April 15, 1991

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

When Will Peace Really Come?

The Watchtower®
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

April 15, 1991
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In This Issue

Is World Peace on the Horizon?	3
When Will Lasting Peace Really Come?	5
At the Sea of Galilee	8
Dead Sea Scrolls—The Prized Find	10
Dead Sea Scrolls —Unprecedented Treasure	12
Will You Imitate God's Mercy?	14
Imitate God's Mercy Today	20
"The Lord's Day"	26
Do You Remember?	28
Keep Walking in Light and Love	29
Walk as Fellow Workers in the Truth	30
Beware of Apostates!	31

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these 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 God's 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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IS WORLD PEACE ON THE HORIZON?

THROUGHOUT history, there has been no lack of peace plans and peace declarations of one sort or another. Unfortunately, there appear to have been just as many wars to nullify them. As far as peace treaties and proclamations are concerned, most people have learned not to put too much stock in them.

Within the last few years, however, many observers and news analysts have begun to feel that something different is taking place. They have raised the possibility that, despite local problems, this time the stage may be set for world peace. "Hope for peaceful conflict resolution is better founded than in any other year since the end of World War II," said the Stockholm International Peace Institute. A prominent news correspondent was led by the fast-moving events in Eastern Europe to declare: "Peace on Earth seems more possible now than at any time since World War II." Even the journal *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reflected this mood. In 1988 it turned its famous doomsday clock from three minutes before midnight to six minutes before midnight, and then in April 1990 farther back to ten minutes before midnight.

"This generation of people on earth may witness the advent of an irreversible period of peace in the history of civilization."

UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos

—Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, at summit meeting in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., May 1990

All of this generated much optimism and euphoria before the outbreak of war in the Middle East. But even since then, some people are talking about the Cold War and the arms race between the superpowers as having ended. Some were speculating about what to do with all the money the governments hope to save from reduced military spending. Is it possible that the time for lasting peace has really come? Are the nations truly learning "to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears"? (Isaiah 2:4) What do the facts show?

The Forgotten Wars

"The end of the cold war and the new relaxation between East and West have tempted some to believe that peace is the order of the day," observes *The Economist* of London. "It is not. Rid of one big source of tension, the world still has lots of little ones." What are these "little" tensions, or conflicts?

The Lentz Peace Research Laboratory, an independent research organization in the United States, reports that as of September 1990, at least 15 wars were raging around the world. This did not include the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, since the report

counted only wars in which at least a thousand people were killed per year up to that time. Some of these wars have been going on for 20 or more years. Together they have taken 2,900,000 lives, and most of these have been civilians. This figure excludes those killed in some of the bloodiest wars that had just come to a halt in the previous year, such as those in Uganda, Afghanistan, and Iran-Iraq.

Nearly three million people killed when the world is supposedly at peace! That in itself is tragic. The greater tragedy, however, is that most of these wars have been going on practically unnoticed—and unlamented—by the rest of the world. They are what might be called the forgotten wars, since most of them—coups, civil wars, revolutions—are fought in one or another of the less-developed nations. For most people in the rich, industrialized nations, the half a million people killed in the Sudan, or the third of a million killed in Angola, do not seem to have held much interest. In fact, there are those who argue that the world has been in an unprecedented period of peace since the end of World War II because there was no war among the developed nations and, in spite of the tremendous tension and weapons buildup, the superpowers had not gone to war against each other.

"A new world of freedom lays before us . . . , a world where peace endures, where commerce has conscience and where all that seems possible is possible."

UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos

—U.S. president George Bush, at a world economic summit meeting in Houston, Texas, U.S.A., July 1990

"The walls that once confined people and ideas are collapsing. Europeans are determining their own destiny. They are choosing freedom. They are choosing economic liberty. They are choosing peace."

—Declaration by NATO at summit in London, England, July 1990

Is There Hope for Peace?

If peace simply means no global nuclear war, then perhaps one could argue that the nations of the world have already had some success in their peace efforts. The policy of Mutual Assured Destruction has restrained the superpowers thus far. But is that really peace? How can it be, when people are living in constant fear of instant and total annihilation? How can we talk about peace when, around the world, so many people's lives are shattered, their livelihood ruined, and their prospect for a meaningful and fulfilled existence wiped out by wars, large and small?

Nobel prize winner Elie Wiesel once wrote: "From time immemorial, people have talked about peace without achieving it. Do we simply lack enough experience? Though we talk peace, we wage war. Sometimes we even wage war in the name of peace. . . . War may be too much a part of history to be eliminated—ever."

And recently the war in the Middle East again shattered the illusion of peace. Could it be that mankind has simply *been looking* to the wrong source for peace?

WHEN WILL LASTING PEACE REALLY COME?

"WAR is one of the constants of history, and has not diminished with civilization or democracy," wrote Will and Ariel Durant in their book *The Lessons of History*. "Peace is an unstable equilibrium, which can be preserved only by acknowledged supremacy or equal power."

Indeed, despite intense efforts, lasting peace has so far eluded mankind. Why? The reason is that the causes of war are far more deep-rooted than the political, territorial, or social struggles we see on the surface. The Durants observed: "The causes of war are the same as the causes of competition among individuals: acquisitiveness, pugnacity, and pride; the desire for food, land, materials, fuels, mastery."

However, the Bible in particular identifies the root cause of strife and war between individuals and on a larger scale. We read: "From what source are there wars and from what source are there fights among you? Are they not from this source, namely, from your cravings for sensual pleasure that carry on a conflict in your members? You desire, and yet you do not have. You go on murdering and coveting, and yet you are not able to obtain. You go on fighting and waging war."—James 4:1, 2.

The issue, then, boils down to this: For true peace to come, we must eliminate not only the symptoms—wars, uprisings, coups, revolutions—but also the root causes—suspicion, greed, hatred, hostility—in all humans. These must be replaced by actions consistent with such unselfish qualities as love, kindness, trust, and generosity. Does anyone exist who is capable of accomplishing this? If it is dependent on imperfect, mortal earthlings, the answer will have to be no. But there is someone for whom this is not too difficult. This is the One who holds the answer to the question: When will peace really come?

The One Who Can Bring Peace

Some 28 centuries ago, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to declare: "There has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. To the abundance of the princely rule and to peace there will be no end."—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

The identity of this one who will bring peace with no end was later revealed to be none other than Jesus Christ, "Son of the Most High." (Luke 1:30-33; Matthew 1: 18-23) But why will this one succeed where all other princes and rulers have failed? It should be noted, first of all, that the promised "child" was not to remain forever a helpless infant, as some may picture him. Rather, he was to exercise "princely rule" as the "Prince of Peace," to mankind's eternal blessing.

There is more to Jesus' rule. As "Wonderful Counselor," having extraordinary understanding of human nature and superlative ability, he will be able to get to the heart of difficult issues and thus resolve the thorny problems that confront and frustrate worldly rulers today. (Matthew 7: 28, 29; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 11:14-20)

Then, as "Mighty God," the resurrected godlike one, Jesus Christ, now enthroned in the heavens as Messianic King, will work for peace by repeating on a grand scale what he did while on earth—healing those with incurable diseases, providing multitudes with food and drink, even controlling the weather. (Matthew 14:14-21; Mark 4:36-39; Luke 17:11-14; John 2:1-11) As "Eternal Father," Jesus has the power to bring back to life those who have perished in death and impart to them eternal life. And he himself will live forever, thus ensuring that his rule and the peace will have no end.—Matthew 20:28; John 11:25, 26; Romans 6:9.

Thus equipped, Jesus Christ is clearly the one capable of dealing with the deep-rooted causes of war and strife. He will not simply work out a peace pact or a plan for so-called peaceful coexistence for the nations, only to have it shattered by another war. Rather, he will remove every political, territorial, social, and economic inequality by bringing all mankind under one rule, that of his Messianic Kingdom. By leading all people in the worship of the one true God, Jehovah, he will eliminate what is often the underlying cause of war—false religion. There is no doubt that Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, will accomplish all of this. The question is, When?

PEACE DEFINED

Today most people think of peace as the absence of war or strife. This, however, is a very narrow definition of the word. In Bible times the word "peace" (Hebrew, *sha·lohm'*) or the expression "May you have peace!" was used as a common form of greeting. (Judges 19:20; Daniel 10:19; John 20:19, 21, 26) Clearly, it is not just referring to the absence of war. Note what the book *The Concept of Peace* says on this point: "When the word *shalom* is used for peace, what those who used it originally had in view was a condition of the world or of human society in which there is completeness, unity, wholeness, fullness. . . . Where there is peace, both the whole and its constituent parts have reached their maximal and optimal levels of being." When God brings peace, not only will men not "learn war anymore" but 'each one will sit under his own vine and fig tree.'—Micah 4:3, 4.

Events Leading Up to Lasting Peace

After his resurrection and ascension to heaven in 33 C.E., Jesus had to await the appointed time for him to take action. This was according to Jehovah's decree: "'Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.' The rod of your strength Jehovah will send out of Zion, saying: 'Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.'" (Psalm 110:1, 2; Luke 22:69; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 10:12, 13) When does that happen? For more than 70 years, Jehovah's Witnesses have been proclaiming around the world the good news that Jesus Christ began to rule in God's Kingdom in heaven in the year 1914.*

But you might say, 'There has been no peace since 1914. On the contrary, conditions have gone from bad to worse since then.' You are absolutely right. This actually proves that events are taking place just as foretold. The Bible tells us that right at the time when "the kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, . . . the nations became wrathful." (Revelation 11:15, 18) Rather than submitting to the rule of Jehovah God and his Prince of Peace, the

* For details on Bible chronology and fulfilled Bible prophecies, see chapters 12 to 14 of the book *"Let Your Kingdom Come,"* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

nations plunged into a frenzied struggle for world domination and expressed wrath particularly against Christians who were bearing witness to God's established Kingdom.

The book of Revelation also reveals that as soon as Jesus Christ came into Kingdom power, he took action to remove Satan and his demons from heaven: "Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been hurled down, who accuses them day and night before our God!" The result? The account continues: "On this account be glad, you heavens and you who reside in them! Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." —Revelation 12:10, 12.

The absence of peace has been keenly felt since World War I

A Final Signal

This gives us insight into why the nations have not been able to bring about peace in spite of all their efforts. The Devil's great anger, reflected in the nations' own wrath, has kept the world agitated and in turmoil as never before in human history. When will all of this come to an end? The Bible provides an important clue: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them."—1 Thessalonians 5:3.

Do you appreciate the significance of this warning? World events such as those we have detailed in the previous article show that rulers and many people are talking about peace and reaching out for it as never before. Some feel that with the end of the Cold War, the threat of a nuclear holocaust is a thing of the past. Yes, the nations have been saying much about peace and security. But is the world situation really moving in that direction? Remember, Jesus said of those living through the last days, starting in 1914: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matthew 24:34) Yes, peace will really come within this generation but not through the nations' efforts. The firmly established, just, and righteous peace promised by Jehovah God can come only through the approaching rule of his Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. —Isaiah 9:7.

If you long to see the day when peace will really come and to experience it with your loved ones, then look to the Prince of Peace and bear well in mind his reassuring words: "Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:36.

At the Sea of Galilee

THE apostles now return to Galilee, as Jesus had earlier instructed them to do. But they are uncertain about what they should do there. After a while, Peter tells Thomas, Nathanael, James and his brother John, and two other apostles: "I am going fishing."

"We also are coming with you," the six reply.

During the whole night, they fail to catch anything. However, just as it is getting light, Jesus appears on the beach, but the apostles do not discern that it is Jesus. He shouts: "Young children, you do not have anything to eat, do you?"

"No!" they shout back across the water.

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some," he says. And when they do, they are unable to draw in their net because of all the fish. "It is the Lord!" John cries. Peter girds on his top garment, plunges into the sea, and swims about a hundred yards to shore. The other apostles follow in the little boat, dragging the net full of fish.

When they arrive onshore, there is a charcoal fire, with fish lying on it, and there is bread. "Bring some of the fish you just now caught," Jesus says. Peter goes aboard and pulls the net ashore. It contains 153 big fish!

"Come, take your breakfast," Jesus invites.

None of them have the courage to ask, "Who are you?" because they know it is Jesus. This is his seventh postresurrection appearance, and his third to the apostles as a group. He now serves breakfast, giving each of them bread and fish.

When they finish eating, Jesus perhaps nods toward the large catch of fish and asks Peter: "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" Perhaps he means, Are you more attached to the fishing business than to the work that I have prepared you to do?

"You know I have affection for you," Peter responds.

"Feed my lambs," Jesus replies.

Again, a second time, he asks: "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know I have affection for you," Peter answers.

"Shepherd my little sheep," Jesus commands again.

Then, yet a third time, he asks: "Simon son of John, do you have affection for me?"

By now Peter is grieved. He may wonder if Jesus doubts his loyalty. After all, when Jesus was recently on trial for his life, Peter three times denied knowing him. So Peter says: "Lord, you know all things; you are aware that I have affection for you."

"Feed my little sheep," Jesus commands a third time.

Jesus thus uses Peter as a sounding board to impress upon the others as well the work that he wants them to do. He will soon leave the earth, and he wants them to take the lead in ministering to those who will be drawn into God's sheepfold.

Just as Jesus was bound and executed because he did the work that God com-

missioned him to do, so, he now reveals, Peter will suffer a similar experience. "When you were younger," Jesus tells him, "you used to gird yourself and walk about where you wanted. But when you grow old you will stretch out your hands and another man will gird you and bear you where you do not wish." Despite the martyr's death awaiting Peter, Jesus urges him: "Continue following me."

Upon turning about, Peter sees John and asks: "Lord, what will this man do?"

"If it is my will for him to remain until I come," Jesus answers, "of what concern is that to you? You continue following me."

These words of Jesus came to be understood by many of the disciples to mean that the apostle John would never die. However, as the apostle John later explained, Jesus did not say that he would not die, but Jesus simply said: "If it is my will for him to remain until I come, of what concern is that to you?" **John 21:1-25; Matthew 26:32; 28:7, 10.**

- What shows that the apostles are uncertain about what they should do in Galilee?
- How do the apostles recognize Jesus at the Sea of Galilee?
- How many times has Jesus now appeared since his resurrection?
- How does Jesus emphasize what he wants the apostles to do?
- How does Jesus indicate the manner in which Peter will die?
- What comments of Jesus about John were misunderstood by many of the disciples?

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS
The Prized Find

ABOUT 15 miles southeast of Jerusalem, Wadi En-Nar, a desolate, dry watercourse runs eastward down to the Dead Sea. A broken line of cliffs stretches behind the shoreline plain. On this plain, in the hot days and contrasting cold nights of autumn, the Ta'amireh Bedouin tend their flocks of sheep and goats.

In the year 1947, while tending the flocks, a young Bedouin shepherd threw a stone into a small opening in the crumbling face of a cliff. He was startled by the noise it caused, apparently by shattering an earthenware jar. He fled in fear, but two days later he returned and climbed some 300 feet to enter through a larger, higher opening. As his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he saw ten tall jars lining the walls of the cave, and a mass of broken pottery amid fallen rocks littered the floor.

Most of the jars were empty, but one contained three scrolls, two of which were cloth-covered. He took the manuscripts back to the Bedouin camp and left them there for about a month, hanging in a bag on a tent pole. Finally, some Bedouin took the scrolls to Bethlehem to see how much they would fetch. The Bedouin were unceremoniously turned away from one monastery, being told that the scrolls were of no value whatever. Another dealer said that the manuscripts had no archaeological merit, and he suspected that they had been stolen from a Jewish synagogue. How wrong he was! Eventually, with a Syrian cobbler acting as broker, their worth was rightfully established. Soon, other manuscripts were evaluated.

Some of these ancient writings opened up a whole new insight into the activity of Jewish religious groups about the time of Christ. But it was a Bible manuscript of Isaiah's prophecy that excited the world. Why?

Courtesy of The British Museum

The Great Prize

The newly discovered scroll of Isaiah was originally about 25 feet long. It was made up of 17

sheets of carefully prepared animal skin, nearly as refined as parchment. Composed in 54 columns averaging 30 lines each, it had been carefully ruled. On these lines the skilled penman had placed the letters of the text, written in paragraphs.—See photograph.

The scroll had not been rolled around sticks, and it was much darker in the center where many hands had held it for reading. It was well-worn, with skillful repairs and reinforcements in evidence. Its fine preservation was due to its having been carefully sealed in a jar. How valuable is it to the Bible scholar, and, by extension, to all of us?

This manuscript of the prophet Isaiah is some one thousand years older than any other surviving copy, yet its contents are not greatly different. Said Professor Millar Burrows, the editor of the text that was published in 1950: "The text of Isaiah in this manuscript, with significant differences in spelling and grammar and many variant readings of more or less interest and importance, is substantially that presented considerably later in the MT [Masoretic Hebrew Text]."* Also noteworthy is its consistent use of the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, God's holy name, Jehovah, in Hebrew.

Other Valuable Manuscripts

The divine name also appears in another manuscript from this same cave, now known as Cave 1. In a commentary on the book of Habakkuk, the Tetragrammaton appears four times in paleo-Hebrew letters, an older style that contrasts with the more familiar square Hebrew lettering.—See the footnote to Habakkuk 1:9, *Reference Bible.*

The cave yielded portions of another Isaiah scroll, along with leather fragments from the Bible book of Daniel. One of these preserves the change from Hebrew to Aramaic at Daniel 2:4, just as found in manuscripts of a thousand years later.

Small parts of the scrolls that are well preserved are now exhibited in Jerusalem, in the museum known as the Shrine of the Book. This museum is underground, so as you visit there, you have the impression of entering a cave. The upper part of the museum is in the shape of the lid of the earthenware jar in which the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah was discovered. Yet, you see only a facsimile of the Isaiah manuscript. The precious original rests safely in the storeroom nearby.

Israel Antiquities Authority; The Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum; D. Samuel and Jeanne H. Gottesman Center for Biblical Manuscripts

* Some of its more important readings are noted in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures —With References* at Isaiah 11:1; 12:2; 14:4; 15:2; 18:2; 30:19; 37:20, 28; 40:6; 48:19; 51:19; 56:5; 60:21. The scroll is identified in the footnotes as 1QIs[a].

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS
Unprecedented Treasure

AT THE foot of Wadi Qumran, on the northwest side of the Dead Sea, lie some ancient ruins. Long considered to be the remains of a Roman fort, they had received little attention from archaeologists. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah in 1947, however, prompted reconsideration of the site.

Soon scholars identified the buildings as belonging to a religious community of the Jews. The immediate assumption was that these people had hidden the scrolls in the caves among the cliffs nearby. But later discoveries seemed to cast doubt on that.

An Unprecedented Find

Bedouin were alert to the value of the manuscripts they had already found. So, in 1952, when an old man recounted that as a youth he had chased a wounded partridge until it disappeared into a hole in the rock face, where he found some pottery and an ancient oil lamp, a fresh search got under way.

The old man was still able to identify the cave mouth among the deep clefts of the precipitous cliff. It turned out to be a man-made cave, now identified as Cave 4. There the Bedouin found pieces of manuscripts a few feet below the then existing level of the floor. None of the pieces had been stored in jars, so most were badly decayed, blackened, and very brittle. In time some 40,000 fragments were recovered, representing nearly 400 manuscripts. All the books of the Hebrew Scriptures, with the exception of Esther, were represented among the one hundred Bible manuscripts. Much of the material recovered from Cave 4 has not yet been published.

One of the more significant manuscripts was of the books of Samuel, copied in a single roll. Its Hebrew text, preserved in 47 columns out of a probable 57, is very similar to that used by the translators of the Greek Septuagint version. There are also Greek fragments of the *Septuagint* from Leviticus and Numbers that date back to the first century B.C.E. The Leviticus manuscript uses *IAO,* for the Hebrew יהוה, the divine name of God, instead of the Greek *Ky′ri·os,* "Lord."*

In a fragment from Deuteronomy, the Hebrew text includes the portion from chapter 32, verse 43, found in the *Septuagint* and quoted at Hebrews 1:6: "And let all God's

* See the *Reference Bible,* Appendix 1C (5) and the footnote to Leviticus 3:12, where this manuscript is identified as 4Q LXX Lev^{b}.

angels do obeisance to him." This is the first time this line has been found in any Hebrew manuscript, revealing a text that evidently underlies the Greek translation. Scholars have thus gained new insight into the text of the *Septuagint,* so often quoted in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

An Exodus scroll has been dated to the third quarter of the third century B.C.E., one of Samuel to the end of the same century, and a scroll of Jeremiah to between 225 and 175 B.C.E. Sufficient material from the third to the first century B.C.E. has been found to trace changes in writing styles and individual letters of the Hebrew and Aramaic alphabets, something of great value in dating manuscripts.

The Surprise of Cave 11

Eventually, the whole area around Qumran had been thoroughly searched, both by local Bedouin and by archaeologists. Yet, one day in 1956, some Bedouin noticed bats emerging from crevices in the cliffs north of Cave 1. They climbed up and found another cave, the entrance of which was blocked. Two tons of fallen rock had to be removed to expose it. The finds inside were astounding—two complete manuscripts and five large portions of others.

The most significant find was a beautiful scroll of Psalms. The thickness of the leather suggests that it is probably calfskin rather than goatskin. A total of five sheets, four separable leaves, and four fragments give it a length of more than 13 feet. Although the top of this scroll is well preserved, the bottom edge is considerably decayed. It dates from the first half of the first century C.E. and contains parts of 41 psalms. The Tetragrammaton is written some 105 times in ancient paleo-Hebrew characters, making it stand out amid the square Hebrew script of the context.

Another manuscript, of Leviticus, is written entirely in the ancient Hebrew script, but why this is so has not yet been adequately explained. It is the longest document in existence using this form of writing, which was in use when the Jews went into Babylonian exile at the end of the seventh century B.C.E.

A copy of a Targum, an Aramaic paraphrase of the book of Job, also came to light. It is among the earliest Targums committed to writing. A number of commentaries on other Bible books were also found in different caves. How did all these scrolls come to be hidden so well in these caves?

As mentioned earlier, some may have been concealed by the Qumran community. But from the evidence, it seems quite likely that many were put there by Jews fleeing the Roman advance on Judea in the year 68 C.E., before the final destruction of Jerusalem two years later. The Judean wilderness was a safe natural haven for the precious manuscripts not only in the caves close to Qumran but in those many miles to the north, around Jericho, and to the south, near Masada. How grateful we are for their preservation! They give further proof of the unchangeableness of Jehovah's inspired Word. Truly, "as for the word of our God, it will last to time indefinite."—Isaiah 40:8.

MORE TO COME SOON?

Though discovered decades ago, a large quantity of Dead Sea Scroll fragments are unpublished. *The New York Times* of December 23, 1990, decried: "Even their photographic likenesses are held captive by a clannish group of scholars who shun their colleagues and refuse to publish much of the material in their possession." The paper reported, however, that a staff change in this editorial team has recently been made, which may be a step toward breaking "the clannishness surrounding the scrolls . . . , and the world will know more about an extraordinary era in history."

WILL YOU IMITATE GOD'S MERCY?

"Become imitators of God, as beloved children."—EPHESIANS 5:1.

FOR good or for bad, most people imitate others. The ones whom we are around, and whom we may imitate, can measurably affect us. The inspired writer of Proverbs 13:20 warned: "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." With good reason, then, God's Word says: "Be an imitator, not of what is bad, but of what is good. He that does good originates with God."—3 John 11.

[2] We have excellent Bible examples of men and women whom we can imitate. (1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17) Yet, the foremost one for us to imitate is God. At Ephesians 4:31–5:2, after noting traits and practices that we should avoid, the apostle Paul urged that we be "tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another." This led to the key exhortation: "Therefore, become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love."

[3] What are God's ways and qualities that we should imitate? There are many aspects of his personality and acts, as can be seen from the way he described himself to Moses: "Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, pardoning error and transgression and sin, but by no means will he give exemption from punishment, bringing punishment for the error of fathers upon sons and upon grandsons." —Exodus 34:6, 7.

[4] Since Jehovah is "a lover of righteousness and justice," we should definitely get to know and imitate this facet of his personality. (Psalm 33:5; 37:28) He is the Creator, as well as mankind's supreme Judge and Statute-Giver, so he expresses justice toward all. (Isaiah 33:22) This is clearly indicated in the way he required justice and caused it to be carried out among his people Israel and later within the Christian congregation.

Divine Justice Carried Out

[5] When choosing Israel as his people, God asked whether they 'would strictly obey his voice and indeed keep his covenant.' Assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai, they answered: "All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do." (Exodus 19:3-8) What a serious undertaking! By means of angels, God gave the Israelites some 600 laws, which they, as a people dedicated to him, were responsible to keep. What if someone would not do so? A specialist in God's Law explained: "The word spoken through angels proved to be firm,

1. Why should imitating others be of concern to all of us?
2. We ought to imitate whom, and in what ways?
3, 4. God provided what description of himself, and why should we give consideration to his being a just God?

5, 6. How was justice manifested in God's dealings with Israel?

Garo Nalbandian

and every transgression and disobedient act received a retribution in harmony with justice."—Hebrews 2:2.

[6] Yes, an Israelite who would not obey faced "retribution in harmony with justice," not deficient human justice, but justice from our Creator. God stipulated various penalties for lawbreaking. The most serious penalty was 'cutting off,' or execution. That applied to grave violations, such as idolatry, adultery, incest, bestiality, homosexuality, child sacrifice, murder, and misuse of blood. (Leviticus 17:14; 18: 6-17, 21-29) Moreover, any Israelite who willfully, unrepentantly violated any divine law could be "cut off." (Numbers 4: 15, 18; 15:30, 31) When this divine justice was carried out, the effects might well be felt by the wrongdoer's descendants.

[7] Such penalties underscored the gravity of breaking divine law. For example, if a son became a drunkard and a glutton, he was to be brought before mature judges. If they found that he was a deliberate, unrepentant wrongdoer, the parents were to share in executing justice. (Deuteronomy 21: 18-21) Those of us who are parents can imagine that it was not easy to do that. Yet God knew that it was needed so that wickedness would not spread among true worshipers. (Ezekiel 33:17-19) This was arranged by the One about whom it could be said: "All his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." —Deuteronomy 32:4.

[8] After many centuries God rejected the nation of Israel and chose the Christian congregation. But Jehovah did not change. He was still committed to justice and could be described as "a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29; Luke 18:7, 8) He therefore continued to have a provision to instill godly fear in the entire congregation by expelling wrongdoers. Dedicated Christians who became unrepentant wrongdoers were to be disfellowshipped.

[9] What is involved in disfellowshipping? We find an object lesson in the way a problem was handled in the first century.

7. What were some consequences of the executing of justice among God's ancient people?
8. How did justice mark God's dealings with the Christian congregation?
9. What is disfellowshipping, and what does it accomplish?

A Christian in Corinth engaged in immorality with his father's wife and did not repent, so Paul directed that he be expelled from that congregation. This had to be done to protect the cleanness of God's people, for "a little leaven ferments the whole lump." Expelling him would prevent his wickedness from dishonoring both God and His people. The severe discipline of being disfellowshipped might also shock him to his senses and instill in him and the congregation due fear of God.—1 Corinthians 5:1-13; compare Deuteronomy 17:2, 12, 13.

[10] The divine command is that if a wicked one is expelled, Christians must "quit mixing in company with [him] . . . , not even eating with such a man."* He thus is cut off from fellowship, including socializing, with loyal ones who respect and want to walk according to God's law. Some of them might be relatives outside the immediate family, not a part of the same household. It may be hard for those relatives to apply this divine directive, even as it was not easy for Hebrew parents under the Mosaic Law to share in executing a wicked son. Still, God's command is clear; thus we can be sure that disfellowshipping is just. —1 Corinthians 5:1, 6-8, 11; Titus 3: 10, 11; 2 John 9-11; see *The Watchtower,* September 15, 1981, pages 26-31; April 15, 1988, pages 28-31.

[11] Remember, though, that our God is not merely just; he is also "abundant in loving-kindness, pardoning error and transgression." (Numbers 14:18) His Word makes clear that a disfellowshipped person may repent, seeking divine forgiveness. Then what? Experienced overseers may meet with him to determine prayerfully and carefully whether he is giving evidence of being repentant over the wrongdoing that led to his being disfellowshipped. (Compare Acts 26:20.) If so, he may be reinstated in the congregation, as 2 Corinthians 2:6-11 indicates happened with the

* "Excommunication in its most general sense is the deliberate act whereby a group denies the privileges of its membership to those who were once members in good standing. . . . Excommunication came in the Christian era to refer to an act of exclusion by which a religious community denies to offenders the sacraments, congregational worship, and possibly social contact of any kind."—*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.*

10. How are God's servants to respond if someone is disfellowshipped?

11. How could various aspects of God's personality become manifest in connection with a disfellowshipping?

Plain of er-Raha before Mount Sinai (left background)

man in Corinth. Yet, some expelled ones have been away from God's congregation for years, so can anything be done to help them see the way back?

Justice Balanced With Mercy

12 The foregoing has dealt primarily with one aspect of God's qualities, as mentioned at Exodus 34:6, 7. Those verses, however, outline much more than God's justice, and those who want to imitate him do not focus solely on enforcing justice. If you were making a model of the temple built by Solomon, would you study only one of its pillars? (1 Kings 7:15-22) No, for that would hardly give you a balanced picture of the nature and role of the temple. Similarly, if we desire to imitate God, we need to copy also others of his ways and qualities, such as his being "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, pardoning error."

13 Mercy and forgiveness are fundamental qualities of God, as we see from the way he dealt with Israel. The God of justice did not exempt them from punishment for repeated error, yet he displayed ample mercy and forgiveness. "He made known his ways to Moses, his dealings even to the sons of Israel. Jehovah is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness. He will not for all time keep finding fault, neither will he to time indefinite keep resentful." (Psalm 103:7-9; 106: 43-46) Yes, a retrospective view of his dealings over hundreds of years proves those words true.—Psalm 86:15; 145:8, 9; Micah 7:18, 19.

14 Since Jesus Christ "is the reflection of [God's] glory and the exact representation of his very being," we should expect him to display similar mercy and willingness to forgive. (Hebrews 1:3) He did, as his actions toward others show. (Matthew 20: 30-34) He also stressed mercy by his words that we read in Luke chapter 15. The three illustrations there prove that Jesus imitated Jehovah, and they provide vital lessons for us.

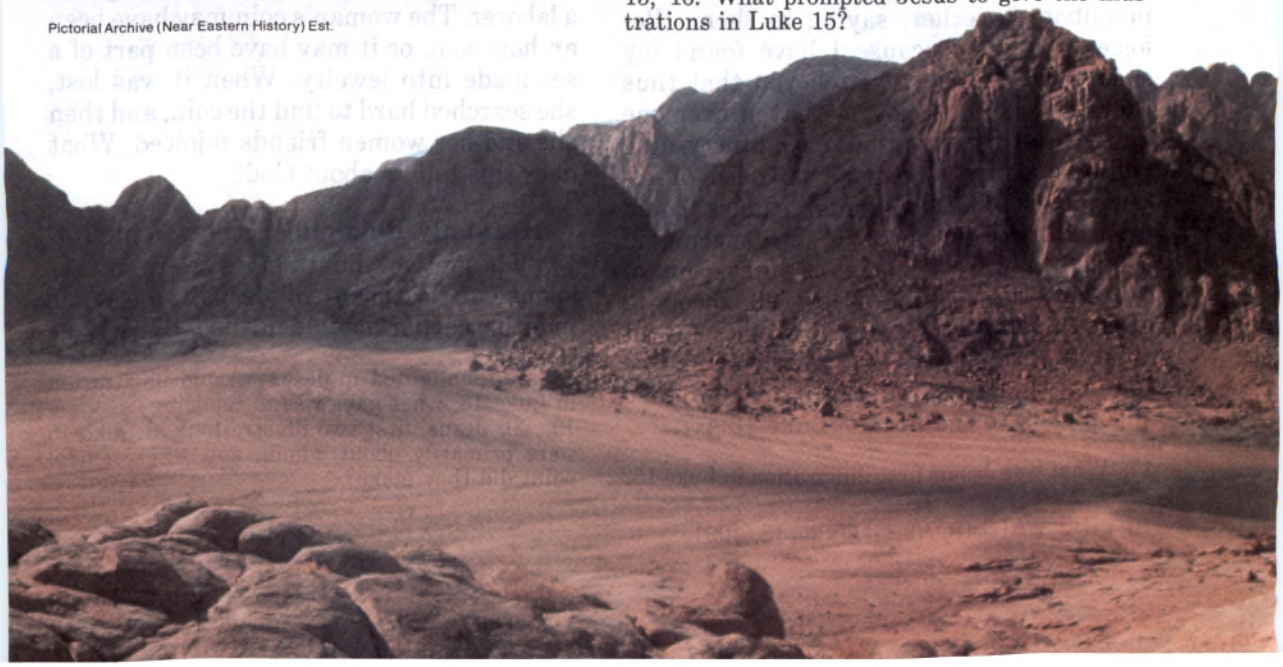
Concern for What Was Lost

15 Those illustrations testify to God's merciful interest in sinners, painting a

12, 13. Why should our imitating God include more than reflecting his justice?

14. How did Jesus show that he imitated God's mercifulness?

15, 16. What prompted Jesus to give the illustrations in Luke 15?



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harmonious picture for us to imitate. Consider the setting of the illustrations: "Now all the tax collectors and the sinners kept drawing near to [Jesus] to hear him. Consequently both the Pharisees and the scribes kept muttering, saying: 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.'" —Luke 15:1, 2.

[16] All the people involved were Jews. The Pharisees and the scribes prided themselves on their supposed punctilious adherence to the Mosaic Law, a sort of legalistic righteousness. God, though, did not agree with such self-proclaimed righteousness. (Luke 16:15) Evidently, the tax collectors mentioned were Jews who collected taxes for Rome. Because many exacted excessive sums from fellow Jews, tax collectors were a despised group. (Luke 19:2, 8) They were classed with "sinners," which included immoral persons, even harlots. (Luke 5: 27-32; Matthew 21:32) But Jesus asked the complaining religious leaders:

[17] "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.' 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 religious leaders could understand the imagery, for sheep and shepherds were a common sight. Out of concern, the shepherd left 99 sheep to graze in familiar pasturage while he went searching for a stray. Persisting until he found it, he tenderly carried the frightened sheep back to the flock.—Luke 15:4-7.

17. What was Jesus' first illustration in Luke 15?

Garo Nalbandian

[18] Jesus added a second illustration: "Or 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.' Thus, I tell you, joy arises among the angels of God over one sinner that repents." (Luke 15:8-10) The drachma was worth nearly a day's wage for a laborer. The woman's coin may have been an heirloom, or it may have been part of a set made into jewelry. When it was lost, she searched hard to find the coin, and then she and her women friends rejoiced. What does this tell us about God?

Heavenly Rejoicing—Over What?

[19] These two illustrations were in response to criticism of Jesus, who some months earlier had identified himself as

18. As highlighted in Jesus' second illustration in Luke 15, what gave rise to rejoicing?

19, 20. Jesus' first two illustrations in Luke 15 were primarily about whom, and what central point did they make?

"the fine shepherd" who would give his soul for his sheep. (John 10:11-15) Nonetheless, the illustrations were not primarily about Jesus. The lessons that the scribes and the Pharisees needed to learn centered on God's attitude and ways. Thus, Jesus said that there is joy in heaven over a sinner who repents. Those religionists claimed to serve Jehovah, yet they were not imitating him. Jesus' merciful ways, on the other hand, represented the will of his Father. —Luke 18:10-14; John 8:28, 29; 12:47-50; 14:7-11.

[20] If one out of a hundred was a basis for joy, one coin out of ten was more so. Even today, we can sense the emotions of the women rejoicing over finding the coin! Here, too, the lesson centers on heaven, in that "the angels of God" rejoice with Jehovah "over one sinner that repents." Note that final word, "repents." These illustrations were really about sinners who repent. And you can see that both stressed the appropriateness of having joy over their repentance.

[21] Those misguided religious leaders who felt smug over superficial compliance with the Law overlooked God's being "merciful and gracious, . . . pardoning error and transgression and sin." (Exodus 34:6, 7) Had they been imitating this aspect of God's ways and personality, they would have appreciated Jesus' mercy toward sinners who repented. How about us? Are we taking the lesson to heart and applying it? Well, note Jesus' third illustration.

Repentance and Mercy in Action

[22] This has often been called the illustration of the prodigal son. Yet, in reading it you may see why some think of it as the parable of a father's love. It tells of the younger son in a family, who obtains his inheritance from his father. (Compare Deuteronomy 21:17.) This son leaves for a distant land, where he squanders all in debauchery, has to take up the work of herding swine, and is even reduced to hungering for the food of swine. He finally comes to his senses and decides to return home, if only to work for his father as a hired laborer. As he nears home, his father takes the positive step of welcoming him, even holding a feast. The older brother, who had remained at home working, resents the mercy shown. But the father says that they should rejoice because the son who was dead now lives.—Luke 15:11-32.

[23] Some scribes and Pharisees may have felt that they were being compared to the older son, in contrast with sinners who were like the younger son. Did they, though, grasp the key point of the illustration, and do we? It highlights an outstanding attribute of our merciful heavenly Father, his willingness to forgive on the basis of a sinner's heartfelt repentance and conversion. It should have moved listeners to respond with joy at the redemption of repentant sinners. That is how God views

21. What lesson should we learn from Jesus' illustrations in Luke 15?
22. Briefly, what did Jesus give as a third illustration in Luke 15?
23. We should learn what from the illustration of the prodigal son?

What Have You Learned?

- ☐ How was God's justice manifested in the congregation of Israel and in the Christian congregation?
- ☐ Why should we imitate God's mercy, in addition to his justice?
- ☐ What gave rise to the three illustrations in Luke chapter 15, and what lessons should they teach us?

matters and how he acts, and those imitating him do likewise.—Isaiah 1:16, 17; 55: 6, 7.

[24] Clearly, justice marks all of God's ways, so those who want to imitate Jehovah treasure and pursue justice. Still, our God is not motivated by mere abstract or rigid justice. His mercy and love are great. He shows this by a willingness to forgive based on genuine repentance. It is fitting, then, that Paul linked our being forgiving with our imitating God: "[Be] freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you. *Therefore,* become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love."—Ephesians 4: 32–5:2.

24, 25. What ways of God should we be seeking to imitate?

[25] True Christians have long tried to copy Jehovah's justice as well as his mercy and willingness to forgive. The more we get to know him, the easier it should be for us to imitate him in these respects. How, though, may we apply this toward a person who has justly received severe discipline because he pursued a course of sin? Let us see.

IMITATE GOD'S MERCY TODAY

"Let us fall, please, into the hand of Jehovah, for many are his mercies."
—2 SAMUEL 24:14.

KING DAVID knew from experience that Jehovah is more merciful than humans are. Confident that God's ways, or paths, are best, David desired to learn His ways and to walk in His truth. (1 Chronicles 21:13; Psalm 25:4, 5) Do you feel as David did?

[2] The Bible offers us insight into God's thinking, even on such matters as what we should do if someone sins against us. Jesus told his apostles, who would later be Christian overseers: "If your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother." The wrong involved here was not a mere personal slight but a serious sin, such as fraud or slander. Jesus said that if this step does not resolve the matter and if witnesses are available, the one sinned against should take them along to prove that there was a wrong. Is this the step of last resort? No. "If [the sinner] does not listen to them, speak to the congregation. If he does not listen even to the congregation, *let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector.*"—Matthew 18:15-17.

[3] Being Jews, the apostles would understand what it meant to treat a sinner "as a man of the nations and as a tax collector." Jews avoided association with people of the nations, and they despised Jews who worked

1. How did David feel about God's mercy, and why?
2. What advice did Jesus give at Matthew 18: 15-17 about handling serious sin?

3. What did Jesus mean in saying that an unrepentant wrongdoer was to be "as a man of the nations and as a tax collector"?

as Roman tax collectors.* (John 4:9; Acts 10:28) Hence, Jesus was advising the disciples that if the congregation rejected a sinner, they were to cease associating with him. How, though, does that harmonize with Jesus' being with tax collectors at times?

[4] Luke 15:1 says: "All the tax collectors and the sinners *kept drawing near to him to hear him.*" Not every tax collector or sinner was there, but "all" in the sense of many. (Compare Luke 4:40.) Which ones? Those who were interested in having their sins forgiven. Some such were earlier drawn to John the Baptizer's message of repentance. (Luke 3:12; 7:29) So when others came to Jesus, his preaching to them did not violate his counsel at Matthew 18:17. Observe that "many tax collectors and sinners [heard Jesus] and they began *following him.*" (Mark 2:15) These were not ones who wished to continue in a bad way of life, refusing any help. Rather, they heard Jesus' message and their hearts were touched. Even if they were still sinning, though likely trying to make changes, "the fine shepherd" by his preaching to them was imitating his merciful Father.—John 10:14.

Forgiveness, a Christian Obligation

[5] We have these warm assurances of our Father's willingness to forgive: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one." (1 John 1:9; 2:1) Is forgiveness possible for a disfellowshipped person?

[6] Yes. At the time of disfellowshipping someone for unrepentant sin, elders who represent the congregation explain to him that it is possible for him to repent and receive God's forgiveness. He may attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall, where he can hear Bible instruction that may help him to repent. (Compare 1 Corinthians 14:23-25.) In time he may seek reinstatement in the clean congregation. When elders then meet with him, they will try to determine whether he has repented and left his sinful course. (Matthew 18:18) If that is the case, he may be reinstated, in line with the pattern at 2 Corinthians 2:5-8. In the event that he had been disfellowshipped for many years, he will need to make a concerted effort to progress. He may also need considerable help thereafter to build up his Bible knowledge and appreciation so that he becomes a spiritually strong Christian.

Returning to Jehovah

[7] But may the elders themselves take any initiative in approaching a disfellowshipped person? Yes. The Bible shows that mercy is expressed not simply by a negative holding back of punishment but often by positive acts. We have Jehovah's example. Before he sent his unfaithful people into exile, he prophetically held out the prospect of their returning: "Remember these things, O Jacob, and you, O Israel, because you are my

* "Tax collectors were especially despised by the Jewish population of Palestine for several reasons: (1) they collected money for the foreign power that occupied the land of Israel, thus indirectly giving support to this outrage; (2) they were notoriously unscrupulous, growing wealthy at the expense of others of their own people; and (3) their work involved them in regular contact with Gentiles, rendering them ritually unclean. Contempt for tax collectors is found both in the N[ew] T[estament] and the rabbinic literature . . . According to the latter, hatred was to be extended even to the family of the tax collector."—*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.*

4. In view of his words at Matthew 18:17, why could Jesus have dealings with some tax collectors and sinners?
5. What is God's basic position as to forgiveness?
6. How can a disfellowshipped person be forgiven and reinstated?
7, 8. What pattern did God set in connection with his exiled people?

servant. . . . I will wipe out your transgressions just as with a cloud, and your sins just as with a cloud mass. *Do return to me,* for I will repurchase you."—Isaiah 44:21, 22.

[8] Then, during the exile, Jehovah took further steps, acting in a positive way. He sent prophets, his representatives, to invite Israel to 'seek him and find him.' (Jeremiah 29:1, 10-14) At Ezekiel 34:16, he likened himself to a shepherd and the people of the nation of Israel to lost sheep: "The lost one *I shall search for,* and the dispersed one I shall bring back." At Jeremiah 31:10, Jehovah also used the imagery of his being a shepherd of the Israelites. No, he did not depict himself as a shepherd at the sheepfold waiting for the lost one to come back; rather, he showed himself as a shepherd searching for the lost ones. Note that even while the people in general were unrepentant and exiled, God initiated efforts to seek their return. And in line with Malachi 3:6, God would not change his way of dealing in the Christian arrangement.

[9] Does this not suggest that there could be a reason for initiating steps toward some who are disfellowshipped and who may now be repentant? Remember that the apostle Paul gave direction to remove the wicked man from the Corinthian congregation. Later he exhorted the congregation to confirm their love toward the man because of his repentance, leading to his subsequent reinstatement in the congregation.—1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11.

[10] The encyclopedia quoted earlier said: 'The basic rationale for excommunication was to protect the standards of the group: "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). This motive is clear in most biblical and extracanonical passages, but *concern for the individual, even after expulsion, was the basis of Paul's plea in 2 Cor. 2:7-10.*' (Italics ours.) Hence, concern of this kind should logically be shown today by the shepherds of the flock. (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) Former friends and relatives might hope that a disfellowshipped one would return; yet out of respect for the command at 1 Corinthians 5:11, they do not associate with an expelled person.* They leave it to the appointed shepherds to take the initiative to see if such a one is interested in returning.

[11] It would not be fitting even for elders to take the initiative toward certain expelled ones, such as apostates, who 'speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.' These are 'false teachers who are trying to bring in destructive sects and to exploit the congregation with counterfeit words.' (Acts 20:30; 2 Peter 2:1, 3) The Bible also does not provide any basis for searching out disfellowshipped ones who are belligerent or who actively encourage wrongdoing. —2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 John 9-11; Jude 4, 11.

[12] However, many expelled ones are not like that. One may have ceased the serious wrongdoing for which he was disfellowshipped. Another may have been using tobacco, or he may in the past have been overdrinking, but he is not now trying to lead others into wrongdoing. Recall that even before exiled Israel turned to God, he sent representatives urging them to come back. Whether Paul or the elders in the Corinth congregation took some initiative to

9. How was God's example followed in the Christian congregation?

10. (a) What motive should prompt any efforts to contact some disfellowshipped persons? (b) Why would Christian relatives not be the ones to initiate contact?

* If in a Christian's household there is a disfellowshipped relative, that one would still be part of the normal, day-to-day household dealings and activities. This could include being present when spiritual material is considered as a family.—See *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1988, pages 19-20.

11, 12. What sort of expelled ones would even elders not want to contact, but what sort might they visit?

Anyone who was once part of God's clean and happy congregation but is now disfellowshipped or disassociated need not remain in such a state. Rather, that one can repent and take the initiative to communicate with the elders of the congregation. The way back is open.

check on the disfellowshipped man, the Bible does not say. When that man had repented and ended his immorality, Paul directed the congregation to reinstate him.

[13] In recent times there have been cases in which an elder happened to meet a disfellowshipped person.* Where appropriate, the shepherd briefly outlined the steps to be taken for reinstatement. Some persons like this repented and were reinstated. Such joyful outcomes indicate that there may be disfellowshipped or disassociated ones who would respond to a merciful approach made by the shepherds. But how might the elders handle this matter? Once a year at most, the body of elders should consider whether there are such persons living in their territory.# The elders would focus on those who have been expelled for over a year. According to the circumstances, if it is appropriate, they would assign two elders (hopefully ones familiar with the situation) to visit such an individual. No visit would be made on any who evidence a critical, dangerous attitude *or who have made it known that they want no help.*—Romans 16:17, 18; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18.

[14] The two shepherds could telephone to ask about making a brief visit, or they could stop by at a suitable time. During the visit, they need not be stern or even cool but should warmly reflect their merciful concern. Instead of reviewing the past case, they could discuss Bible texts such as Isaiah 1:18 and 55:6, 7 and James 5:20. If the person is interested in returning to God's flock, they could kindly explain what steps he should take, such as reading the Bible and publications of the Watch Tower Society and attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall.

[15] These elders will need wisdom and discernment to determine whether there is indication of repentance and whether a follow-up visit would be advisable. They should bear in mind, of course, that some disfellowshipped persons will never be 'revived to repentance.' (Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2: 20-22) After the visit, the two would give a brief oral report to the Congregation Service Committee. They, in turn, would inform the body of elders at their next meeting. The elders' merciful initiative will have reflected God's view: " 'Return to me, and I will return to you,' Jehovah of armies has said."—Malachi 3:7.

Other Merciful Help

[16] What of those of us who are not overseers and will not be taking such initiatives toward disfellowshipped persons? What can we do consistent with this arrangement and in imitation of Jehovah?

[17] As long as someone is disfellowshipped or disassociated, we need to follow the instruction: "Quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even

* See *1991 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 53-4.

If any Witness, in the house-to-house preaching or in another way, learns of a disfellowshipped person living in the territory, he should give that information to the elders.

13, 14. (a) What indicates that some expelled ones might respond to merciful initiatives? (b) How can the body of elders arrange for contact to be made?

15. What should be kept in mind by elders making contact with a disfellowshipped person?

16, 17. How should we view Christian relatives of someone who is disfellowshipped?

eating with such a man." (1 Corinthians 5:11) But this Biblical directive should not affect our view of Christian family members who live with the disfellowshipped person. Ancient Jews reacted so strongly to tax collectors that their hatred was extended even to the family of the tax collector. Jesus did not endorse that. He said that a sinner who refused help was to be treated "just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector"; he did not say that Christian family members were to be so treated.—Matthew 18:17.

[18] We ought to be especially supportive of the family members who are faithful Christians. They may already face pain and obstacles because of living at home with an expelled person who may actually discourage their spiritual pursuits. He may prefer not to have Christians visit the home; or if they do come to see the loyal family members, he may not have the courtesy to keep away from the visitors. He may also impede the family's efforts to go to all Christian meetings and assemblies. (Compare Matthew 23:13.) Christians thus disadvantaged truly deserve our mercy.—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

[19] One way we can show tender mercy is by 'speaking consolingly' and having encouraging conversations with such faithful ones in the household. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) There are also fine opportunities to give support before and after meetings, while in field service, or when together at other times. We need not mention disfellowshipping but can discuss many upbuilding things. (Proverbs 25:11; Colossians 1:2-4) While the elders will continue to shepherd the Christians in the family, we might find that we too can visit without having dealings with the expelled person. If the disfellowshipped one happens to answer when we visit or telephone, we can simply ask for the Christian relative that we are seeking. Sometimes the Christian family members may be able to accept an invitation to our home for association. The point is: They—young and old—are our fellow ser-

18, 19. What are some ways in which we can display our Christianity toward faithful relatives of an expelled person?

Garo Nalbandian

vants, beloved members of God's congregation, not to be isolated.—Psalm 10:14.

[20] Another area for showing mercy opens when an expelled one is reinstated. Jesus' illustrations highlight the joy in heaven when 'one sinner repents.' (Luke 15:7, 10) Paul wrote to the Corinthians regarding the man that had been disfellowshipped: "You should kindly forgive and comfort him, that somehow such a man may not be swallowed up by his being overly sad. Therefore I exhort you to confirm your love for him." (2 Corinthians 2:7, 8) Let us apply that advice soberly and lovingly in the days and weeks after a person is reinstated.

[21] Jesus' illustration of the prodigal son brings up a danger that we need to avoid. The older brother did not rejoice at the prodigal's return but was resentful. May we not be like that, harboring ill will over a past wrong or begrudging a person's being reinstated. Rather, our goal is to be like the father, who illustrated Jehovah's response. The father was happy that his son, who was lost and seemed as good as dead, was found, or came to life. (Luke 15:25-32) Accordingly, we will freely speak to the reinstated brother and otherwise encourage him. Yes, we should make it evident that we are showing mercy, as our forgiving and merciful heavenly Father does.—Matthew 5:7.

20, 21. How should we feel and act if one is reinstated?

[22] There is no question that if we want to imitate our God, we must show mercy in harmony with his commands and his justice. The psalmist describes him this way: "Jehovah is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and great in loving-kindness. Jehovah is good to all, and his mercies are over all his works." (Psalm 145:8, 9) What a loving pattern for Christians to copy!

22. What is involved in our imitating Jehovah God?

Did You Note These Points?

- ☐ How did Jews treat tax collectors and sinners, but why did Jesus have dealings with some of such?
- ☐ What Scriptural basis is there for merciful initiative being taken toward many lost ones?
- ☐ How can bodies of elders take such initiative, and toward whom?
- ☐ How should we show mercy toward reinstated ones and toward the families of disfellowshipped ones?

"THE LORD'S DAY"

"BY INSPIRATION I came to be in the Lord's day." (Revelation 1:10) So said the aged apostle John, depicted above, in the first chapter of the Bible book of Revelation. His words help us to locate the time of the fulfillment of the magnificent visions that he goes on to describe.

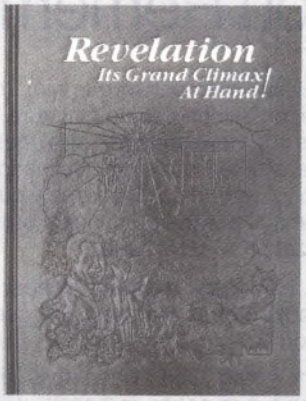
Not all, however, agree with this rendering of Revelation 1:10. For example, the German Bible translator Jörg Zink renders it: "I was filled with holy spirit—it was on Sunday." Most Bible versions, however, translate the Greek phrase *tei' ky·ri·a·kei' he·me'rai* as "the Lord's day." But in a footnote many claim that it refers to Sunday. Is this correct?

The German *Herders Bibelkommentar,* a Catholic reference work, explains the reasoning behind this thinking when it says: "Reference is made here [at Revelation 1:10] not to the Day of Final Judgment, which is likewise known as the 'Day of the Lord', but to a specific day of the week. The early Christians began celebrating the first day of the week as the day of their main church services as early as the middle of the first century. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2)" However, the two scriptures cited by that reference work in no way prove that first-century Christians viewed the first day of the week as "the day of their main church services."

The first text, Acts 20:7, merely records that Paul, his traveling companions, and Christians from Troas gathered to-

gether on the first day of the week for a meal. Since Paul was going to leave the next day and he would not see them again for some time, he took advantage of the occasion to speak to them at length.

The second text, 1 Corinthians 16:2, encouraged the Christians at Corinth to set aside money "every first day of the week" in order to have something to contribute to those in need in Judea. Scholar Adolf Deissmann suggests that this day may have been a payday. At any rate, Paul's suggestion was practical, since money could run out during the week.



A clear and up-to-date explanation of each verse in the book of Revelation is presented in "Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!" This fascinating Bible-study aid is now available in 33 languages

Nowhere in the Bible is it said that Christians in the apostolic era viewed the first day of the week, now called Sunday, as a kind of Christian sabbath, a day set aside exclusively for their regular meetings for worship. It was only after the death of the apostles that Sunday came to be viewed in this way and came to be called "the Lord's day." This was part of the apostasy foretold by Jesus and the apostles themselves.—Matthew 13:36-43; Acts 20:29, 30; 1 John 2:18.

What, then, is "the Lord's day"? The context of Revelation 1:10 points to Jesus as the Lord whose day it is. God's Word identifies expressions such as "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" with a time of judgment for mankind and the restoration of Paradise.—1 Corinthians 1:8; 15:24-26; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16.

Hence, Hans Bruns, in his translation with commentary, *Das Neue Testament* (The New Testament), is correct when he says: "Some maintain that he [John] is speaking here of Sunday, but it is far more likely that he is referring to the illustrious Day of the Lord, which is after all what all of his subsequent description pertains to." W. E. Vine says: " 'The Day of the Lord' . . . is the Day of His manifested judgment on the world." Fritz Rienecker's *Lexikon zur Bibel* (Lexicon of the Bible) says that "the Lord's day" clearly refers to "judgment day."

The right understanding of the expression "the Lord's day" helps us to understand the whole book of Revelation. Moreover, the evidence is that that day has already begun. How important it is, then, that we 'hear the words of the prophecy of Revelation and observe the things written in it'!—Revelation 1:3, 19.

In Our Next Issue

- **Coping With Crime in a Chaotic World**
- **Become United by the Pure Language**
- **Keep Sowing Seed —Jehovah Will Make It Grow**

Do You Remember?

Have you found recent issues of *The Watchtower* to be of practical value? Then why not test your memory with the following?

□ **What facts argue against hallowing the supposed site of Jesus' birth?**

The Bible does not mention the exact site of Jesus' birth. The Gospel accounts of Matthew and Luke give only the bare essentials. (Matthew 2:1, 5; Luke 2:4-7) A reading of John 7:40-42 shows that people in general were ignorant of his birthplace, some thinking that he was born in Galilee. Also, during Jesus' own earthly life, he never advertised the details of his birth.—12/15, page 5.

□ **How can a Christian maintain his joy while coping with trials of physical sickness, depression, and economic hardship?**

God's Word supplies the needed comfort and guidance. By reading or listening to the psalms, much needed refreshment can be provided. David advised us: "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you." He also assured us that Jehovah is indeed the "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 55:22; 65:2) Jehovah's organization, through its publications and its congregation elders, stands ever ready to help us grapple with our problems. —1/1, pages 14-15.

□ **What did Jesus mean when on his way to being impaled, he said: "If they do these things when the tree is moist, what will occur when it is withered?" (Luke 23:31)**

Jesus was referring to the tree of the Jewish nation. Because of the presence of Jesus and a remnant of Jews who believed in him, the nation still had some moisture of life in it. However, when all of these were taken out from the nation, only a spiritually dead tree would remain, a withered national organization.—1/15, page 9.

□ **How can "the pure in heart," spoken of at Matthew 5:8, "see God"?**

They "see God" when they observe him acting in behalf of integrity keepers. (Compare Exodus 33:20; Job 19:26; 42:5.) However, the Greek word at Matthew 5:8 rendered "see" also means "to see with the mind, to perceive, know." Since Jesus perfectly reflected God's personality, insight into that personality enabled "the pure in heart" to "see God." (John 14:7-9)—1/15, page 16.

□ **Why do we conclude that Jesus is the archangel Michael?**

God's Word mentions only one archangel, and it speaks of that angel in reference to the resurrected Lord Jesus: "The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet." (1 Thessalonians 4:16) At Jude 9 we find that this archangel's name is Michael.—2/1, page 17.

□ **What are four areas in which we can show honor to other people?**

We should show honor to political rulers, to employers, to members of our family circle, and to those in the congregation.—2/1, pages 20-2.

□ **Shortly before Jesus' death, what fine example did he set for those with aged parents?**

While Jesus was still hanging in agony on the torture stake, he gave consideration to the physical and spiritual welfare of his mother by entrusting her to the care of his beloved apostle John. (John 19:25-27)—2/15, page 8.

□ **Why did Jesus have to suffer?**

Jesus' sufferings served to settle the issue of the integrity of God's servants. They also equipped him for his role as a merciful High Priest for mankind. (Hebrews 4:15)—2/15, pages 14-15.

□ **What vital issues were raised by the rebellion in Eden?**

Is man able to rule himself successfully apart from God? Is it just on God's part to demand submission to his sovereignty? By extension, would any humans unselfishly choose to serve God of their own free will?—3/1, page 6.

□ **Why have some wrongly partaken of the Memorial emblems?**

Some immature ones may not yet have a balanced appreciation of God's purposes. They may not acknowledge that anointing "depends, not upon the one wishing nor upon the one running, but upon God." (Romans 9:16) It is not up to the individual to decide that he or she would like to be taken into the new covenant and become a joint heir with Christ. Jehovah's choice is what counts, and his spirit bears witness to that choice. (Romans 8:16; 1 Corinthians 12:18)—3/15, page 21.

□ **What is the "pure language" that is spoken about in Zephaniah 3:9?**

It is a proper understanding of the truth about God and his purposes. —4/1, pages 21-2.

Keep Walking in Light and Love

Highlights From First John

JEHOVAH is the Source of light and love. We must look to God for spiritual light. (Psalm 43:3) And love is among the fruits of his holy spirit.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

Light, love, and other matters are discussed in the apostle John's first inspired letter, likely penned in or near Ephesus about 98 C.E. A major reason for writing it was to safeguard Christians from apostasy and help them to keep on walking in the light. Since we face challenges to our love, faith, and integrity to truth, consideration of this letter will surely benefit us.

'Walk in the Light'

John made it clear that faithful Christians must walk in spiritual light. (1:1–2:29) He said: "God is light and there is no darkness at all [nothing evil, immoral, untrue, or unholy] in union with him." Because spirit-anointed Christians 'walk in the light,' they have "a sharing" with God, Christ, and one another. They have also been cleansed from sin by Jesus' blood.

Whether we are anointed Christians with a heavenly hope or we are looking forward to eternal life on earth, we will continue to benefit from Jesus' sacrifice only if we love our brothers but not the world. We must also avoid being influenced by apostates, such as the "antichrist," who denies both the Father and the Son. And let us never forget that life everlasting will be enjoyed only by those clinging to the truth and practicing righteousness.

Children of God Display Love

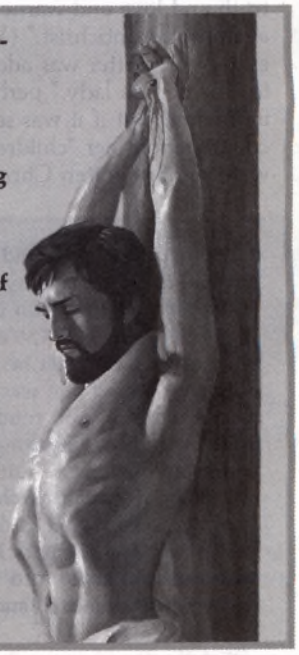
John next identified the children of God. (3:1–4:21) For one thing, they do what is righteous. They also obey Jehovah God's commandment 'that they have faith in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another.'

An individual having "the knowledge of God" knows about Jehovah's purposes and how His love is expressed. This should help the person to display love. Actually, "he that does not love has not come to know God, because God is love." Divine love was shown when God "sent forth his Son as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins." If Jehovah loved us to that extent, we are obligated to love one another. Yes, anyone claiming to love God must also be loving his spiritual brother.

Faith 'Conquers the World'

Love moves God's children to observe his commandments, but it is through faith that they 'conquer the world.' (5:1-21) Our faith in God, his Word, and his Son enables us to 'conquer the world' by rejecting its wrong thinking and ways and by keeping Jehovah's commandments. God has given 'world conquerors' the hope of eternal life and hears their prayers that harmonize with his will. Because anyone "born from God" does not practice sin, Satan does not fasten his hold on such a person. But both anointed ones and Jehovah's servants with earthly hopes should remember that 'the whole world is lying in the power of that wicked one.'

A Propitiatory Sacrifice: Jesus "is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins [those of his anointed followers], yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's," the rest of mankind. (1 John 2:2) His death was a "propitiation" (Greek, *hi·la·smos'*, signifying a "means of appeasing," an "atonement") but not in the sense of soothing hurt feelings on God's part. Rather, the sacrifice of Jesus appeased, or satisfied, the demands of perfect divine justice. How? By providing the righteous and just basis for pardoning sin, so that God "might be righteous even when declaring righteous the [inherently sinful] man that has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26; 5:12) By furnishing the means for making complete satisfaction for man's sins, Jesus' sacrifice made it propitious, or favorable, for man to seek and receive restoration to right relations with Jehovah. (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 2:17) How thankful all of us should be for this!



Walk as Fellow Workers in the Truth

Highlights From Second and Third John

KNOWLEDGE of the truth is an identifying mark of Jehovah's worshipers. (John 8:31, 32; 17:17) Walking in divine truth is essential for salvation. And God's servants must be fellow workers in the truth.

The apostle John's second and third inspired letters speak of "walking in the truth." (2 John 4; 3 John 3, 4) Third John also encourages cooperation as "fellow workers in the truth." (3 John 5-8) Likely, both letters were penned in or near Ephesus about 98 C.E. But what they say can benefit Jehovah's people today.

Second John Stresses Truth

Second John first emphasized truth and love and warned against "the antichrist." (Verses 1-7) The letter was addressed to "the chosen lady," perhaps an individual. But if it was sent to a congregation, her "children" were spirit-begotten Christians "chosen" by God for heavenly life. (Romans 8:16, 17; Philippians 3:12-14) John rejoiced that certain ones were "walking in the truth" and thus resisting apostasy. Yet, they needed to guard against "the antichrist," who denies that Jesus came in the flesh. Jehovah's Witnesses today heed such warnings against apostasy.

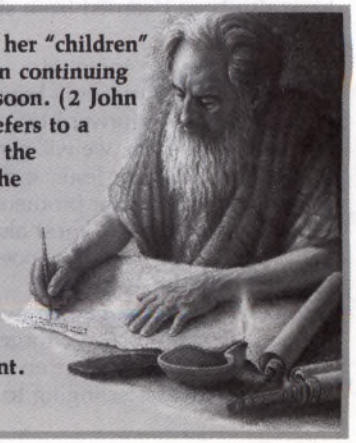
John next gave counsel on dealing with apostates and then concluded with a personal wish and greetings. (Verses 8-13) By such labors as preaching, he and others had produced fruitage resulting in the conversion of those to whom he sent his letter. Only by 'looking out' for themselves spiritually would they "obtain a full reward," evidently including the heavenly "crown" reserved for faithful anointed ones. (2 Timothy 4:7, 8) If anyone 'not remaining in the teaching of the Christ' came to them, they should 'never receive him into their homes nor say a greeting to him' so as to avoid being accomplices in his "wicked works." After expressing the hope that he would come and speak with those fellow believers face-to-face, John closed with greetings.

Third John Emphasizes Cooperation

Third John was directed to Gaius and first took note of what he was doing for fellow believers. (Verses 1-8) Gaius was "walking in the truth" by adhering to the entire body of Christian teachings. He was also "doing a faithful work" in assisting visiting brothers. John wrote: "We . . . are under obligation to receive such persons hospitably, that we may become fellow workers in the truth." Jehovah's Witnesses extend similar hospitality to traveling overseers today.

After contrasting the bad conduct of Diotrephes with that of Demetrius, John concluded his letter. (Verses 9-14) Glory-seeking Diotrephes showed no respect for John and even tried to oust from the congregation those receiving the brothers hospitably. A certain Demetrius was cited as a fine example, though. John hoped to see Gaius soon and concluded with greetings and a wish that Gaius enjoy peace.

With Paper, Pen, and Ink: John desired to visit "the chosen lady" and her "children" instead of writing many things to them "with paper and ink." Rather than continuing to write to Gaius "with ink and pen," the apostle also hoped to see him soon. (2 John 1, 12; 3 John 1, 13, 14) The Greek word translated "pen" (*ka'la·mos*) refers to a cane or reed and can be rendered "writing-reed." Among the Greeks and the Romans, a reed pen was pointed and slit like quill pens of later times. The Greek word *me'lan,* rendered "ink," is the neuter form of the masculine adjective *me'las,* meaning "black." In the oldest inks, the pigment was a carbonaceous black—either a form of soot obtained from burning oil or wood, or a crystalline charcoal from vegetable or animal sources. Usually, inks were stored as dried bars or cakes, which were moistened by the scribe and applied with his brush or reed. The paper of those days was a thin material made into sheets from strips obtained from the papyrus plant. Early Christians used such paper for letters, scrolls, and codices.



Beware of Apostates!

Highlights From the Letter of Jude

JEHOVAH'S servants must "abhor what is wicked" and "cling to what is good." (Romans 12:9) The Bible writer Jude helped others to do this in his letter sent from Palestine probably about 65 C.E.

Jude called himself "a slave of Jesus Christ, but a brother of James." This James was evidently the well-known half brother of Jesus Christ. (Mark 6:3; Acts 15:13-21; Galatians 1:19) Jude himself was thus Jesus' half brother. However, he may have thought it unbecoming to mention this fleshly tie, since Christ was then a glorified spirit person in heaven. Jude's letter was very direct in giving counsel that can help us to "cling to what is good" and beware of apostates.

"Put Up a Hard Fight"

Though Jude intended to write about the salvation Christians hold in common, he found it necessary to urge his readers to "put up a hard fight for the faith." (Verses 1-4) Why? Because ungodly men had slipped into the congregation and were 'turning the undeserved kindness of God into an excuse for loose conduct.' They wrongly thought that they could break God's laws and yet stay among his people. May we never yield to such wicked reasoning but always pursue righteousness, thankful that through Jesus' blood God mercifully washed us from our sins.—1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 1:7.

Warnings Set Before Us

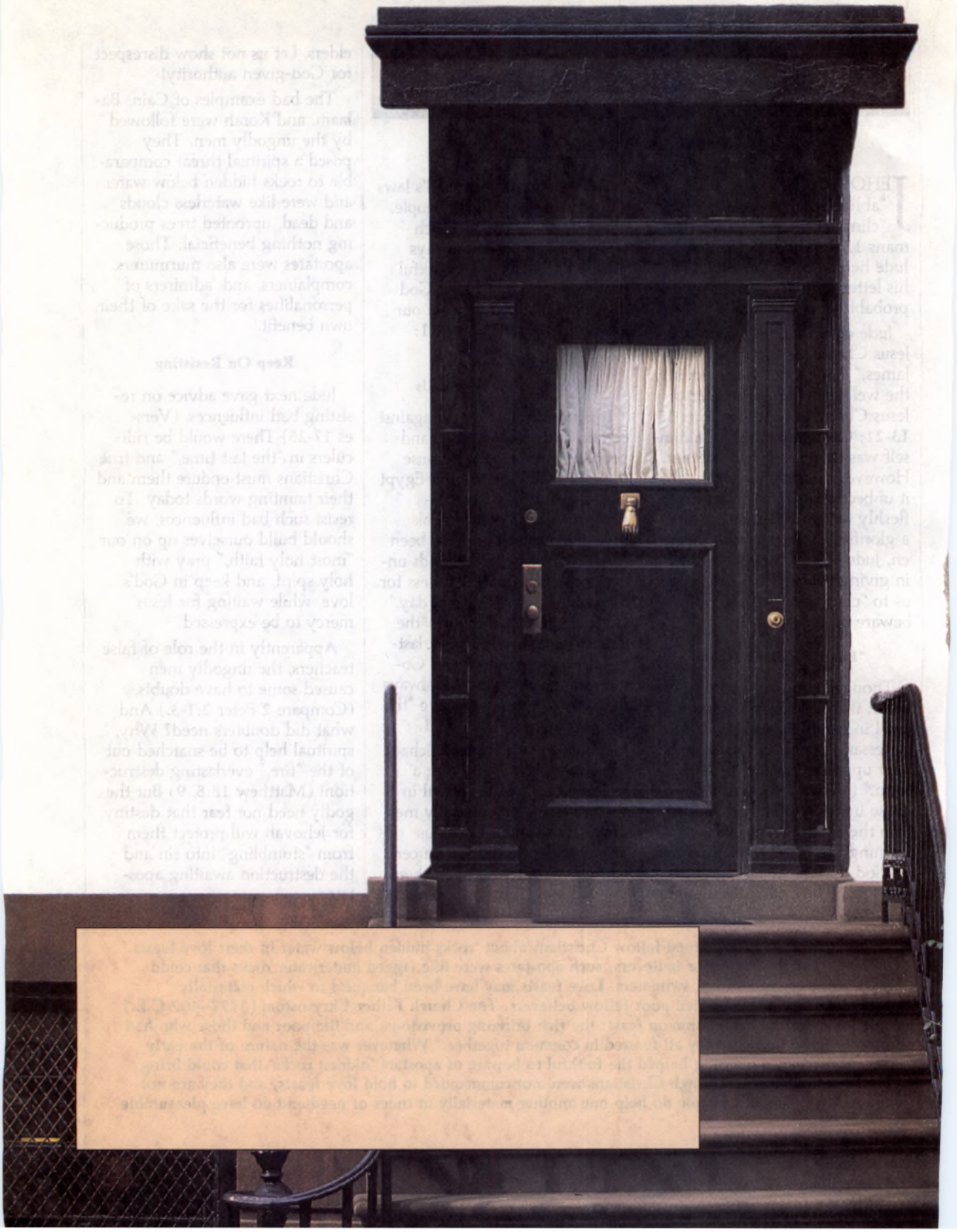
It is necessary to guard against certain attitudes, conduct, and people. (Verses 5-16) Because some Israelites saved from Egypt lacked faith, they were destroyed. Angels that forsook their proper position have been "reserved with eternal bonds under dense [spiritual] darkness for the judgment of the great day." Gross immorality brought "the judicial punishment of everlasting fire" upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Therefore, let us always please God and never leave "the path of life."—Psalm 16:11.

Unlike the archangel Michael, who would not even bring a judgment against the Devil in abusive terms, the ungodly men spoke abusively of "glorious ones," evidently those with certain glory conferred upon them by God and Christ as anointed elders. Let us not show disrespect for God-given authority!

The bad examples of Cain, Balaam, and Korah were followed by the ungodly men. They posed a spiritual threat comparable to rocks hidden below water and were like waterless clouds and dead, uprooted trees producing nothing beneficial. Those apostates were also murmurers, complainers, and 'admirers of personalities for the sake of their own benefit.'

Keep On Resisting

Jude next gave advice on resisting bad influences. (Verses 17-25) There would be ridiculers in "the last time," and true Christians must endure them and their taunting words today. To resist such bad influences, we should build ourselves up on our "most holy faith," pray with holy spirit, and keep in God's love, while waiting for Jesus' mercy to be expressed.

Apparently in the role of false teachers, the ungodly men caused some to have doubts. (Compare 2 Peter 2:1-3.) And what did doubters need? Why, spiritual help to be snatched out of the "fire," everlasting destruction! (Matthew 18:8, 9) But the godly need not fear that destiny, for Jehovah will protect them from "stumbling" into sin and the destruction awaiting apostates.

Hidden Rocks: Jude warned fellow Christians about 'rocks hidden below water in their love feasts.' (Jude 12) Feigning love for believers, such apostates were like jagged underwater rocks that could wreck ships or rip and kill swimmers. Love feasts may have been banquets to which materially prosperous Christians invited poor fellow believers. The Church Father Chrysostom (347?–407 C.E.) said: "They all met at a common feast: the rich bringing provisions, and the poor and those who had nothing being invited, they all feasted in common together." Whatever was the nature of the early love feasts, Jude's warning helped the faithful to beware of apostate 'hidden rocks' that could bring about spiritual death. Though Christians were not commanded to hold love feasts, and they are not held today, Jehovah's people do help one another materially in times of need and do have pleasurable fellowship.