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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**A Meal With
Meaning for You**

THE WATCHTOWER®

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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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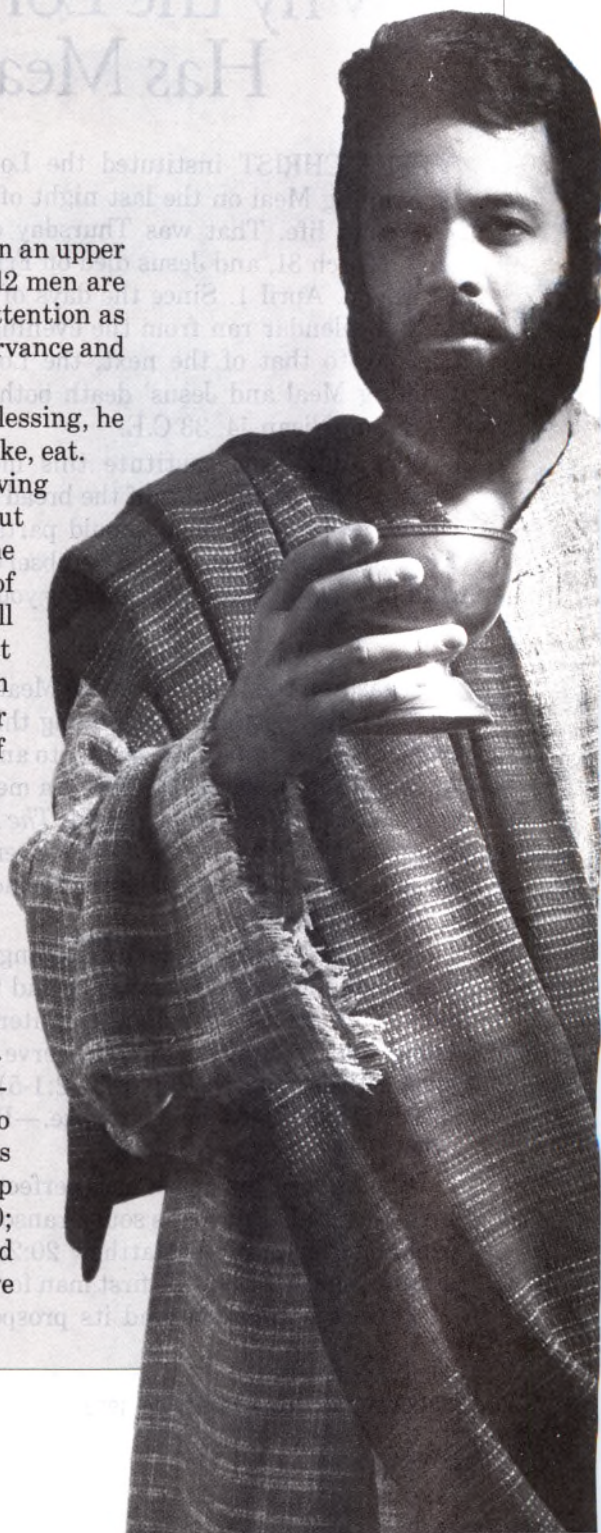
Can This Meal Have Meaning for You?

A FULL moon bathes the land in soft light. In an upper room of a dwelling in age-old Jerusalem, 12 men are gathered about a table. Eleven pay rapt attention as their Teacher introduces a highly significant observance and speaks words of great import. Says one account:

"Jesus [Christ] took a loaf and, after saying a blessing, he broke it and, giving it to the disciples, he said: 'Take, eat. This means my body.' Also, he took a cup and, having given thanks, he gave it to them, saying: 'Drink out of it, all of you; for this means my "blood of the covenant," which is to be poured out in behalf of many for forgiveness of sins. But I tell you, I will by no means drink henceforth any of this product of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father.' Finally, after singing praises, they went out to the Mount of Olives." —Matthew 26:26-30.

This occurred after sundown on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan in the year 33 of our Common Era. Jesus and his apostles had just celebrated the Passover in commemoration of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage in the 16th century B.C.E. Christ had dismissed Judas Iscariot, who was about to betray him. Hence, only Jesus and his 11 loyal apostles were present.

This supper was not a continuation of the Jewish Passover. It was something new that came to be called the Lord's Evening Meal. Concerning this observance, Jesus commanded his followers: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:24-26) Why did he say this? And how can this centuries-old event possibly have meaning for you?



Why the Lord's Evening Meal Has Meaning for You

JESUS CHRIST instituted the Lord's Evening Meal on the last night of his human life. That was Thursday evening, March 31, and Jesus died on Friday afternoon, April 1. Since the days of the Jewish calendar ran from the evening of one day to that of the next, the Lord's Evening Meal and Jesus' death both occurred on Nisan 14, 33 C.E.

Why did Jesus institute this meal? What is the significance of the bread and the wine he used? Who should partake? How often should this meal be observed? And how can it have meaning for you?

Why Instituted?

Regarding the Lord's Evening Meal, Jesus told his apostles: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." According to another rendition, he said: "Do this as a memorial of me." (1 Corinthians 11:24; *The New English Bible*) In fact, the Lord's Evening Meal is often referred to as the Memorial of Christ's death.

Jesus died as an integrity-keeping upholder of Jehovah's sovereignty and thus proved Satan to be a lying taunter for charging that upright humans serve God with selfish motives only. (Job 2:1-5) His death made God's heart rejoice.—Proverbs 27:11.

By means of his death as a perfect human, Jesus also 'gave his soul a ransom in exchange for many.' (Matthew 20:28) In sinning against God, the first man forfeited perfect human life and its prospects.

But "God loved the world [of 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) Yes, "the wages sin pays is death, but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord." —Romans 6:23.

"Received From the Lord"

Shedding light on the commemoration of Christ's death are the apostle Paul's words: "I received from the Lord that which I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was going to be handed over took a loaf and, after giving thanks, he broke it and said: 'This means my body which is in your behalf. Keep doing this in remembrance of me.' He did likewise respecting the cup also, after he had the evening meal, saying: 'This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood. Keep doing this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives."—1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Since Paul was not present with Jesus and the 11 apostles on Nisan 14, 33 C.E., this information was evidently "received from the Lord" by inspired revelation. Jesus instituted the Memorial "in the night in which he was going to be handed over" by Judas to Jewish religious foes, who got the Romans to impale Christ. Those enti-

tled to partake of the emblematic bread and wine would do so in remembrance of him.

Observe It How Often?

What is meant by Paul's words: "As often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives"? Faithful anointed Christians would partake of the Memorial emblems "often" until they died, later to be resurrected to heavenly life. Before God and the world, they would thus often proclaim their faith in Jehovah's provision of Jesus' sacrifice. For how long? "Until he arrives," said Paul, evidently meaning that these observances would continue until Jesus' arrival to receive his anointed followers into heaven by a resurrection during his "presence." (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17) This is in harmony with Christ's words to the 11 loyal apostles: "If I go my way and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be."—John 14:3.

Should Christ's death be commemorated daily or perhaps weekly? Well, Jesus instituted the Lord's Evening Meal and was killed on the Passover, which commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. In fact, he is called "Christ our passover" because he is the Lamb sacrificed for Christians. (1 Corinthians 5:7) Passover was held only once a year, on Nisan 14. (Exodus 12:6, 14; Leviticus 23:5) This suggests that Jesus' death should be commemorated only as often as the Passover was—annually, not daily or weekly.

For several centuries many professed Christians commemorated Jesus' death

once a year. Because they did so on Nisan 14, they were called Quartodecimans, meaning "fourteenthers." Concerning them, historian J. L. von Mosheim wrote: "The Christians of Asia Minor were accustomed to celebrate this sacred feast, commemorative of the institution of the Lord's supper, and the death of Jesus Christ, at the same *time* when the Jews ate their Paschal lamb, namely on the evening of the *fourteenth day* of the first month [Nisan]. . . . They considered the *example* of Christ possessing the force of law."

Significance of the Emblems

Paul said that Jesus "took a loaf and, after giving thanks, he broke it." That crackerlike loaf baked of flour and water without leaven (or, yeast) had to be broken for consumption. In Bible symbolism, leaven denotes sin or corruption. Urging Corinthian Christians to expel an immoral man from the congregation, Paul said: "Do you not know that a little leaven ferments the whole lump? Clear away the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, according as you are free from ferment. For, indeed, Christ our passover has been sacrificed. Consequently let us keep the festival, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of badness and wickedness, but with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:6-8) As a bit of sourdough leavens the whole lump, or batch, of bread, so the congregation would become unclean in God's eyes if the sinful man's corrupting influence was not removed. They needed to get the "leaven" out of their midst, just as the Israelites could have no leaven in their houses during the Festival of Unfermented Cakes that followed the Passover.

Regarding the unleavened Memorial bread, Jesus said: "This means my body which is in your behalf." (1 Corinthians 11:24) The bread represents Jesus' perfect fleshly body, concerning which Paul wrote: "When [Jesus] comes into the world he says: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but you prepared a body for me. You did not approve of whole burnt offerings and sin offering.' Then I said, 'Look! I am come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do your will, O God.'" . . . By the said 'will' we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time." (Hebrews 10: 5-10) Jesus' perfect human body was sinless and served as a ransom sacrifice for humankind.—Hebrews 7:26.

After praying over the cup of unadulterated red wine, Jesus said: "This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood." (1 Corinthians 11:25) Another rendition is: "This cup means the new covenant ratified by my blood." (*Moffatt*) Just as the blood of sacrificed bulls and goats validated the Law covenant between God and the nation of Israel, so Jesus' blood poured out in death made valid the new covenant. Mention of that covenant helps us to identify legitimate partakers of Memorial emblems.

Who Should Partake?

Jesus' anointed followers, who are in the new covenant, rightly partake of the Memorial emblems. This covenant is made between God and spiritual Israel. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 6:16) But the new covenant will eventually bring blessings to all obedient mankind, and you can be among the recipients of those blessings.

Partakers of Memorial emblems must be in the personal covenant for the Kingdom

that Jesus made. When instituting this meal, Jesus told his loyal apostles: "I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom." (Luke 22:29) The Kingdom covenant made by God with King David pointed forward to the coming of Jesus, the one who would rule forever in the heavenly Kingdom. The 144,000 spiritual Israelites, who will share rulership with him, are depicted as standing on heavenly Mount Zion with the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Upon being resurrected, they will rule with Christ as associate kings and priests. (2 Samuel 7:11-16; Revelation 7:4; 14:1-4; 20:6) Only those who are in the new covenant and in the personal covenant with Jesus rightly partake of the emblems of the Lord's Evening Meal.

God's spirit bears witness with the spirit of anointed ones that they are His children and joint heirs with Christ. Wrote Paul: "The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together." (Romans 8: 16, 17) God's holy spirit, or active force, creates within anointed ones the assurance that they are destined for heavenly life. They view as directed to them everything the Scriptures say about heavenly life and are willing to sacrifice all earthly things, including human life. Although life in the earthly Paradise would be wonderful, they do not have that hope. (Luke 23:43) A certain and unchangeable heavenly hope not based on false religious views entitles them to partake of the Memorial emblems.

Jehovah would be displeased if a person represented himself as one called to be a

heavenly king and priest when he had no such calling. (Romans 9:16; Revelation 22:5) God executed Korah for presumptuously seeking the priesthood. (Exodus 28:1; Numbers 16:4-11, 31-35) So, what if strong emotions or former religious ideas made a person wrongly partake of the Memorial emblems? Then he or she should stop partaking and humbly pray for God's forgiveness.—Psalm 19:13.

How You Are Affected

A person is not required to partake of the Memorial emblems in order to be covered by Jesus' ransom sacrifice and receive eternal life on earth. For instance, the Bible gives no indication that God-fearing people like Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Boaz, Ruth, and David will ever partake of these emblems. But they and all others desiring unending life on this globe will have to exercise faith in God and Christ and in Jehovah's provision of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. (John 3:36; 14:1) The annual observance of Christ's death serves as a reminder of that great sacrifice.

The importance of Jesus' sacrifice was shown when the apostle John said: "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. And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's." (1 John 2:1, 2) Anointed Christians can say that Jesus "is a propitiatory sacrifice for [their] sins." However, he is also a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, making eternal life possible for obedient mankind in the Paradise earth now so near at hand!

By being present for the commemoration of Christ's death, you will benefit from a thought-provoking Bible discourse. You will be reminded of how much Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have done for us. It will be spiritually rewarding to assemble with those having deep regard for God and Christ and for Jesus' ransom sacrifice. The occasion may well strengthen your desire to become a recipient of God's undeserved kindness, leading to life eternal. We heartily invite you to meet with Jehovah's Witnesses after sundown on April 6, 1993, to memorialize the death of Jesus Christ because the Lord's Evening Meal can have great meaning for you.



JEHOVAH'S MERCY SAVES US FROM DESPAIR

"Show me favor, O God, according to your loving-kindness. According to the abundance of your mercies wipe out my transgressions."—PSALM 51:1.

JEHOVAH'S law cannot be violated with impunity. How evident that becomes if we commit some grievous sin against God! Though we may have served Jehovah faithfully for years, violating his law may cause great anxiety or deep depression. We may feel that Jehovah has left us and that we are no longer worthy of serving him. Our sin may seem like a massive cloud shutting out the light of God's favor.

² King David of ancient Israel once found himself in such a state. How did this situation develop?

Missteps Can Lead to Gross Sin

³ David loved God but took false steps that led to grave sins. (Compare Galatians 6:1.) This can happen to any imperfect human, especially if he has authority over others. As a prosperous king, David enjoyed fame and power. Who dared to challenge his word? Capable men were at his beck and call, and people eagerly did his bidding. Yet, David erred by multiplying wives for himself and numbering the people.—Deuteronomy 17:14-20; 1 Chronicles 21:1.

⁴ During this season of material prosperity, David committed serious sins against God and man. Why, one sin led to another like interwoven threads of a fabric designed

by Satan! While fellow Israelites battled the Ammonites, from his rooftop David watched Uriah's beautiful wife, Bath-sheba, bathe herself. With Uriah at war, the king had the woman brought to his palace and committed adultery with her. Imagine his shock upon learning later that she was pregnant! David sent for Uriah, hoping that he would spend the night with Bath-sheba and would consider the child his own. Though David got him drunk, Uriah refused to sleep with her. Now desperate, David sent the commander Joab secret orders to put Uriah in the front lines where he would be sure to die. Uriah was killed in battle, his widow observed the usual mourning period, and David married her before people became aware of her pregnancy.—2 Samuel 11:1-27.

⁵ Through the prophet Nathan, God exposed David's sins and said: "I am raising up against you calamity out of your own house." Accordingly, the child born to Bath-sheba died. (2 Samuel 12:1-23) David's first-born son, Amnon, raped his own half sister Tamar and was murdered by her brother. (2 Samuel 13:1-33) The king's son Absalom tried to usurp the throne and disgraced his father by cohabiting with David's concubines. (2 Samuel 15:1-16:22) Civil war ended in Absalom's death and in more grief for David. (2 Samuel 18:1-33) However, Da-

5. What occurred after David sinned with Bath-sheba, and what effect did his sins have on him?

1, 2. How can one of Jehovah's servants be affected by serious sin?

3, 4. What happened to King David during a season of prosperity?



vid's sins humbled him and made him aware of the need to stay close to his compassionate God. If we should err, let us humbly repent and draw close to Jehovah.—Compare James 4:8.

⁶ David was especially guilty because he was an Israelite ruler fully aware of Jehovah's Law. (Deuteronomy 17:18-20) He was not an Egyptian pharaoh or a Babylonian king who lacked such knowledge and might routinely do things disapproved by God. (Compare Ephesians 2:12; 4:18.) As a member of a nation dedicated to Jehovah, David realized that adultery and murder are gross sins. (Exodus 20:13, 14) Christians also know God's law. Like David, however, some of them break it because of inherent sinfulness, human weakness, and unresisted temptation. If that should happen to any of us, we need not remain in a bedarkened state that obscures our spiritual vision and shrouds us in deep despair.

Confession Brings Relief

⁷ If guilty of grave transgressions of God's law, we may find it difficult to confess our sins, even to Jehovah. What can happen under those circumstances? In Psalm 32, David admitted: "When I kept silent [instead of confessing] my bones wore out through my groaning all day long. For day and night your [Jehovah's] hand was heavy upon me. My life's moisture has been changed as in the dry heat of summer." (Verses 3, 4) Trying to conceal his sin and repress a guilty conscience wore out wayward David. Anguish reduced his vigor so much that he was like a drought-stricken tree without life-giving moisture. In fact, he may well have experienced ill effects mentally and

6. Why was King David especially guilty?
7, 8. (a) What happened to David when he tried to conceal his sins? (b) Why confess and leave one's sin?

physically. At any rate, he lost his joy. If any of us find ourselves in a similar state, what should we do?

⁸ Confession to God can bring forgiveness and relief. "My sin I finally confessed to you, and my error I did not cover," sang David. "I said: 'I shall make confession over my transgressions to Jehovah.' And you yourself pardoned the error of my sins." (Psalm 32:5) Are you distressed over some concealed sin? Would it not be best to confess and leave it so as to receive God's mercy? Why not call the congregation elders and seek spiritual healing? (Proverbs 28:13; James 5:13-20) Your repentant spirit will be acknowledged, and in time your Christian joy can be restored. "Happy is the one whose revolt is pardoned, whose sin is covered," said David. "Happy is the man to whose account Jehovah does not put error, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."—Psalm 32:1, 2.

⁹ David and Bath-sheba were accountable to Jehovah God for their wrongdoing. Though they could have been put to death for their sins, God had mercy on them. Especially was he merciful to David because of the Kingdom covenant. (2 Samuel 7:11-16) David's repentant attitude toward his sins involving Bath-sheba is seen in Psalm 51. This touching psalm was composed by the penitent king after the prophet Nathan awakened his conscience to the enormity of his transgressions of divine law. It took courage for Nathan to call David's sins to his attention, even as appointed Christian elders must be courageous in order to do such things today. Instead of denying the charge and ordering Nathan's execution, the king humbly confessed. (2 Samuel 12:1-14) Psalm 51 shows what he said to God in prayer regarding the sordid affair and is

9. When was Psalm 51 composed, and why?

well suited for prayerful meditation, particularly if we have erred and yearn for Jehovah's mercy.

We Are Accountable to God

¹⁰ David did not seek to excuse his sin but begged: "Show me favor, O God, according to your loving-kindness. According to the abundance of your mercies wipe out my transgressions." (Psalm 51:1) By transgressing, David had overstepped the boundaries of God's Law. There was hope for his spiritual recovery, however, if God showed him favor according to His loving-kindness, or loyal love. The abundance of God's past mercies gave the repentant king a basis for faith that his Maker would wipe out his transgressions.

¹¹ Through the prophetic shadows of Atonement Day sacrifices, Jehovah intimated that he had a way to cleanse repentant ones from their sin. We now know that his mercy and forgiveness are extended to us on the basis of our faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. If David, with only types and shadows of this sacrifice in mind, could trust in Jehovah's loving-kindness and mercies, how much more should God's present-day servants exercise faith in the ransom provided for their salvation!—Romans 5:8; Hebrews 10:1.

¹² In pleading with God, David added: "Thoroughly wash me from my error, and cleanse me even from my sin. For my transgressions I myself know, and my sin is in front of me constantly." (Psalm 51:2, 3) To sin is to miss the mark as regards Jehovah's standards. David had certainly done that. Yet, he was not like a murderer or an adul-

10. How could David experience spiritual recovery?

11. What was suggested by Atonement Day sacrifices, and what is required for salvation today?

12. What does it mean to sin, and how did David feel about his wrongdoing?

terer who is unconcerned about his offense, merely being distressed over his punishment or the possibility of contracting a disease. As a lover of Jehovah, David hated what was bad. (Psalm 97:10) He was sick of his sin itself and wanted God to cleanse him of it completely. David was fully aware of his transgressions and was deeply sorry that he had let his sinful desire overpower him. His sin was before him constantly, for a God-fearing person's guilty conscience is never eased until there is repentance, confession, and Jehovah's forgiveness.

¹³ Acknowledging his accountability to Jehovah, David said: "Against you, you alone, I have sinned, and what is bad in your eyes I have done, in order that you may prove to be righteous when you speak, that you may be in the clear when you judge." (Psalm 51:4) David had broken God's laws, dishonored the kingly office, and "unquestionably treated Jehovah with disrespect," exposing Him to reproach. (2 Samuel 12:14; Exodus 20:13, 14, 17) David's sinful acts were offenses also against Israelite society and members of his family, just as a baptized wrongdoer today causes sadness or distress in the Christian congregation and among loved ones. Though the repentant king knew that he had sinned against such fellow humans as Uriah, he recognized a higher responsibility to Jehovah. (Compare Genesis 39:7-9.) David acknowledged that the judgment of Jehovah would be righteous. (Romans 3:4) Christians who have sinned need to have the same viewpoint.

Extenuating Circumstances

¹⁴ Though David did not try to justify himself, he did say: "Look! With error I was

13. Why could David say that he had sinned against God alone?

14. What extenuating circumstances were cited by David?

brought forth with birth pains, and in sin my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5) David was brought forth with error, and his mother experienced birth pains because of inherited sinfulness. (Genesis 3:16; Romans 5:12) His words do not mean that proper marital relations, conception, and birth are sinful, inasmuch as God provided for marriage and childbirth; neither was David referring to any specific sin of his mother. He was conceived in sin because his parents were sinful like all imperfect humans.—Job 14:4.

¹⁵ If we have sinned, we can cite in prayer to God any extenuating circumstances that may have contributed to our wrongdoing. But let us not turn God's undeserved kindness into an excuse for loose conduct or use inherited sinfulness as a smoke screen behind which to hide from responsibility for our sin. (Jude 3, 4) David accepted responsibility for entertaining unclean thoughts and yielding to temptation. Let us pray that we not be abandoned to temptation and then take action in harmony with such prayer.—Matthew 6:13.

Plea for Cleansing

¹⁶ People may appear to be fine individuals devoted to God, but he looks beneath the surface and sees what they are inside. Said David: "Look! You [Jehovah] have taken delight in truthfulness itself in the inward parts; and in the secret self may you cause me to know sheer wisdom." (Psalm 51:6) David was guilty of falsehood and deviousness in maneuvering Uriah's death and trying to conceal the facts about Bathsheba's pregnancy. Nevertheless, he knew

15. Though God may take extenuating circumstances into consideration, what should we not do?

16. In what quality does God take delight, and how should that affect our conduct?

that God delights in truthfulness and holiness. This should affect our conduct in a good way, for Jehovah would condemn us if we were devious. (Proverbs 3:32) David also realized that if God would 'cause him to know sheer wisdom,' as a repentant king, he would be able to comply with divine standards the rest of his life.

¹⁷ Because the psalmist saw his need for God's help in overcoming sinful tendencies, he further pleaded: "May you purify me from sin with hyssop, that I may be clean; may you wash me, that I may become whiter even than snow." (Psalm 51:7) Among other things, the hyssop plant (perhaps marjoram, or *Origanum maru*) figured in the cleansing ceremony for people formerly infected with leprosy. (Leviticus 14:2-7) So it was appropriate that David should pray to be purified from sin with hyssop. The idea of purity is also associated with his plea that Jehovah wash him that he might become entirely clean, whiter even than snow that has not gathered soot or other debris. (Isaiah 1:18) If any of us are now

17. What was the significance of praying to be purified with hyssop?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What effect can serious sin have on one of Jehovah's servants?
- ☐ How was David affected when he tried to conceal his sin?
- ☐ Why did David say that he had sinned against God alone?
- ☐ Though God may take extenuating circumstances into consideration if we sin, what should we not do?
- ☐ What should a Christian do if he has sinned grievously?

suffering pangs of conscience over some wrongdoing, let us have faith that if we repentantly seek God's forgiveness, he can purify and cleanse us on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice.

Plea for Restoration

¹⁸ Any Christian who has ever suffered with a guilty conscience can understand David's words: "May you [Jehovah] cause me to hear exultation and rejoicing, that the bones that you have crushed may be joyful." (Psalm 51:8) Before David repented and confessed his sins, his troubled conscience made him miserable. He did not even find pleasure in songs of exultation and rejoicing presented by fine singers and skillful musicians. So great was sinful David's agony over God's disapproval that he was like a man whose bones had been painfully crushed. He longed for forgiveness, spiritual recovery, and restoration of the joy he had previously experienced. A repentant wrongdoer today also needs Jehovah's forgiveness so as to regain the joy he had before he did something imperiling his relationship with God. Restoration of "joy of holy spirit" to a repentant person shows that Jehovah has forgiven him and loves him. (1 Thessalonians 1:6) What comfort that brings!

¹⁹ David further prayed: "Conceal your face from my sins, and wipe out even all my errors." (Psalm 51:9) Jehovah could not be expected to look upon sin with approval. Hence, he was asked to conceal his face from David's sins. The king also pleaded that God wipe out all his errors, blot out all his unrighteousness. If only Jehovah would do

18. What was David's condition before he repented and confessed, and how can knowledge of this be helpful today?

19. How would David feel if God wiped out all his errors?

that! It would lift David's spirits, remove the burden of a troubled conscience, and let the now repentant king know that he had been forgiven by his loving God.

What If You Have Sinned?

²⁰ Psalm 51 indicates that any of Jehovah's dedicated servants who have sinned seriously but who are repentant can confidently ask him to show them favor and cleanse them from their sin. If you are a Christian who has erred in such a way, why not seek our heavenly Father's forgiveness in humble prayer? Acknowledge your need

20. What is recommended for any Christian who has sinned grievously?

for God's help so as to stand approved before him, and ask that he restore your former joy. Repentant Christians can confidently go to Jehovah in prayer with such requests, for "he will forgive in a large way." (Isaiah 55:7; Psalm 103:10-14) Of course, congregation elders should be called upon so that they can render needed spiritual assistance.—James 5:13-15.

²¹ Jehovah's mercy does save his people from despair. But let us examine repentant David's other heartfelt pleas in Psalm 51. Our study will show that Jehovah does not despise a broken heart.

21. What will we next examine?

JEHOVAH DOES NOT DESPISE A BROKEN HEART

*"The sacrifices to God are a broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed,
O God, you will not despise."*—PSALM 51:17.

JEHOVAH can 'block approach to himself as with a cloud mass, that prayer may not pass through.' (Lamentations 3:44) But he wants his people to have access to him. Even if one of his worshipers should err seriously but is repentant, our heavenly Father remembers the good done by that person. Hence, the apostle Paul could tell fellow Christians: "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name."—Hebrews 6:10.

1. How does Jehovah view his worshipers who sin seriously but who are repentant?

² Christian elders should also consider the years of faithful service rendered to God by fellow believers. This includes sacred service on the part of repentant ones who have taken a false step or who have even sinned gravely. Christian shepherds seek the spiritual welfare of all of those in the flock of God.—Galatians 6:1, 2.

³ A repentant wrongdoer needs Jehovah's mercy. Yet, more is required. This is made clear by David's words at Psalm 51:10-19.

2, 3. What should Christian elders take into account in dealing with erring fellow believers?

A Pure Heart Needed

⁴ If a dedicated Christian is in a bad spiritual state because of sin, what may he need besides Jehovah's mercy and forgiveness? Well, David pleaded: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." (Psalm 51:10) Apparently, David made this request because he realized that the propensity for gross sin was still in his heart. We may not have been involved in the kinds of sin that ensnared David in connection with Bath-sheba and Uriah, but we need Jehovah's help to avoid yielding to temptation to engage in any gravely sinful conduct. For that matter, we may personally need divine help to remove from our heart such sinful traits as covetousness and hatred—crimes akin to theft and murder.—Colossians 3:5, 6; 1 John 3:15.

⁵ Jehovah requires that his servants have "a pure heart," that is, purity of motive or intention. Realizing that he had not displayed such purity, David prayed that God cleanse his heart and bring it into harmony with divine standards. The psalmist also wanted a new, upright spirit, or mental inclination. He needed a spirit that would help him to resist temptation and stick firmly to Jehovah's laws and principles.

Holy Spirit Vital

⁶ When in despair over our mistakes or wrongdoing, we could feel that God is about to cast us aside and withdraw from us his holy spirit, or active force. David felt that way, for he begged Jehovah: "Do not throw me away from before your face; and your

holy spirit O do not take away from me." (Psalm 51:11) Contrite and humble David felt that his sins had made him unworthy to serve Jehovah. To be thrown away from before God's face would mean to lose his favor, comfort, and blessing. If David was to be restored spiritually, he needed Jehovah's holy spirit. With it resting upon him, the king could prayerfully seek divine direction so as to please Jehovah, could avoid sin, and could rule with wisdom. Aware of his sins against the Giver of holy spirit, David fittingly pleaded that Jehovah not take it away from him.

⁷ What about us? We should pray for holy spirit and must guard against grieving it by failing to follow its direction. (Luke 11:13; Ephesians 4:30) Otherwise, we could lose the spirit and would be unable to display its God-given fruitage of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control. Jehovah God would especially take his holy spirit away from us if we unrepentantly kept sinning against him.

Exultation of Salvation

⁸ A repentant sinner who experiences spiritual restoration can again rejoice in Jehovah's provision of salvation. Yearning for this, David petitioned God: "Do restore to me the exultation of salvation by you, and may you support me even with a willing spirit." (Psalm 51:12) How wonderful it was to exult in the sure hope of salvation by Jehovah God! (Psalm 3:8) After sinning against God, David sought a restoration of the joy of salvation by Him. In later times, Jehovah provided for salvation by means of the ransom sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ. If we as God's dedicated servants sin

7. Why should we pray for holy spirit and guard against grieving it?

8. If we sin but want to have the joy of salvation, what do we need to have?

4. Why did David pray for a pure heart and a new spirit?

5. (a) What does it mean to have a pure heart? (b) What did David desire when he asked for a new spirit?

6. Why did David beg that Jehovah not take holy spirit away from him?



**Do you pray for holy spirit
and guard against grieving it?**

trials. (Psalm 145:14) How comforting it is to realize this, especially if we have erred but are contrite and wish to serve Jehovah faithfully evermore!

Teach Transgressors What?

¹⁰ If God would permit it, David unselfishly wanted to do something that would show his appreciation for Jehovah's mercy and would help others. With prayerful sentiments directed to Jehovah, the repentant king next declared: "I will teach transgressors your ways, that sinners themselves may turn right back to you." (Psalm 51:13) How could sinful David teach transgressors of God's Law? What might he tell them? And what good could this accomplish?

¹¹ When showing Israelite transgressors Jehovah's ways in the hope of turning them from a wicked path, David could point out how evil sin is, what repentance means, and how to receive God's mercy. Having felt the agony of Jehovah's disfavor and a guilty conscience, David would undoubtedly be a compassionate instructor of repentant, heartbroken sinners. Of course, he could use his example to teach others only after he himself had accepted Jehovah's standards and received His forgiveness, for those refusing to submit to divine requirements have no right to 'enumerate God's regulations.'—Psalm 50: 16, 17.

10, 11. (a) What could David teach Israelite transgressors? (b) David could teach sinners only after doing what himself?

gravely but want to have the joy of salvation restored to us, we need to have a repentant attitude so as to avoid sinning against the holy spirit.—Matthew 12:31, 32; Hebrews 6: 4-6.

⁹ David asked that Jehovah support him "even with a willing spirit." Apparently, this refers, not to God's willingness to be helpful or to his holy spirit, but to David's impelling mental inclination. David wanted God to support him by imparting to him a spirit of willingness to do what was right and not fall into sin once again. Jehovah God continuously supports his servants and raises up those bowed down by various

9. What was David requesting when he asked God to support him "even with a willing spirit"?

¹² Repeating his intentions in another form, David said: "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God the God of my salvation, that my tongue may joyfully tell about your righteousness." (Psalm 51:14) Bloodguiltiness brought with it condemnation to death. (Genesis 9:5, 6) So knowledge that the God of his salvation had delivered him from bloodguiltiness in connection with Uriah would give David peace of heart and mind. His tongue could then sing joyfully about God's righteousness, not his own. (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10) David could not blot out his immorality or bring Uriah back from the grave, even as a present-day human cannot restore the chastity of a person he has seduced or resurrect someone he has killed. Should we not think about that when we are tempted? And how much we should appreciate Jehovah's mercy shown toward us in righteousness! In fact, appreciation should impel us to direct others to this Fountainhead of righteousness and forgiveness.

¹³ No sinner can have a proper opening of his lips to praise Jehovah unless God mercifully opens them, as it were, to speak His truths. David therefore sang: "O Jehovah, may you open these lips of mine, that my own mouth may tell forth your praise." (Psalm 51:15) With his conscience relieved because of God's forgiveness, David would be impelled to teach transgressors the ways of Jehovah, and he could freely extol Him. All who have been forgiven of their sins as David was should appreciate Jehovah's undeserved kindness toward them, and they ought to take advantage of every opportunity to declare God's truth and 'tell forth his praise.'—Psalm 43:3.

12. How did David benefit from knowledge that God had delivered him from bloodguiltiness?

13. Only under what circumstances can a sinner have a proper opening of his lips to praise Jehovah?

Acceptable Sacrifices to God

¹⁴ David had acquired deep insight that made him say: "For you [Jehovah] do not take delight in sacrifice—otherwise I would give it; in whole burnt offering you do not find pleasure." (Psalm 51:16) The Law covenant required that animal sacrifices be offered to God. But David's sins of adultery and murder, punishable by death, could not be expiated by such sacrifices. Otherwise, he would have spared no expense to offer animal sacrifices to Jehovah. Without heartfelt repentance, sacrifices are valueless. It would therefore be wrong to think that we could compensate for continued wrongdoing by doing some good things.

¹⁵ David added: "The sacrifices to God are a broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not despise." (Psalm 51:17) In the case of a repentant sinner, acceptable "sacrifices to God are a broken spirit." Such a person does not have a belligerent attitude. The heart of a dedicated person having a broken spirit is deeply grieved over his sin, is humbled because of sensing God's disapproval, and is willing to do anything to regain divine favor. We can offer God nothing of value until we repent of our sins and give him our hearts in exclusive devotion.—Nahum 1:2.

¹⁶ God does not reject a sacrifice such as a broken and crushed heart. Despite any difficulty we encounter as his people, therefore, let us not yield to despair. If we have stumbled along life's pathway in some manner that makes our heart cry out for divine mercy, all is not lost. Even if we have sinned

14. (a) What sacrifices were required according to the Law covenant? (b) Why would it be wrong to think that we can compensate for continued wrongdoing by doing some good things?

15. What is the attitude of a dedicated person having a broken spirit?

16. How does God look upon a person who is heartbroken over his sin?



**Show appreciation for
Jehovah's undeserved kindness
by declaring his truth**

looked forward to rendering acceptable worship to God once again, his psalm did not selfishly leave others out of the picture. It includes this plea to Jehovah: "In your goodwill do deal well with Zion; may you build the walls of Jerusalem."—Psalm 51:18.

¹⁸ Yes, David looked forward to his restoration to divine favor. However, it was also the humble psalmist's prayer that 'in goodwill God would deal well with Zion,' Israel's capital city, Jerusalem, where David had hoped to build God's temple. David's grave sins had threatened the entire nation, for all the people could have suffered because of the king's wrongdoing. (Compare 2 Samuel, chapter 24.) In effect, his sins undermined "the walls of Jerusalem," so that they now needed to be rebuilt.

¹⁹ If we have sinned grievously but have received God's forgiveness, it would be appropriate to pray that he somehow repair any damage our conduct has done. We may have brought reproach on his holy name, may have undermined the congregation, and may have brought grief to our family. Our loving heavenly Father can remove any reproach brought upon his name, can build the congregation up by means of his holy spirit, and can comfort the hearts of our loved ones who love and serve him. Whether sin is involved or not, of course, the sanctification of Jehovah's name and the welfare

grievously but are repentant, Jehovah will not spurn our broken heart. He will forgive us on the basis of Christ's ransom sacrifice and will restore us to His favor. (Isaiah 57:15; Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 2:1) Like David, however, our prayers should be for a restoration of divine favor and not for escape from needed reproof or correction. God forgave David, but he also chastened him.—2 Samuel 12:11-14.

Concern for Pure Worship

¹⁷ If we have committed some grave sin, doubtless this will weigh heavily on our mind, and a contrite heart will move us to plead for God's forgiveness. Nevertheless, let us also pray for others. Though David

17. Besides pleading for God's forgiveness, what should sinners do?

18. Why did repentant David pray for Zion?

19. If we have sinned but were forgiven, for what would it be appropriate to pray?

of his people should always be our concern.—Matthew 6:9.

²⁰ If Jehovah rebuilt the walls of Zion, what else would happen? David sang: “In that case you [Jehovah] will be delighted with sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt sacrifice and whole offering; in that case bulls will be offered up on your very own altar.” (Psalm 51:19) David earnestly desired that he and the nation enjoy Jehovah’s favor so as to be able to worship Him acceptably. Then God would be delighted with their burnt sacrifices and whole offerings. This would be so because these would be sacrifices of righteousness offered by dedicated, sincere, and repentant people enjoying God’s favor. Out of gratitude for Jehovah’s mercy, on his altar they would offer bulls—the best and most expensive sacrifices. Today, we honor Jehovah by bringing him the best of what we have. And our offerings include “the young bulls of our lips,” sacrifices of praise to our merciful God, Jehovah.—Hosea 14:2; Hebrews 13:15.

Jehovah Hears Our Cries

²¹ David’s heartfelt prayer recorded in Psalm 51 shows us that we should react to our sin with a truly repentant spirit. This psalm also contains pointed lessons for our benefit. For instance, if we sin but are repentant, we can trust in God’s mercy. However, let us be concerned primarily about any reproach we may have brought on Jehovah’s name. (Verses 1-4) Like David, we can appeal to our heavenly Father for mercy on the basis of our inherited sinfulness. (Verse 5) We should be truthful, and we need to seek wisdom from God. (Verse 6) If we have sinned, we ought to plead with Je-

20. Under what circumstances would Jehovah be delighted with Israel’s sacrifices and offerings?

21, 22. Psalm 51 contains what lessons for our benefit?

hovah for cleansing, a pure heart, and a steadfast spirit.—Verses 7-10.

²² From Psalm 51 we can also see that we should never allow ourselves to become hardened in sin. If we were to do so, Jehovah would remove from us his holy spirit, or active force. With God’s spirit upon us, though, we can successfully teach others his ways. (Verses 11-13) If we err but repent, Jehovah will allow us to continue praising him because he never despises a heart broken and crushed. (Verses 14-17) This psalm further shows that our prayers should not center on ourselves only. Rather, we should pray for the blessing and spiritual welfare of all those engaging in the pure worship of Jehovah.—Verses 18, 19.

²³ This touching psalm of David should motivate us to be courageous and optimistic. It helps us to realize that we need not think that all is lost even if we stumble into sin. Why? Because if we are repentant, Jehovah’s mercy can save us from despair. If we are contrite and wholly devoted to our loving heavenly Father, he hears our cry for mercy. And how comforting it is to know that Jehovah does not despise a broken heart!

23. Why should Psalm 51 move us to be courageous and optimistic?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Why do Christians need a pure heart and God’s holy spirit?
- ☐ What can a repentant person teach transgressors of Jehovah’s law?
- ☐ How does Jehovah view a heart broken and crushed?
- ☐ What lessons are found in Psalm 51?

Why a Complainer's Lot Is Not a Happy One

EXULTATION had turned to despair in just a few weeks. The initial jubilation of the Israelites over their new-found freedom from Egyptian bondage had degenerated into petty grumbling over food. During the second month after they had left Egypt, the disgruntled nation said they would prefer a slave's lot to a difficult life in the wilderness. In the months that followed, this complaining spirit sapped their determination to obey Jehovah and ruined that generation's prospects of entering the Promised Land.—Exodus 16:1-3; Numbers 14:26-30.

Complaining has, of course, never been limited to one generation or a single people. Who does not occasionally complain about work, food, weather, children, neighbors, or the cost of living? It seems that human imperfection lends itself to complaining.—Romans 5:12; James 3:2.

Why do we complain so readily? Perhaps we are feeling discouraged, disappointed, or sick. Complaining may be an outlet for our frustration, or it could be an indirect way of saying: "I would do the job better!" Sometimes complaints are fueled by personality clashes. Then again, there are genuine grievances.

Whatever the underlying cause, as the foregoing example of the Israelites shows, complaining can be destructive if it persists. A person could become a chronic complainer, even murmuring about Jehovah's way of doing things. Why is that so dangerous? And how should legitimate complaints be properly handled?

Legitimate Complaints

If a grievance is not a serious one, the first question we should ask is, Can I overlook it in love? True, we may have a valid cause for complaint against someone, perhaps even a fellow believer. He may have treated us unkindly or unjustly. Nevertheless, will complaining to others about the unfair treatment improve matters? How does the Bible recommend that we react? Colossians 3:13 says: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also." So even when a complaint may be justified, the Scriptures recommend a forgiving attitude instead of a complaining spirit.—Matthew 18:21, 22.

What if the matter is too serious to overlook? There may be good reason for voicing a complaint. When a valid "cry of complaint" went up to Jehovah concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, he took steps to deal with the disgraceful situation in those decadent cities. (Genesis 18:20, 21) Another legitimate complaint arose soon after Pentecost 33 C.E. When food was distributed to needy widows, partiality was shown toward the Hebrew-speaking women. Understandably, this caused resentment among the Greek-speaking widows. Eventually, the complaint reached the ears of the apostles, and they quickly organized a team of responsible men to correct the problem.—Acts 6:1-6.

Appointed Christian elders today should likewise not delay in taking necessary steps



when serious matters are brought to their attention. Proverbs 21:13 says: "As for anyone stopping up his ear from the complaining cry of the lowly one, he himself also will call and not be answered." Rather than ignoring a legitimate complaint, elders should listen sympathetically. On the other hand, all of us can cooperate by directing serious complaints to the elders, instead of reciting them to everyone who will listen.

Nevertheless, most of us would frankly admit that there are times when human im-

Even God's miraculous provision of manna became a cause for complaint

perfection causes us to complain unnecessarily. A closer look at the behavior of the Israelites in the wilderness will help us to see the danger of allowing an occasional grumble to escalate into a complaining spirit.

God's View of Complainers

The Israelites' murmuring about food supplies reveals two inherent dangers in

complaining. First, complaining is contagious. The account says that "the entire assembly of the sons of Israel began to murmur against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness." (Exodus 16:2) Likely, a few began to complain about the shortage of food, and before long everybody was complaining.

Second, the complainer often exaggerates the problem. In this case, the Israelites asserted that they would be better off in Egypt, where they could eat as much bread and meat as they wished. They complained that they had been led into the wilderness only to die of hunger.—Exodus 16:3.

Was the situation of those Israelites really that critical? Possibly their food stocks were running low, but Jehovah had foreseen that problem, and in good time he provided the manna to satisfy their physical needs. Their exaggerated complaints betrayed a complete lack of trust in God. While in Egypt they had justifiably complained about the harsh conditions. (Exodus 2:23) But when Jehovah freed them from slavery, they started complaining about food. That was unwarranted murmuring. "Your murmurings are not against us, but against Jehovah," Moses warned.—Exodus 16:8.

This complaining spirit of the Israelites manifested itself again and again. Within a year the manna became a cause of complaint. (Numbers 11:4-6) Soon thereafter a bad report from 10 of the 12 Israelite spies unleashed an outcry about the supposed dangers involved in the conquest of the Promised Land. The people went so far as to say: "If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness!" (Numbers 14:2) What a gross lack of appreciation! Not surprisingly, Jehovah said to Moses: "How long will this people treat me without respect, and how long will they not put faith in me?" (Numbers 14:11)

Those ungrateful complainers were condemned to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until that generation passed away.

The apostle Paul reminds us of this example. He warns fellow Christians never to be like those Israelites who became murmurers, only to perish in the wilderness. (1 Corinthians 10:10, 11) Clearly, unjustified murmuring and a spirit of complaint can undermine our faith and lead to Jehovah's displeasure.

Yet, Jehovah is patient with his servants who may occasionally complain because of discouraging circumstances. When Elijah fled to Mount Horeb because of persecution by wicked Queen Jezebel, he was convinced that his work as a prophet had come to an end. He mistakenly assumed that he was the only worshiper of Jehovah remaining in the land. To strengthen Elijah's faith, God first gave him a demonstration of His divine power. The prophet was then told that there were still 7,000 faithful servants of Jehovah in Israel and that there was much work for him to do. Consequently, Elijah forgot his complaints and went forward with renewed vigor. (1 Kings 19:4, 10-12, 15-18) As Christian elders exercise discernment, they can likewise speak consolingly to faithful ones, helping them to see their role in the outworking of God's purpose.—1 Thessalonians 5:14.

Overcoming a Spirit of Complaint

How can a spirit of complaint be overcome? Well, those who are given proof about the harm tobacco does to the body have a powerful incentive to stop smoking. Similarly, understanding why a spirit of complaint is so detrimental can motivate us to break any habit of complaining.

What benefits result to those who overcome a complaining spirit? One important

benefit enjoyed by those who avoid complaining is that they can view matters Scripturally and more objectively. A complainer rarely stops to think about a problem from Jehovah's standpoint. The complaining Israelites forgot that Jehovah God had freed them from bondage and had miraculously parted the waters of the Red Sea for them. Their negative thinking blinded them to God's power and robbed them of their joy. As a result, their confidence in Jehovah evaporated.

Furthermore, a person who can make an objective appraisal of his problems discerns when his own mistakes have been the root cause of his difficulties. He is much less likely to make the same error again. Jeremiah warned his fellow Israelites not to complain about the hardships they were experiencing after the destruction of Jerusalem. Their suffering was a direct result of their own sins, and that was something they needed to understand in order to repent and return to Jehovah. (Lamentations 3:39, 40) Similarly, the disciple Jude censured the "ungodly men" who rejected Jehovah's direction and were chronic "complainers about their lot in life."—Jude 3, 4, 16.

As wise King Solomon once observed, "a heart that is joyful does good as a curer, but a spirit that is stricken makes the bones dry." (Proverbs 17:22) A complaining spirit drains us emotionally and takes away our joy. It reflects pessimism, not optimism. But those who learn to think and speak about 'praiseworthy things' have a joyful heart, which may even make them feel better.—Philippians 4:8.

Doubtless, our lives will be richer if we notice people's virtues instead of their failings. We will be uplifted if we make the best of trying circumstances rather than grumble about our setbacks. Even trials can be a

cause for joy if we view them as an opportunity to strengthen our faith and fortify our endurance.—James 1:2, 3.

It is also important to remember that when we murmur, we are not harming ourselves only. By constantly voicing complaints, we may well undermine the faith of others. The bad report of the ten Israelite spies caused the whole nation to view the conquest of the Promised Land as a hopeless venture. (Numbers 13:25-14:4) On another occasion, Moses became so downhearted because of the people's incessant murmuring that he asked Jehovah to take away his life. (Numbers 11:4, 13-15) On the other hand, if we talk about matters in an upbuilding way, we may be able to strengthen the faith of others and contribute to their joy.—Acts 14:21, 22.

Although we may be tempted to complain about our workmates, our friends, our family, or even the congregation elders, Jehovah wants his people to "have intense love for one another." Such love moves us to cover over the errors of others instead of highlighting their mistakes. (1 Peter 4:8) Thankfully, Jehovah remembers that we are mere dust and does not watch our errors. (Psalm 103:13, 14; 130:3) If all of us tried to imitate his example, undoubtedly we would complain a lot less.

When mankind is restored to perfection, no one will have cause to complain about his lot in life. Until that time comes, we need to resist the temptation to complain about others or about our own trying circumstances. To show that we trust in Jehovah and really love our fellow believers, let us "keep doing all things free from murmurings." (Philippians 2:14) This will please Jehovah and will benefit us greatly. For our own welfare and that of others, then, let us not forget that a complainer's lot is not a happy one.

Discovery of a Different Kind in the

B · A · H · A · M · A · S

LIKE stepping-stones across the azure-blue seas between Florida and Cuba, the Bahamas received unprecedented attention by world media in 1992. Why? Because most authorities consider the Bahamas to be the landfall of Christopher Columbus' historic voyage in 1492, when he discovered the Americas. The quincentenary, or 500th anniversary, of Columbus' landing on October 12 captured international attention.

Nonetheless, the quincentennial fervor was not without its detractors. Addressing the 23rd National Conference of Black Lawyers, John Carew (a professor of international studies) reportedly said that Columbus "unleashed a tide of death on the Caribbean."—*The Nassau Guardian*.

Today, none of the 250,000 indigenous population of the Bahamas can trace blood relation to the peaceful natives Columbus met and described as a "well-built people, with handsome bodies and very fine faces." What happened to those islanders? *A History of the Bahamas* answers: "Between 1500 and 1520 the entire population of the Bahamas, probably about 20,000 Lucayans, were carried off" as slaves to work in Spanish gold mines in Hispaniola.

Thus depopulated, the Bahamas were "rediscovered" first by the British and later by large contingents of "loyalists." The latter were mainly plantation owners from the American colonies. Loyal to the British Crown, they fled the war of independence then brewing on the continent. Today's Bahamians are primarily descendants of these

settlers and their slaves. Upon being freed, many of the slaves retained the names of their former masters.

Discovery of Another Kind

There is little doubt that Columbus saw himself as a missionary of sorts. He reportedly said: "God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth. . . . He showed me where to find it." Yet, the devastation that resulted proved otherwise. The righteous 'new heavens and new earth' promised by God had to await a discovery of another kind.—2 Peter 3:13.

In 1926, Edward McKenzie and his wife arrived in the Bahamas. Unlike discoverers before them, this humble Jamaican couple came in search of honesthearted people to whom they could impart a treasure. They were the first to bring to the Bahamas the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 13:44; 24:14) Later that year they were joined by two other Jamaicans, Clarence Walters and Rachel Gregory. By 1928 there were seven Kingdom publishers in the Bahamas. For four years they worked hard in preaching the good news to the islanders.

Then came E. P. Roberts, a dynamic speaker from Trinidad. His public lectures in popular meeting halls did much to dispel false beliefs and touched the hearts of many with Bible truth. Sitting enthralled in the audience at one of those meetings was Donald Oscar Murray, later affectionately known as D. O. He eventually took the lead in the work.

Missionary Nancy Porter well remembers how D. O. Murray spoke of his fervent



◀ Preaching in the Straw Market

▼ Wading ashore to share the good news

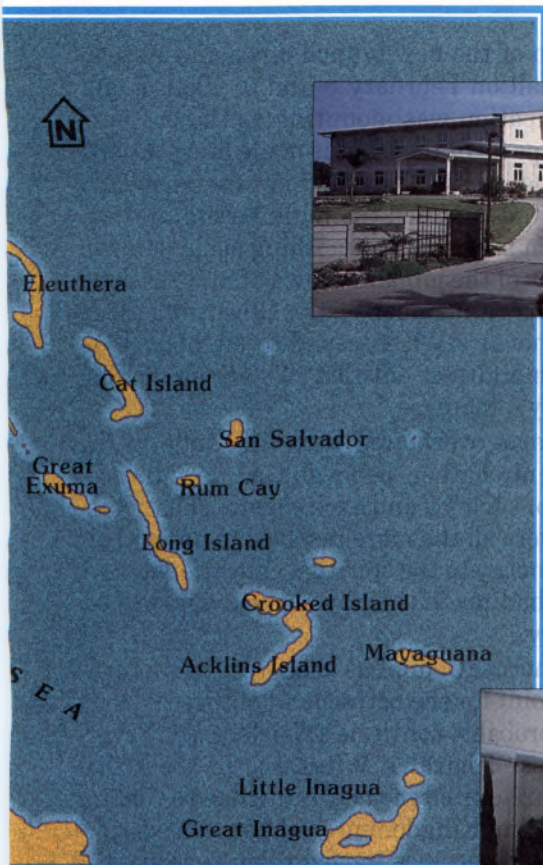


prayers for help in the preaching work. In 1947, Nancy and her husband, George, along with two others, became the first missionaries sent to the Bahamas by the Watch Tower Society. She recalls: "The first meeting we went to is something I do not think we will ever forget. There were about nine or ten present. Brother Murray was chairman and opened with a prayer, thanking Jehovah for the arrival of the missionaries. Help was needed, he said, and 'we have prayed for assistance for so long.' The Society had promised to send help, and now we were here. The prayer was so touching that it made us feel we wanted to stay and never wanted to leave." Now, some 45 years later

and despite the death of her husband, Sister Porter is still carrying the comforting Kingdom message to the islanders.

Particularly since 1947 has the Kingdom-preaching work in the Bahamas benefited greatly from full-time ministers and others who have visited the islands by boat. They often had to navigate the treacherous sandbanks and rippling shallows and then wade ashore to take the good news to remote settlements. Those early efforts are bearing fruit even to this day.

A milestone was reached in 1950. In December of that year, Nathan H. Knorr, then president of the Watch Tower Society, and his secretary, Milton G. Henschel, visited



◀ The branch office is situated on a hill overlooking the Assembly Hall



the Bahamas for the first time. Knorr addressed 312 persons packed into the Mother's Club Hall, a small wooden building on Jail Alley. Quite a few well-known people were on hand, including a member of parliament and the editor of a daily newspaper. That night, Brother Knorr announced the establishment of a branch office of the Society in the Bahamas.

Islanders' Friendly Response

The friendly people of the Bahamas have generally given the Kingdom message a hearing ear. Still, it is a challenge to reach all of them. Why is this so? Well, though most of the people live in the capital, Nassau, and on neighboring Grand Bahama,

others are scattered throughout 15 of the larger islands and some of the 700 islets and atolls making up this island group.

Seeing the need, increasing numbers of local Witnesses and many from elsewhere have moved into small island communities to help with the preaching work. Commendably, they have done so at considerable sacrifice and expense to themselves. But their efforts have been amply rewarded.

One young couple moved to the large island of Andros. Preaching from house to house one day, they met an immigrant from Haiti. There are thousands of these individuals in the Bahamas. The man readily agreed to a home Bible study. One was

started that very night, using English and French copies of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. The next evening, he attended his first Christian meeting. Soon, the man gave up smoking, made rapid progress, and began sharing in the preaching work.

In the morning of the day that this man was to be baptized, he received a tape recording from his family in Haiti, although he had not heard from them for five years. What did they have to say? They recounted how they had become Jehovah's Witnesses. They explained that his sister was already a regular pioneer, or full-time preacher, and they exhorted him to locate the Witnesses and study the Bible with them. Needless to say, the man was baptized that day with full confidence that he was doing the right thing.

Enthusiastic responses such as this have warmed the hearts of the local Witnesses. Ever-increasing numbers of them have taken up the work as full-time evangelizers, and this has contributed to the growth. So it was that in 1988 the number of Kingdom proclaimers in the Bahamas reached 1,000. Today, in 19 congregations, there are about 1,300 Kingdom publishers, on virtually all the major islands.

Prepared for the Future

Because of their numerical growth, the Witnesses have had difficulty finding affordable facilities large enough for their annual conventions. Two conventions had to be held on separate islands to care for the crowd. Thus, plans were made to build an Assembly Hall along with a new branch office. Work was started in December 1989. Hundreds of international and local volunteers worked on the project "whole-souled as to Jehovah." —Colossians 3:23.

Without a doubt, the largest and happiest gathering of Witnesses in the Bahamas to date took place on the occasion of the dedi-

cation of the new branch office and Assembly Hall on February 8 and 9, 1992. Eager anticipation was mounting as the brothers in all parts of the islands made preparations for the event. The weather was unusually cool, and it rained the night before the dedication program. But nothing could dampen the joy of the jubilant crowd of 2,714 as John E. Barr, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, delivered the dedication address, entitled "The Song of Theocracy's Increase."

Hearts overflowed with gratitude to the heavenly Father, Jehovah God, for an occasion of such joy and excitement. Those present were all the more resolved to apply their full energy to the spiritual educational work that had made the physical expansion necessary.

Whether Columbus' discovery was a turning point for the betterment of these islands will probably continue to be debated. Nevertheless, Jehovah's Witnesses in the Bahamas are united in their gratitude to God for providing Kingdom proclaimers whose spirit of self-sacrifice moved them to brave the unknown and bring the glorious good news into what had been spiritually uncharted waters. Their work and "discovery" have resulted in spiritual riches beyond compare for all truth seekers in the Bahamas.

In Our Next Issue

Should You Be Baptized?

Follow the Light of the World

Be Happy and Organized

The Splendor of Gray-Headedness

HOW thrilling it would be to speak with faithful men and women of old! Just think of talking to men such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and John the Baptizer, as well as to women like Sarah, Rahab, Ruth, and Deborah! Would you not be enthralled to hear them relate eyewitness accounts of outstanding events of times long past?

Even today, would you not enjoy hearing faithful older ones share experiences about how they and others kept their integrity to God under trials, including bans, beatings, and imprisonment for righteousness' sake? Most assuredly! Our love for God and our esteem for them would grow as they told us about their feelings and especially their heartfelt appreciation for Jehovah's loving care.

Among God's people, faithful elderly men and women have always been respected for their experience, knowledge, and wisdom. In fact, the following injunction was included in the Law given by God to the Israelites: "Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show consideration for the person of an old man, and you must be in fear of your God. I am Jehovah." (Leviticus 19:32) The Hebrew word for age or old age comes from a root meaning "grow gray" and is also rendered "gray-headedness." So the Israelites were expected to rise up as a sign of respect for an older person, doing so in reverential fear of God.

Does that respectful attitude exist today? For instance, do young people graciously open doors for the elderly? Do youths or young adults usually give their place on a

loaded elevator to an older person? Or do younger individuals generally relinquish their seat to the elderly on a crowded bus or train? Failure to do such things has even been noted among Christians.

To please Jehovah God, however, Christians must act in harmony with his viewpoint and avoid the thinking, speech, and actions of those who are 'lovers of themselves, disobedient to parents, unthankful, and without love of goodness.' (2 Timothy 3:1-5) What, then, does God's Word say about youthfulness in relation to gray-headedness?

The Power of Youth

The Bible recognizes youthful strength and its advantages, stating: "The beauty of young men is their power." (Proverbs 20:29) In ancient Israel the power of young Levites was employed at the temple, often for many of the heavier tasks. Today, much of the work in factories, in Bethel homes, and on construction projects of the Watch Tower Society is done by young men and women who have offered their strength and abilities to advance Kingdom interests. (Matthew 6:33) They thus enjoy fine privileges in God's service.

The proverb just quoted concludes with the words, "and the splendor of old men is their gray-headedness." When youthful strength is combined with the experience and wisdom of years, a very strong combination is formed.

To illustrate: A young apprentice carpenter who has been asked to install some paneling seeks to fulfill the assignment with youthful vigor. An older, more experienced



***Gray-headed Christians
have much to offer
for the benefit of others***

separately. She has also learned that she can avoid doing some ironing by folding clothes as she takes them off the line or out of the dryer.

Learning from experienced people can make life easier. Nevertheless, there comes a time when even the more experienced person cannot handle some jobs that he or she easily accomplished a few years earlier. One writer aptly observed: "If youth but knew, and old age only could." But how good it is when older people appreciate the strength of younger ones and patiently share with them experience acquired over the years—and youths humbly accept sugges-

tions! In this way, both age groups are benefited.

Acquiring Splendor

Mere age is not enough. "It is not those merely abundant in days that prove wise, nor those just old that understand judgment," said the young man Elihu. (Job 32:9; Ecclesiastes 4:13) To be truly valued because of gray-headedness, an older person would have to have done more with his life than lazily spending his days watching television, attending sports events, or otherwise just having a good time. And even in

carpenter notices that in spite of his strength, the young helper strikes a nail several times before it is driven in. The older workman recommends that the young man hold the hammer at the end of the handle, rather than close to its metal head. This enables the young person to strike the nails with greater force, saving time and energy.

Similarly, a young, energetic woman may learn from trial and error that some fabrics will be ruined if they are not washed according to instructions. An experienced woman, though, knows the value of taking time to sort the clothes and wash some garments

later years, the elderly need to continue learning.

Some people brag about doing things their way, or they say: "Experience is the best teacher." Yet, God's Word counsels: "A wise person will listen and take in more instruction, and a man of understanding is the one who acquires skillful direction." (Proverbs 1:5; compare 1 Corinthians 10:11.) Experience is not always the best teacher, for we can learn from the mistakes of others without having to make the same errors ourselves. Moreover, a Christian would want to keep in mind that "gray-headedness is a crown of beauty when it is found in the way of righteousness." (Proverbs 16:31) A life spent in faithful service to Jehovah is beautiful from his standpoint and merits the respect of others as a good example. Of course, learning about God and acquiring experience "in the way of righteousness" can start early in life and should be a never-ending process.—Romans 11:33, 34.

This can be illustrated by an experience involving a seven-year-old boy in Sweden. He asked the Theocratic Ministry School overseer in the congregation if he might join the school. The overseer asked, "Why?" At that, the youngster responded: "One cannot idle one's whole life away!" (Ecclesiastes 12:1) What a positive example for young and old alike!

Honoring Gray-Headedness

A disturbing tendency in modern society is to put great value on physical fitness and athletic ability and to look down on the elderly. What should be the Christian's attitude toward the gray-headed ones in the congregation?

Rather than overlooking elderly Christians, we should take them into consideration and spend time with them. For

instance, at the weekly meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Kingdom Hall, do you make a point of greeting the older ones? They truly appreciate the greetings of the little ones and others. And how the elderly enjoy being present at social gatherings of fellow believers of different age groups! Though a younger married couple may have more in common with other married people of their age group, it would be rewarding to include older ones at such happy gatherings.—1 Thessalonians 3:12; 5:15.

How important it is to be considerate when talking to the elderly! When an older brother with 40 years of service to Jehovah once spoke to another elder about how he could be used in the congregation, the younger man said: "You have very little to offer." What an unkind remark! The older brother had less energy than he once had, his share in the field ministry had diminished somewhat, and some privileges of oversight apparently were beyond his present abilities; yet, he had much to offer. He had years of accumulated wisdom and experience in the way of righteousness. Because such elderly ones worked hard as Kingdom preachers, endured persecution, carried heavy loads of Christian responsibility, and trained others, God's people now enjoy a strong organization backed up by his spirit. May we, therefore, show these older ones respect as wise counselors, loving shepherds, and effective teachers.

There is also good reason to give serious consideration to suggestions made by older people. For example, an experienced brother suggested that the door of a certain Kingdom Hall not be placed on the west side of the building. Younger brothers more concerned about the supposed beauty of the structure did not follow his suggestion. After several years, however, the door had to

be relocated because the constant wind and rain from the west had caused its deterioration. The practical wisdom of experience outweighed the aesthetic factors. If younger individuals honor older ones by listening to their opinions and practical wisdom, this may well save time and money. Even if the older person's suggestion is not followed, he can be honored by letting him know that it was considered, but other factors led to another decision.—Compare Proverbs 1:8.

Look Ahead, Not Back

Some older people take this view: "There is no time like old times when you and I were young." Rather than dwelling on times gone by, however, such elderly ones can be encouraged to look ahead to the day when they will either gain their heavenly reward or regain youthful vigor under the rule of God's Kingdom. Meanwhile, they need to be aware of their limitations due to age. This awareness and a keen sense of humor are invaluable when an older person is apparently overlooked for privileges of service.

For example, an older brother may have been used regularly on district convention programs years ago. Now there are many capable elders and a wider selection of men with teaching abilities. Though relatively young, some of these elders have proven zeal and abilities, can teach well and give kind exhortation, and are able to encourage others. (1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13; 1 Timothy 5:17) As a result, an older brother not appearing on the convention program may feel overlooked and may not be happy that the privileges have been given to younger elders. Yet, that negative feeling stemming from human imperfection can be surmounted. In fact, all in the congregation can help by letting older ones know that they are needed, that they are loved for their faithfulness, and that their opinions are valued.

Of course, an older person needs to remember that fellow worshipers must be honored just as he would like to be honored. (Matthew 7:12; Romans 12:10) Instead of feeling put out to pasture and suffering from a negative viewpoint, older ones should rejoice over their years of faithful service. And surely, all of us should be grateful that as a result of Jehovah's blessing, there is an increasing number of qualified overseers to share the work load and to assume congregation responsibilities as crowds of "other sheep" flock to the Christian organization.—John 10:16; Isaiah 60:8, 22; 2 Timothy 2:2.

Because of pain, failing health, or other factors, gray-headed ones sometimes become irritable. This calls for understanding and empathy on the part of other members of the family or congregation. It also requires that the older ones work hard to maintain a positive attitude, to stay young in heart and mind. When the younger roommate of a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses was leaving Bethel some years ago, the older man asked him to suggest a good replacement and said that he would prefer a younger, mature brother to help him stay young and active. The older anointed brother was not about to retire or take it easy, for there was work to be done. What a fine example of looking ahead and maintaining a positive outlook!

Unquestionably, "the beauty of young men is their power, and the splendor of old men is their gray-headedness." How wonderful it is when younger people use their energies and older ones apply their wisdom in pursuing the way of righteousness! Old and young Christians alike experience great joy as they unitedly promote the true worship of Jehovah God, "the Ancient of Days."—Daniel 7:13.

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and became associated with the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. He was baptized on November 30, 1913, and the following year he left the university and entered the colporteur (pioneer) work. On June 1, 1920, he became a member of the Brooklyn Bethel family. Before long, he was put in charge of the colporteur desk, and in 1926 he was transferred to the editorial department, where he served most prolifically. In 1945 he became vice president of the Watch Tower Society and other associated bodies. Upon the death of then president Nathan H. Knorr in 1977, he became the president of the Watch Tower Society. He served in that capacity until his death. In his lifetime, Brother Franz saw the number of Witnesses of Jehovah increase from a few thousand to some four and a half million. He enjoyed many privileges of service, including speaking at international conventions and visiting branches and missionary homes in many parts of the world. His life story appeared in the May 1, 1987, issue of *The Watchtower*.

On Monday evening, December 28, 1992, a memorial service was held in the Kingdom Hall of Brooklyn Bethel. A very warm and spiritually up-building talk was delivered by Brother Albert D. Schroeder of the Governing Body. Tied in by telephone were the Bethel families at Watchtower Farms, Patterson, Mountain Farm, and Kingdom Farm, as well as the Bethel family at the Canada branch.

All, especially those who worked closely with him, will greatly miss Brother Franz. He was understanding, encouraging, and patient toward everyone with whom he served and traveled. Truly, fellow believers responded to him in the spirit of Hebrews 13:7: "Remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith."

On December 30, 1992, Brother Milton G. Henschel was chosen as the Society's fifth president, to succeed Brother Franz.

**With Nathan H. Knorr at
Yankee Stadium in 1953** ▶

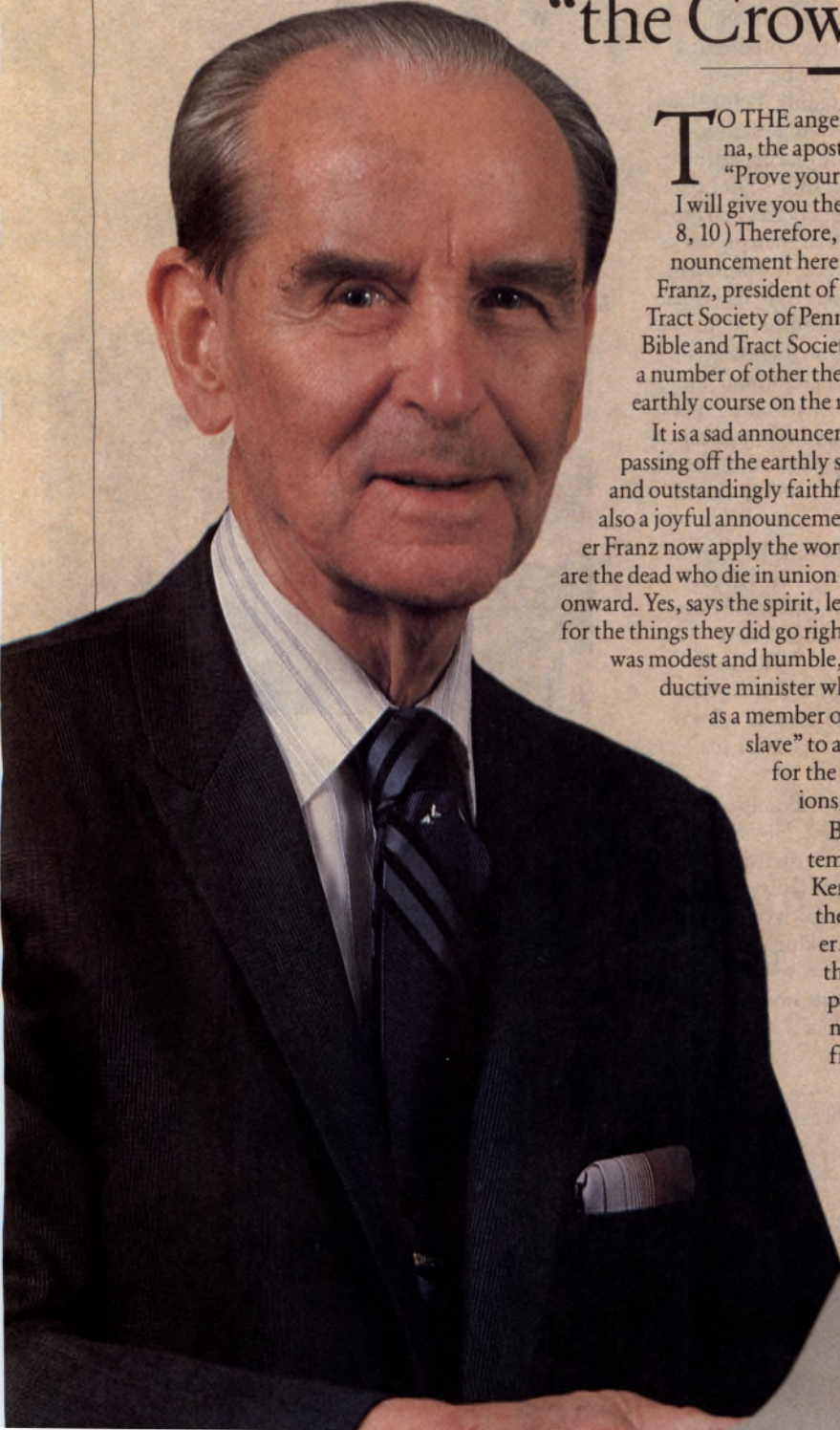
**Frederick
W. Franz
in 1913** ▶



**At the Society's
Myrtle Avenue
factory in 1920** ▼



Rewarded With “the Crown of Life”

A black and white portrait of an elderly man, Frederick William Franz, with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark suit, a light-colored striped shirt, and a dark tie. The background is a plain, light color.

TO THE angel of the congregation in Smyrna, the apostle John was told to write: “Prove yourself faithful even to death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2: 8, 10) Therefore, both sad and joyful is the announcement here made that Frederick William Franz, president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., as well as a number of other theocratic bodies, finished his earthly course on the morning of December 22, 1992.

It is a sad announcement in that it tells of the passing off the earthly scene of a very much beloved and outstandingly faithful servant of Jehovah. Yet, it is also a joyful announcement because to our dear Brother Franz now apply the words of Revelation 14:13: “Happy are the dead who die in union with the Lord from this time onward. Yes, says the spirit, let them rest from their labors, for the things they did go right with them.” Brother Franz was modest and humble, a hardworking and very productive minister whom Jehovah God used mightily as a member of “the faithful and discreet slave” to assist in providing spiritual food for the “domestics” and their companions.—Matthew 24:45-47.

Brother Franz was born on September 12, 1893, in Covington, Kentucky. He came in touch with the truth through an older brother. At that time he was attending the University of Cincinnati, preparing to become a Presbyterian minister. Instead, he separated from the Presbyterian Church

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A close-up, black and white photograph of a vintage-style microphone, showing its grille and body.