the quarrel has burst forth, take your leave."—Proverbs 17:14.

A Structured Universe

At the end of May some 200 physicists, including several Nobel prize winners, convened in Blois, France. Their week-long meeting was to celebrate the

25th anniversary of the discovery of "CP violation," an apparent violation of laws thought to establish perfect symmetry between matter and antimatter.

But this theory poses as many problems as it solves. Quoting Soviet Professor Andrei Linde, the *International Herald Tribune* reported: "The paradox," he said, "is that this asymmetry produced the ordered universe." Asked whether "CP violation" indicated a purpose in the universe, French cosmologist Jean Audouze stated: "Some days I think yes, some days no. The universe is not uniform. And the universe is structured. And these two things are amazing. The universe is not something that happened at random."

It is neither by accident nor at random that the universe came to exist. Genesis 1:1 says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The universe is orderly because Jehovah, the Creator, "is a God, not of disorder," but One whose works are "perfect."—1 Corinthians 14:33; Deuteronomy 32:4; compare Isaiah 40:26; 42:5.

Homosexuality and Catholics

The pope has repeatedly stated that the Catholic Church's official position on homosexual behavior is that it is morally wrong. As he explains, "the early Christian society was certainly not permissive." Not all Catholic bishops and priests agree.

Early in 1989, French bishop Jacques Gaillot claimed that he was simply echoing Jesus' words when he wrote that "homosexuals are going ahead of us into the kingdom of God."

What Bishop Gaillot failed to

mention, however, was that Jesus was referring to repentant harlots—not practicing prostitutes—as those who would enter the Kingdom of God ahead of obstinate Jewish leaders of his day.—Matthew 21:28-32.

Similarly, Spanish priest José Ramón Carrasco recently wrote in the Madrid newspaper *El País* that "Jesus Christ never condemned homosexuals. . . . When he spoke of love, he spoke of love of neighbor and he never specified whether the neighbor had to be a man or a woman, or what posture, form or way he loved."

The Biblical account, however, shows that Jesus was not referring to homosexual relationships. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, he explained exactly what love of neighbor meant, namely, showing an unselfish interest in the welfare of others.—Luke 10:29-37.

The Bible states regarding practitioners of homosexuality: "Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals . . . will inherit the kingdom of God."—1 Corinthians 6:9-11, *Revised Standard Version*, Catholic edition.

In Our Next Issue

■ Is the Golden Rule Out-of-Date?

■ Do Not Yoke Yourself With Unbelievers

■ Do You See Only the Outward Appearance?

◇ GEMS ◇

From Mark's Gospel

JEHOVAH'S spirit inspired Mark to write an action-packed account of Jesus' earthly life and ministry. Though this Gospel does not say that Mark was its writer, there is evidence of this in the works of Papias, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and others whose writings span the first four centuries of our Common Era.

According to tradition, the apostle Peter provided the basic information for this Gospel. For example, Origen said that Mark wrote it "in accordance with Peter's instructions." But Mark apparently had access to other sources too, for the disciples met in his mother's home. In fact, since Mark probably was the "young man" who eluded those arresting Jesus, he may have had personal contact with Christ.—Mark 14:51, 52; Acts 12:12.

Written for Whom?

Mark apparently wrote primarily with Gentile readers in mind. For instance, his concise style was suited to the Roman nature. He defined "corban" as "a gift dedicated to God" (7:11) and indicated that the temple could be seen from the Mount of Olives. (13:3) Mark also explained that the Pharisees "practiced fasting" and the Sadducees "say there is no resurrection." (2:18; 12:18) Such comments would be unnecessary for Jewish readers.

Of course, reading Mark's Gospel can benefit anyone. But what background features can help us to appreciate some of its gems?

God's Son a Miracle Worker

Mark recounts miracles Christ performed by God's power. For instance, on one occasion there was such a crowd in a house that in order for a paralytic to get healed, he had to be lowered near Jesus through an opening dug in the roof. (2:4) Because the house was crowded, the man may have been taken up a ladder or an outside staircase. But why the need to dig through the roof? Well, most roofs were flat and rested on beams running from wall to wall. Across the beams were rafters covered with branches, reeds, and the like. On top was a thick layer of earth coated with a plaster of clay or of clay and lime. Therefore, to get the paralytic into Jesus' presence, men had to dig through the earthen roof. But what a blessing after they did so! Christ healed the man, and all

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

those on hand glorified God. (2:1-12) What an assurance that Jehovah's Son will perform marvelous cures in the new world!

Jesus performed one of his miracles aboard a boat when he hushed a windstorm on the Sea of Galilee after being awakened while asleep on "a pillow." (4:35-41) The pillow apparently was not the soft kind now used as a headrest in bed. It may have been a mere fleece that oarsmen sat on or a bolster or cushion serving as a seat at the stern. At any rate, when Jesus told the sea, "Hush! Be quiet!" those present had evidence of faith in action, for "the wind abated, and a great calm set in."

Ministry in the Decapolis

Crossing the Sea of Galilee, Jesus entered the Decapolis, or ten-city region. Though these cities undoubtedly had large Jewish populations, they were centers of Greek or Hellenistic culture. There, in the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus freed from demon possession a man who "had his haunt among the tombs."—5:1-20.

At times, tombs hewed out of rock were haunts of the insane, criminal hideouts, or dwellings of the poor. (Compare Isaiah 22:16; 65:2-4.) According to a 19th-century work, a visitor to the area where Jesus encoun-



tered this demoniac said of such a home: "The tomb was about eight feet in height on the inside, as there was a descent of a steep step from the stone threshold to the floor. Its size was about twelve paces square; but, as no light was received into it except by the door, we could not see whether there was an inner chamber as in some of the others. A perfect sarcophagus still remained within, and this was now used by the family as a chest for corn and other provisions, so that this violated sepulcher of the dead had thus become a secure, a cool, and a convenient retreat to the living."

Jesus and Tradition

On one occasion, the Pharisees and some scribes complained that Jesus' disciples ate with unwashed hands. For the benefit of Gentile readers, Mark explained that the Pharisees and other Jews 'did not eat unless they washed their hands up to the elbow.' Upon returning from the market, they ate only after cleansing themselves by sprinkling, and their traditions included "baptisms of cups and pitchers and copper vessels." —7:1-4.

Besides sanctimoniously sprinkling themselves before eating, these Jews baptized, or immersed in water, the cups, pitchers, and copper vessels they used at meals. How tradition-bound they were was illustrated by scholar John Lightfoot. Citing rabbinical works, he showed that much attention was given to such details as the amount of water, the manner, and the time satisfactory for washing. Lightfoot quoted a source indicating that

certain Jews washed carefully before meals so as to avoid injury by Shibta, "an evil spirit which sits upon men's hands in the night: and if any touch his food with unwashed hands, that spirit sits upon that food, and there is danger from it." No wonder Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees for 'letting go the commandment of God while holding fast the tradition of men!'—7:5-8.

Jesus' Final Public Ministry

After reporting on Jesus' later ministry in Galilee and His work in Perea, Mark focused attention on events in and around Jerusalem. For instance, he told about an occasion when Christ was observing people drop money into the temple treasury chests. Jesus saw that a poor widow contributed only 'two small coins of very little value.' Yet, he said that she gave more than all the others, for they contributed out of their surplus, whereas 'out of her want, she dropped in her whole living.'



(12:41-44)

According to the Greek text, she contributed two lepta. The lepton was the smallest Jewish copper or bronze coin, and its monetary value is practically negligible today. But this poor woman did what she could, furnishing a fine example of unselfishness in supporting true worship. —2 Corinthians 9:6, 7.

As Jesus' ministry drew to a

close, he was questioned by Pontius Pilate, whose name and the title "prefect" appear on an inscription found at Caesarea in



Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums; photograph from Israel Museum, Jerusalem

1961. In outlying provinces like Judea, a governor (prefect) had military control, was responsible for financial administration, and served as a trial judge. Pilate had authority to release Christ, but he yielded to Jesus' foes and sought to satisfy the crowd by handing him over for impalement and freeing the seditious murderer Barabbas.—15:1-15.

There are various traditions regarding Pilate's later life and death. For instance, the historian Eusebius wrote: "Pilate himself, the governor of our Saviour's day, was involved in such calamities that he was forced to become his own executioner and to punish himself with his own hand: divine justice, it seems, was not slow to overtake him." Regardless of such a possibility, however, the death of utmost import was that of Jesus. The Roman army officer (centurion) who witnessed Christ's death and the extraordinary events surrounding it spoke truth indeed when he said: "Certainly this man was God's Son."—15:33-39.

