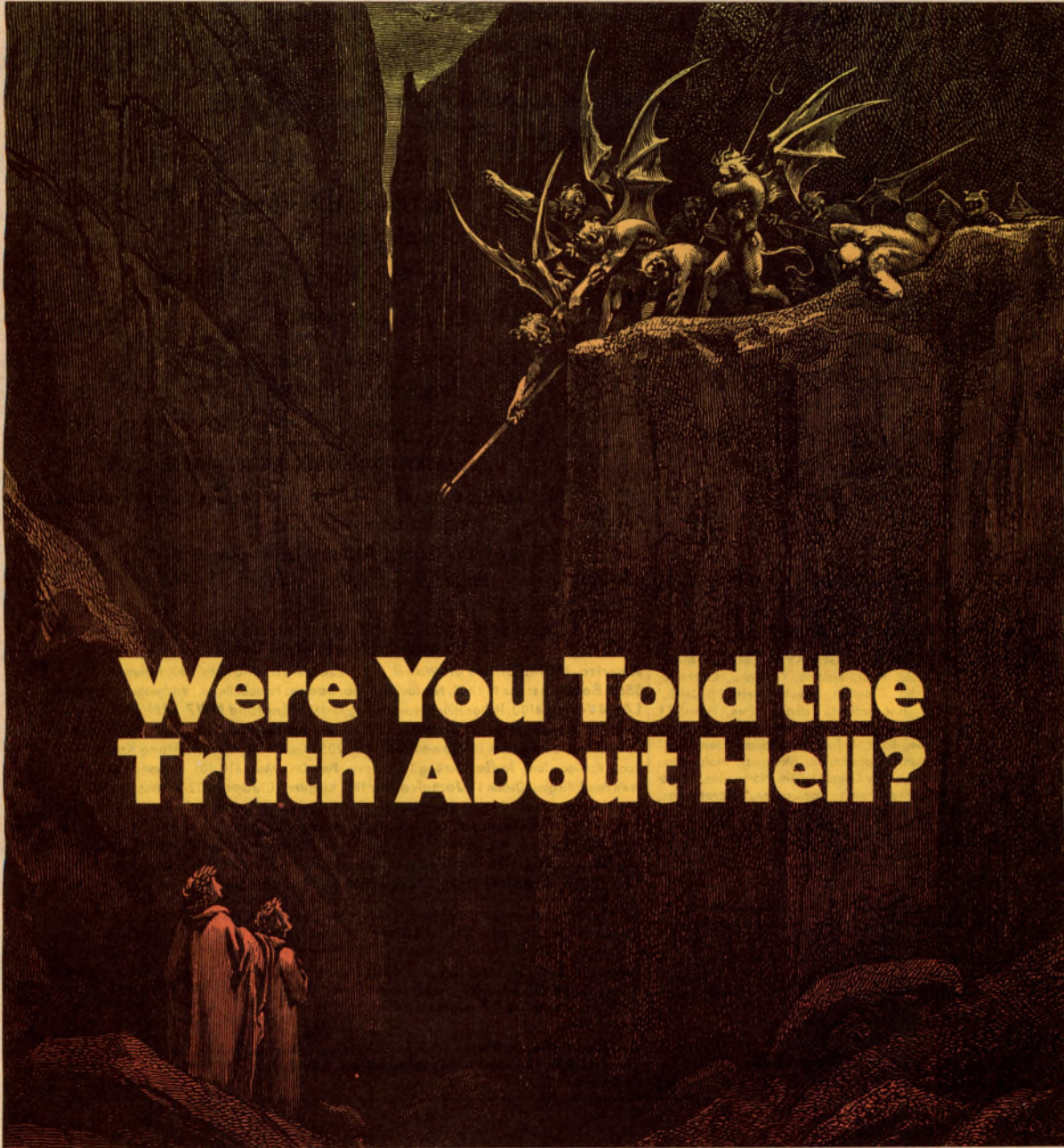


APRIL 15, 1993

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Were You Told the
Truth About Hell?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

April 15, 1993

Average Printing Each Issue: 16,400,000

Vol. 114, No. 8

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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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589. Printed in U.S.A.

HELLFIRE

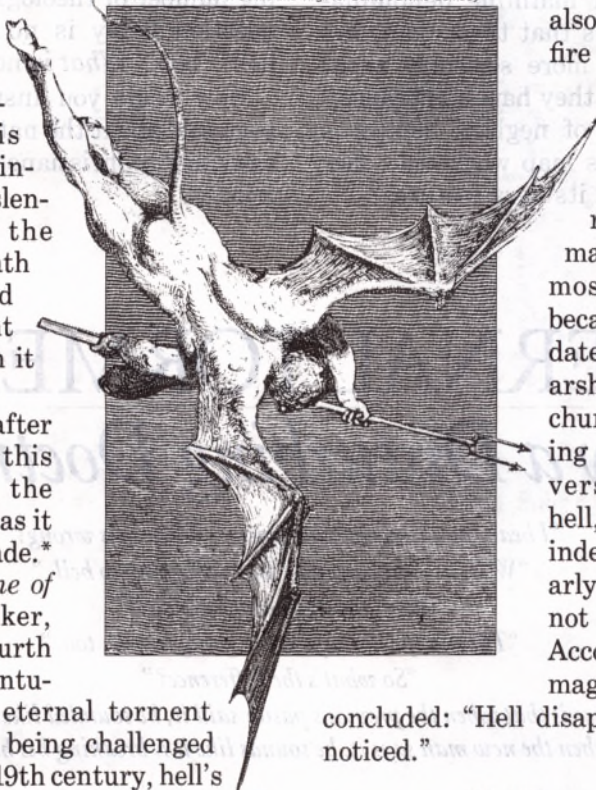
Flaring or Fading?

PROTESTANT preacher Jonathan Edwards used to strike fear in the hearts of 18th-century Colonial Americans with his graphic portrayals of hell. Once he described a scene in which God dangled sinners over the flames like loathsome spiders. Edwards rebuked his congregation: "O sinner, you hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it asunder."

However, shortly after Edwards delivered this notorious sermon, the flames of hell began, as it were, to flicker and fade.* The book *The Decline of Hell*, by D. P. Walker, notes that "by the fourth decade of the 18th century the doctrine of eternal torment for the damned was being challenged openly." During the 19th century, hell's flames continued fading, and by the middle of the 20th century, Edwards' view of hell as a 'furnace of fire where its victims are exquisitely tortured in their minds and in their bodies eternally' had slipped from polite conversation. "Attacked by modern

intellectualism and paled by the flames of Hiroshima and the Holocaust," notes journalist Jeffery Sheler, "hell's frightful imagery lost much of its fury."

Doré's Illustration of Devils and Virgil for Dante's *Divine Comedy*



Many preachers had also lost their taste for fire and brimstone. Robust sermons on the horrors of hell disappeared from the pulpit rhetoric of Christendom's mainline churches. For most theologians, hell became a subject too outdated for serious scholarship. Some years ago a church historian was doing research for a university lecture about hell, and he checked the indexes of several scholarly journals. He could not find a single entry. According to *Newsweek* magazine, the historian

concluded: "Hell disappeared. And no one noticed."

Hell's Comeback

Disappeared? Not really. Surprisingly, in recent years the doctrine of hell has flared up again in some places. Polls taken in America show that the number of people who say that they believe in hell increased from 53 percent in 1981 to 60 percent in 1990. Add to this the worldwide

* On July 8, 1741, Edwards preached the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."

proliferation of evangelical hell-preaching movements, and it becomes evident that hell's sober comeback in Christendom's thinking is a global phenomenon indeed.

But does this revival affect only the people in church pews, or has it reached the pulpits as well? The fact is that hellfire as preached by Jonathan Edwards 250 years ago never vanished from some of Christendom's conservative pulpits. In 1991, *U.S. News & World Report* observed: "Even among some liberal mainline denominations, there are signs that theologians are beginning to think more seriously about the idea of hell than they have in decades." Clearly, after years of neglect, hellfire is back on the religious map worldwide. Has it, however, retained its fiery features?

Questions Raised

Theologian W. F. Wolbrecht had no doubts: "Hell is hell, and no human wish or thought will make any less of everlasting damnation." Many churchgoers are not so sure. Though not doubting hell's existence, they do have questions about hell's nature. Admits another theologian: "For me too, hell is an unquestioned reality, plainly announced in the biblical witness, but its precise nature is problematic." Yes, for a growing number of theologians and laymen, the question today is no longer, "Is there a hell?" but, "What is hell?"

How would you answer? What have you been told about the nature of hell? And why are sincere Christians troubled by this doctrine?

ETERNAL TORMENT

Why a Disturbing Doctrine?

"I hear you dismissed your pastor. What was wrong?"

"Well, he kept telling us we're all going to hell."

"What does the new pastor say?"

"The new pastor says we're going to hell, too."

"So what's the difference?"

"Well, the difference is that when the previous pastor said it, he sounded like he was glad about it; but when the new man says it, he sounds like it is breaking his heart."

SET out in a book of illustrations, this story reflects in its own way that many Bible teachers, as well as churchgoers, are not at ease with the doctrine of hell. In a larger context, it also confirms what Canadian theologian Clark H. Pinnock observed: "Of all the articles of theology that have troubled the human conscience over the centuries, I sup-

pose few can have caused any greater anxiety than the received interpretation of hell as everlasting conscious punishment in body and soul."

Moral Implications

Why, then, are many troubled about the scenes of an inferno that are presented in

THREE LIKE-MINDED IMAGES

The Westminster Confession of Faith, accepted by many Protestants, states that the nonelect "shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction." "In Roman Catholic Christianity," explains *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, "hell is deemed to be a state of unending punishment . . . characterized . . . by the suffering of fire and other tortures." This encyclopedia adds that "Eastern Orthodox Christianity" shares "the teaching that hell is a destiny of eternal fire and punishment awaiting the cursed."—Volume 6, pages 238-9.

Christendom? (See box.) Professor Pinnock points out: "The idea that a conscious creature should have to undergo physical and mental torture through unending time is profoundly disturbing, and the thought that this is inflicted upon them by divine decree offends my conviction about God's love."

Yes, the teaching of eternal torment presents a moral problem. For instance, sincere Christians reflect on the questions raised by Catholic theologian Hans Küng: "Should the God of love . . . watch for all eternity this endless, hopeless, pitiless, loveless, cruel physical-psychological torture of his creatures?" Küng continues: "Is he such a hard-hearted creditor? . . . What would we think of a human being who satisfied his thirst for revenge so implacably and insatiably?"* Indeed, how can the God who tells us in the Bible that we are to love *our* enemies wish to torture *his* enemies for eternity? (1 John 4:8-10) Not surprisingly, some people conclude that the nature of hell simply is not compatible with the nature of God, that this doctrine does not make moral sense.

Many other believers attempt to silence their conscience by shying away from these questions. Looking the other way, though, does not make these perplexities disappear.

* *Eternal Life?—Life After Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem*, page 136.

So let us face the issue. What are the moral implications attached to this doctrine? In the *Criswell Theological Review*, Professor Pinnock writes: "Everlasting torment is intolerable from a moral point of view because it makes God into a bloodthirsty monster who maintains an everlasting Auschwitz for victims whom he does not even allow to die." He asks: "How can anyone with the milk of human kindness in him remain calm contemplating such an idea [the traditional doctrine of hell]? . . . How can Christians possibly project a deity of such cruelty and vindictiveness?"

Showing the evil influence this doctrine may have had on man's behavior, Pinnock comments: "I even wonder what atrocities have been committed by those who have believed in a God who tortures his enemies?" He concludes: "Is this not a most disturbing concept which needs some second thoughts?" Yes, if such cruelty is attributed to God, it is no wonder that sensitive churchgoers are taking a second look at hell-fire. And what do they see? Another problem confronting the idea of eternal torment.

Hell and Justice

Many who give thought to the traditional doctrine of hell find that it seems to depict God as acting unjustly, so it offends their natural sense of justice. In what way?

You find one answer by comparing the doctrine of eternal torment with a standard of justice given by God: "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." (Exodus 21:24) For the sake of argument, apply to the doctrine of hellfire that divine law given to ancient Israel, a law of exact retribution. What conclusion will you likely reach? That only those sinners who have caused eternal torment deserve equal eternal torment in turn—eternal torment for eternal torment. But since humans (no matter how evil) can cause only finite torment, sentencing them to eternal torment creates a disproportion between their crimes and the infinite penalty of hellfire.

Simply stated, the sentence would be too heavy. It would go far beyond "eye for eye, tooth for tooth." Considering that Jesus' teachings moderated the idea of retaliation, you may admit that true Christians would be hard-pressed to see justness in eternal torment.—Matthew 5:38, 39; Romans 12:17.

Justifying the Doctrine

Nonetheless, many believers keep trying to justify the doctrine. How? British author Clive S. Lewis speaks for most defenders in his book *The Problem of Pain*: "There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord's own words." Thus, supporters confess that eternal torment is appalling, but in the same breath, they hold that the doctrine is mandatory because they feel that the Bible teaches it. Notes theologian Pinnock: "By admitting its unpleasantness, they hope to prove their unswerving fidelity to the Bible and a certain heroism in their believing such an awful truth just because scripture teaches it. They make it sound like the infallibility of the Bible were at stake. But is it really?"

You too may wonder whether fidelity to the Bible leaves you no choice but to accept this doctrine. What does the Bible really say?

HELL

Eternal Torture or Common Grave?

HAVE you been told that the early Church Fathers, medieval theologians, and Reformers argued that the torments experienced in hell are everlasting? If so, it may surprise you to know that some highly regarded Bible scholars are now challenging that view. In Britain, one of them, John R. W. Stott, writes that "Scripture points in the direction of annihilation, and that 'eternal conscious torment'

is a tradition which has to yield to the supreme authority of Scripture."—*Essentials—A Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue*.

What led him to conclude that everlasting torment is not based on the Bible?

The Language Lesson

His first argument involves language. He explains that when the Bible refers to the final state of damnation ("Gehenna"; see

box, page 8), it often uses the vocabulary of "destruction," the Greek "verb *apollumi* (to destroy) and the noun *apôleia* (destruction)." Do these words refer to torment? Stott points out that when the verb is active and transitive, "*apollumi*" means "kill." (Matthew 2:13; 12:14; 21:41) Thus, at Matthew 10:28, where the *King James Version* mentions God's destroying "both soul and body in hell," the inherent idea is destroying in death, not in eternal suffering. At Matthew 7:13, 14, Jesus contrasts the "narrow . . . road leading off into life" with the "broad . . . road leading off into destruction." Comments Stott: "It would seem strange, therefore, if people who are said to suffer destruction are in fact not destroyed." With good reason he reaches the conclusion: "If to kill is to deprive the body of life, hell would seem to be the deprivation of both physical and spiritual life, that is, an extinction of being."—*Essentials*, pages 315-16.

Interpreting Infernal Images

Still, many religious people will agree with Southern Baptist Convention president Morris H. Chapman, who said: "I preach a literal hell." He added: "The Bible calls it a 'lake of fire,' and I don't think that definition can be improved upon."

Granted, the imagery of fire used in the Bible could evoke a mental picture of torment. However, the book *Essentials* notes: "It is doubtless because we have all had experience of the acute pain of being burned, that fire is associated in our minds with 'conscious torment'. But the main function of fire is not to cause pain, but to secure destruction, as all the world's incinerators bear witness." (Page 316) Keeping that significant distinction in mind will help you to avoid reading something into the Scriptures that is actually not there. Some examples:

Regarding those cast into Gehenna, Jesus said that "their maggot does not die and the fire is not put out." (Mark 9:47, 48) Influenced by the words in the apocryphal book of Judith ("He will send fire and worms in their flesh and they shall weep with pain for evermore."—Judith 16:17, *The Jerusalem Bible*), some Bible commentaries contend that Jesus' words imply eternal torment. Yet, the apocryphal book of Judith, not being inspired by God, is hardly a criterion for determining the meaning of Mark's writings. Isaiah 66:24, the scripture that Jesus evidently alluded to, says that the fire and the maggot are destroying the dead bodies ("the carcasses," says Isaiah) of God's enemies. There is no hint of everlasting conscious torment in either Isaiah's words or those of Jesus. The imagery of fire symbolizes complete destruction.

Revelation 14:9-11 speaks of some who are "tormented with fire and sulphur . . . And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever."* Does this prove eternal conscious torment in hellfire? Actually, all this passage says is that the wicked are tormented, not that they are tormented forever. The text states that it is the *smoke*—the evidence that the fire has done its work of *destruction*—that continues forever, not the fiery torment.

Revelation 20:10-15 says that in "the lake of fire and sulphur, . . . they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." At first reading, this might sound like proof of eternal conscious torment by fire, but it definitely is not. Why? Among other reasons, "the wild beast and the false prophet" and "death and Hades" will end up in what is here called "the lake of fire." As you may

* In this Bible passage, "tormented with fire" primarily refers to a spiritual, yet finite, torment. For further details, see *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

DEFINING THE TERMS

In this article the terms "hell" and "hellfire" as used by theologians in Christendom refer to the Greek word *ge'en-na*, which appears 12 times in the "New Testament." (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6) Though various Bible translations render this Greek word "hell," other translations transliterate it "Gehenna." It corresponds to "the second death, the lake of fire," a symbol of everlasting destruction found in the last book of the Bible.—Revelation 20:14.

Regarding two other words sometimes translated "hell," *A Dictionary of the Bible* (1914), edited by William Smith, notes: "Hell . . . is the word generally and unfortunately used by our translators to render the Hebrew *Sheol*. It would perhaps have been better to retain the Hebrew word *Sheol*, or else render it always by 'the grave' or 'the pit'. . . . In the N[ew] T[estament], the word *Hades*, like *Sheol*, sometimes means merely 'the grave' . . . It is in this sense that the creeds say of our Lord 'He went down into hell,' meaning the state of the dead in general."

Unlike *Gehenna*, which symbolizes final destruction, *Sheol* and *Hades* refer to death in the common grave of mankind, with the prospect of being raised to life again.—Revelation 20:13.

easily conclude, the beast, the false prophet, death, and *Hades* are not literal persons; therefore, they cannot experience conscious torment. Instead, writes G. B. Caird in *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, "the lake of fire" means "extinction and total oblivion." This realization should be easily reached, for the Bible itself states about this lake of fire: "This means the second death, the lake of fire."—Revelation 20:14.

Separating Theological Twins

In spite of these arguments, many believers insist that "destruction" does not mean what the word says but means eternal torment. Why? Their thinking is influenced by hellfire's religious twin—the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul. And since their church may have mothered these twins for centuries, they may feel that texts that speak of destruction actually mean

eternal torture. After all, the immortal human soul cannot go out of existence—or so it is reasoned by many.

But note the point made by Anglican clergyman Philip E. Hughes: "To contend that only the human soul is innately immortal is to maintain a position which is nowhere approved in the teaching of Scripture, for in the biblical purview human nature is always seen as integrally compounded of both the spiritual and the bodily. . . . God's warning at the beginning, regarding the forbidden tree, 'In the day that you eat of it you shall die,' was addressed to man as a corporeal-spiritual creature—should he eat of it, it was as such that he would die. There is no suggestion that a part of him was undying and therefore that his dying would be in part only."—*The True Image—The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ*.

Similarly, theologian Clark Pinnock remarks: "This concept [that the human soul



Jesus awakened Lazarus from the sleep of death

is immortal] has influenced theology for a long, long time but it is not biblical. The Bible does not teach the natural immortality of the soul." Ezekiel 18:4, 20 and Matthew 10:28 confirm this. Moreover, Jesus himself spoke of his dead friend Lazarus as having "gone to rest," or sleep. Jesus said that he was "to awaken him from sleep." (John 11:11-14) So the human being, or human soul, Lazarus had died, but even after some time passed, he could be resurrected, brought back to life again. The facts prove that. Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead.—John 11:17-44.

How do these points affect the doctrine of eternal torment? Back in the 17th century, essayist William Temple noted: "There are [scriptures] which speak of being cast into undying fire. But if we do not approach these with the presupposition that what is thus cast in is indestructible, we shall get the impression, not that it will burn for ever, but that it will be destroyed." That

correct analysis still holds true, for it is what the Bible actually teaches.

Undeniably, you have compelling reasons to question the idea of eternal conscious torment in hell. Or perhaps you want to go beyond mere questioning and follow the advice of theology professor Pinnock, who said: "The entire set of beliefs surrounding hell, including unending torture, . . . should be dumped in the name of credible doctrine." Yes, morality, justice, and—most important—God's Word, the Bible, tell you to do just that.

If you do, you will see that the true nature of hell is credible indeed. You can find helpful information on this topic in the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*.^{*} Please ask for it when you meet Jehovah's Witnesses. Read the chapters "What Happens at Death?" "What Kind of Place Is Hell?" and "Resurrection—For Whom, and Where?" You will find out that the true nature of hell is not only credible but promising as well.

^{*} Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



HOPE

Vital Protection in a Dismal World

A young Korean boy wanted to help his mother convince a college student how important it is to have hope for the future. Remembering an illustration he had heard at a Christian meeting, he asked the student if she would help him solve a riddle. She agreed. He said: "There were two families. Both were very poor. It was raining hard, and the roofs of both houses were leaking. One family was very sad, and they did a lot of complaining about the leaks. But the other family was happy and pleasant while patching their roof. Why so much difference between these two families?" Intrigued, the young woman replied that she did not know. "Well," the boy said, "the second family was happy because they had just received a notice from the city government that they would be given a new house. So they had hope. That was the difference!"

THE boy's riddle illustrates a simple truth: Hope changes the way we feel about life, often in spite of our circumstances. Like the two families he described, most of us have to weather storms in life—health problems, financial worries, family tensions, crime, and countless other trials and abuses. Often, we can no more make such problems go away than we can order a thunderstorm out of our vicinity. So we may feel frustrated, alone—in short, helpless. To make matters worse, we may have been taught in church that the future is bleak for most sinners, that it may include being punished forever.

It has been said that a recipe for becoming depressed is helplessness plus hopelessness. But we can definitely remove one of those ingredients; none of us have to be hopeless. And hope itself may be the best weapon to ward off the other ingredient, feelings of helplessness. If we have hope, we may endure life's storms with a measure of calm and contentment instead of struggling along in abject misery. Yes, hope is a vital protection.

Does such a claim bring out the skeptic in you? Is hope really so powerful that it makes that great a difference? And is a reliable hope available to each of us?

Like a Helmet

The medical field has begun to recognize the remarkable power of hope. A survivor of the Nazi Holocaust, stress specialist Dr. Shlomo Breznitz, stated that in the case of most of life's problems, "stress comes from our interpretation of their difficulty, not the problems per se. Hope reduces their weight." An article in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* asserted that hope is "a powerful medicine." *American Health* magazine reported: "There are many examples of patients, especially cancer patients, who take a sudden turn for the worse when something makes them lose hope—or who suddenly improve when they find something new to live for."—Compare Proverbs 17:22.

Students of the Bible have long known the importance of hope. At 1 Thessalonians 5:8, the apostle Paul urged Christians: "Let us keep our senses and have on . . . as a helmet the hope of salvation." How is "the hope of salvation" like a helmet?

Consider what a helmet does. The soldier of Bible times wore a helmet of copper or iron, fitted over a felt, wool, or leather cap. This helmet shielded his head from the flying arrows, swinging clubs, and slashing swords of warfare. Likely, then, few soldiers hesitated to wear a helmet if they had one. However, wearing the helmet did not mean that the soldier was invincible or that he felt nothing when his head was struck; rather, the helmet simply ensured that most blows glanced off instead of doing fatal damage.

As a helmet protects the head, so hope protects the mind. Hope may not enable us to shrug off each crisis or setback as if it were nothing. But hope cushions such blows and helps to ensure that they do not prove fatal to our mental, emotional, or spiritual health.

The faithful man Abraham evidently wore this figurative helmet. Jehovah asked him to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. (Genesis 22:1, 2) How easy it would have been for Abraham to spiral down into despair, a feeling that might well have led him to disobey God. What protected his mind from such feelings? Hope played a key role. According to Hebrews 11:19, "he reckoned that God was able to raise [Isaac] up even from the dead." Similarly, Job's hope in a resurrection helped to protect his mind from bitterness, which could have led him to curse God. (Job 2:9, 10; 14:13-15) Jesus Christ, in the face of an agonizing death, found strength and solace in his joyful hope for the future. (Hebrews 12:2) Confidence that God will never do wrong, never fail to fulfill his word, is the groundwork for true hope.—Hebrews 11:1.

The Basis for Genuine Hope

Like faith, genuine hope is based on fact, reality, truth. This may surprise some. As one writer put it, "most people seem to think that hope is just a dopy form of denying the truth." Yet, true hope is not a mere pie-in-the-sky optimism, an insipid belief that we will get whatever we want or that every little thing will work out just fine. Life has a way of dowsing such glowing delusions with buckets of cold reality.—Ecclesiastes 9:11.

Real hope is different. It comes from knowledge, not wishes. Consider the second family in the riddle mentioned at the outset. What hope would they have had if their government had been notorious for reneging on its promises? Rather, the promise plus evidence of its reliability could give the family a solid basis for hope.

Likewise, Jehovah's Witnesses today have a hope that is closely tied to a government—God's Kingdom. This Kingdom lies

at the very heart of the Bible's message. For millennia it has been the source of hope for women and men, such as Abraham. (Hebrews 11:10) God promises that by his Kingdom, he will bring an end to this corrupt old world system and usher in a new one. (Romans 8:20-22; 2 Peter 3:13) This Kingdom hope is real, not a dream. Its source—Jehovah God, Sovereign Lord of the universe—is unimpeachable, to say the least. We need only examine God's physical creation to see that he exists and has ample power to fulfill all his promises. (Romans 1:20) We need only scrutinize the record of his dealings with mankind to see that his word never goes unfulfilled.—Isaiah 55:11.

Sadly, though, most who profess to be Christians have lost sight of true hope. Theologian Paul Tillich said in a recently published sermon: "The [early] Christians learned to wait for the end. But slowly they ceased to wait. . . . The expectation for a new state of things on earth became weak, although one prayed for it in every Lord's Prayer—Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"

What a tragedy! Millions, even billions, of people in dire need of hope have none, yet it is readily available to them right there in their own Bibles. Look at the dismal fruitage! Without a sound hope to protect their minds, is it any wonder that a despairing, "disapproved mental state" has led so many to pollute the world with rampant immorality and violence? (Romans 1:28) It is crucial that we never fall into the same trap. Instead of discarding the helmet of hope, we need always to strengthen it.

How to Build Your Hope

The best way to build hope is to take note of its source, Jehovah God. Study his Word, the Bible, diligently. Romans 15:4 says: "All

the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope."

Further, we should make sure that our hope for the future is not just a vague abstraction. We need to make it real in our minds. Do you hope to live forever in Paradise on earth? Would you like to meet your dead loved ones when they are resurrected on earth? If so, do you picture yourself there at that time? For instance, Isaiah 65:21, 22 speaks of each one building his own house and then occupying it. Can you close your eyes and imagine yourself working on the roof of your new house, nailing down the last shingle? Just think of looking around you at the results of all your planning and labor. The cheery sounds of construction quiet down; you survey the landscape as the afternoon shadows stretch across it. A breeze makes the trees sway gently and cools you from the heat of your work. The laughter of children, mingled with bird-song, reaches your ears. The talk of your loved ones rises from the house below.

Visualizing such a happy moment is not idle speculation; rather, it is meditation on a prophecy that is sure of fulfillment. (2 Corinthians 4:18) The more real that prospect is to you, the stronger your hope that you will be there. Such a firm, palpable hope will protect you from feeling "ashamed of the good news," which might make you shirk the assignment of sharing it with others. (Romans 1:16) On the contrary, you will want to 'boast in the hope' as the apostle Paul did, by sharing it confidently with others.—Hebrews 3:6.

There is more than the eternal future that offers hope. There are sources of hope in the present too. How so? A fifth-century-C.E. Roman statesman named Cassiodorus

said: "He receives hope in future benefits who recognizes a benefit that has already taken place." Wise words! What comfort will we find in promises of future blessings if we cannot appreciate present blessings?

Prayer also builds hope right now. Besides praying for the long-term future, we should pray for our present needs. We may hope and pray for improved relations with family members and fellow Christians, for our next spiritual meal, even for our material needs to be met. (Psalm 25:4; Matthew 6:11) Placing such hopes in Jehovah's hands will help us to endure day by day. (Psalm 55:22) As we endure, our endurance itself will also strengthen the helmet of hope. —Romans 5:3-5.

Taking a Hopeful View of People

Negative thinking is like rust on the helmet of hope. It is corrosive, and gradually it could render the helmet useless. Have you learned to recognize negative thinking and to fight it? Do not be fooled by the mistaken notion that a cynical, critical, pessimistic attitude is the same as intelligence. Actually, negative thinking demands little of the intellect.

It is all too easy to have a hopeless attitude about our fellow humans. Some, because of painful experiences in the past, despair of receiving help or comfort from people ever again. "Once bitten, twice shy" is their motto. They may even hesitate to go to Christian elders for assistance with their problems.

The Bible helps us to take a more balanced view of people. True, it is unwise to put all our hopes in men. (Psalm 146:3, 4) But in the Christian congregation, the elders serve as "gifts in men" from Jehovah. (Ephesians 4:8, 11) They are conscientious, experienced Christians who sincerely want

to be "like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm." —Isaiah 32:2.

Many others in the Christian congregation also care deeply about being a source of hope. Just think of how many hundreds of thousands of them are right now acting as mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and children to those who have lost their own families; think of how many more are acting as friends "sticking closer than a brother" to those who are in distress. —Proverbs 18:24; Mark 10:30.

If you have prayed to Jehovah for help, do not give up hope. He may already have answered you; there may be an elder or other mature Christian who is ready right now to help you once you make your need known. A balanced hope in people protects us from withdrawing from everyone and isolating ourselves, which can lead to selfish, impractical conduct. —Proverbs 18:1.

Further, if we have a problem with a fellow Christian, we need not approach it with a hopeless, negative attitude. After all, "love . . . hopes all things." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) Try to look at Christian brothers and sisters as Jehovah does—with hope. Focus on their good qualities, give them the benefit of the doubt, and be solution oriented. Such hope protects us from feuds and quarrels, which benefit no one.

Never give in to the hopelessness of this dying old world. Hope is there—both for our eternal future and for the solution of many of our immediate problems. Will you take hold of hope? Wearing the hope of salvation like a protective helmet, no servant of Jehovah is truly helpless—no matter how dire the circumstances. If we do not give it up ourselves, nothing in heaven or on earth can wrest away the hope Jehovah has given us. —Compare Romans 8:38, 39.

YOUTHS—WHAT ARE YOU PURSUING?

"Flee from the desires incidental to youth, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, along with those who call upon the Lord out of a clean heart."

—2 TIMOTHY 2:22.

"JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES," declared the Swedish Pentecostal newspaper *Dagen* (The Day), "compose the group that wins the greatest number of new members every year and has the largest crowd of youths." Perhaps you are a part of this crowd of clean, God-fearing youths. You may have been reared in the Christian way from infancy, or you may have heard and responded to the Kingdom message on your own. In any case, we are glad to have you in our midst. And it is our hope that you will pursue a course of righteousness, as did loyal Christian youths in the first century. The apostle John's words may well describe you: "You are strong and the word of God remains in you and you have conquered the wicked one."—1 John 2:14.

² Many—yes the majority—of Christian youths today are standing up to the world's pressures. You may find, though, that maintaining such a course is not easy. When you are in "the bloom of youth," you can feel overwhelmed by new and intense emotions. (1 Corinthians 7:36) At the same time, you may be feeling an increasing load of responsibilities in school, at home, and in the congregation. There is even pressure from Sa-

tan the Devil himself. Determined to mislead as many as possible, he attacks those who may seem vulnerable—just as he did in the garden of Eden. Back then, he focused his persuasive guile, not on the older, more knowledgeable Adam, but on the younger and relatively inexperienced woman, Eve. (Genesis 3:1-5) Centuries later, Satan used similar tactics on the fledgling congregation of Christians in Corinth. Said the apostle Paul: "I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ."—2 Corinthians 11:3.

³ Today, your Christian parents may likewise be afraid for you. Not that they think you are wickedly inclined, but they know from experience that young people are especially vulnerable to Satan's "crafty acts." (Ephesians 6:11, footnote) Far from appearing sinister, Satan's traps are made to look quite appealing, desirable. Television neatly packages materialism, explicit sex, graphic violence, and spiritism as entertainment. Young minds may become filled with things that are anything but 'true, of serious concern, righteous, chaste, and lovable.' (Philippians 4:8) Peer pressure is another po-

1. What is our hope for the young people in our midst?

2. What factors can make pursuing a righteous course difficult during "the bloom of youth"?

3, 4. What are some tools that Satan the Devil uses to mislead young people, and with what possible outcome?

tent tool of Satan. Peers may put you under intense pressure to conform to their lifestyle, dress, and grooming. (1 Peter 4: 3, 4) Newspaper columnist William Brown observed: "If there is any single, secular God for the teenager it is the God of conformity. . . . Being different for teens is a fate worse than death." One Witness girl in Italy confessed: "I was ashamed to let my schoolmates know that I was a Witness. And because I knew that Jehovah was not happy with me, I was sad and downhearted."

⁴ Make no mistake—Satan wants to lead you to your ruin. Many young ones out in the world will suffer the loss of their lives during the great tribulation because they allowed themselves to be misled. (Ezekiel 9:6) The only way to survive is to pursue what is right.

Guard Against Bad Associations

⁵ That was the gist of the advice the apostle Paul gave the young man Timothy. For over ten years, Timothy had accompanied the apostle Paul on his missionary travels. At a time when Timothy was ministering in the pagan city of Ephesus, Paul sat in a Roman prison awaiting execution. As the time of his death approached, Paul was no doubt concerned as to how Timothy would fare. Ephesus was a city renowned for its wealth, immorality, and decadent entertainment, and Timothy would no longer have the support of his beloved mentor.

⁶ Paul therefore wrote his "beloved child" the following: "Now in a large house there are vessels not only of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for an honorable purpose but others for a purpose lacking honor. If, therefore, anyone keeps clear of the latter ones, he will be a

vessel for an honorable purpose, sanctified, useful to his owner, prepared for every good work. So, flee from the desires incidental to youth, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, along with those who call upon the Lord out of a clean heart."—2 Timothy 1:2; 2:20-22.

⁷ Paul thus cautioned Timothy that even among fellow Christians there might have been 'vessels lacking honor'—individuals who did not conduct themselves aright. Now if association with certain anointed Christians could have been harmful for Timothy, how much more so would association with worldlings be damaging to a Christian youth today! (1 Corinthians 15: 33) This does not mean giving your schoolmates the cold shoulder. But you should take care not to get overly involved with them, even if that makes you appear to be a loner at times. This can be very difficult. Says one Brazilian girl: "It is hard. I am always being invited by my schoolmates to go to parties and places that are improper for Christian youths. They say: 'What! You're not going? You're crazy!'"

⁸ Some worldly youths may seem nice simply because they do not smoke, use bad language, or engage in immoral sex. If they are not pursuing righteousness, though, their fleshly thinking and attitudes can easily rub off on you. Besides, how much could you have in common with unbelievers? (2 Corinthians 6:14-16) Why, the spiritual values you hold dear are mere "foolishness" to them! (1 Corinthians 2:14) Could you maintain their friendship without compromising your principles?

7. (a) What were the 'vessels lacking honor' that Paul warned of? (b) How can youths today apply Paul's words?

8, 9. (a) How can association, even with seemingly nice worldlings, pose a danger for a Christian? (b) Where can you find wholesome friends?

5, 6. (a) The young man Timothy faced what challenges while living in Ephesus? (b) What counsel did Paul have for Timothy?



⁹ So keep clear of unwholesome associates. Limit your association to spiritually minded Christians who really love Jehovah. Be careful even of youths in the congregation who are negative or critical. As you grow spiritually, your taste in friends will likely change. Says one teenage Witness girl: "I have been making new friends in different congregations. It has made me realize how unnecessary worldly friends are."

Fleeing Wrong Desires

¹⁰ Paul also urged Timothy to "flee from the desires incidental to youth." When you

10, 11. (a) What does it mean to "flee from the desires incidental to youth"? (b) How can one "flee from fornication"?

Courting couples wisely get to know each other in settings, such as ice skating, that do not isolate them from other people

are young, the wish to be popular, to have fun, or to satisfy sexual desires can be compelling. Left unchecked, such cravings can lead you into sin. Paul therefore said to *flee* harmful desires—to run as if one's life were at stake.*

¹¹ Sexual desire, for example, has led many Christian youths into spiritual ruin. With good reason, then, the Bible tells us to "flee from fornication." (1 Corinthians 6:18)

* The Greek word for "flee" is also used at Matthew 2:13, where Mary and Joseph were told to "flee into Egypt" to escape Herod's murderous plot. —Compare Matthew 10:23.

If a couple are courting, dating, they can apply this principle by avoiding tempting circumstances—such as being alone in an apartment or a parked car. Having a chaperon accompany you may sound old-fashioned, but it can be a real protection. And while *some* expressions of affection may be appropriate, reasonable limits must be set so as to avoid unclean behavior. (1 Thessalonians 4:7) Fleeing from fornication would also include avoiding movies or TV shows that might arouse wrong desire. (James 1:14, 15) If immoral thoughts enter your mind uninvited, change the subject mentally. Go for a walk; do some reading; perform some household chore. Prayer is a particularly powerful aid in this regard. —Psalm 62:8.*

¹² Above all, you must learn to hate, abhor, and detest what is bad. (Psalm 97:10) How do you hate what may at first be fun or pleasurable? By thinking about the consequences! “Do not be misled: God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap; because he who is sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh.” (Galatians 6:7, 8) When tempted to give in to passion, think of what is of greater consequence—how this would hurt Jehovah God. (Compare Psalm 78:41.) Think, too, about the possibility of an unwanted pregnancy or of contracting a disease, such as AIDS. Consider the emotional devastation and loss of self-respect you would suffer. There may also be long-term consequences. One Christian woman admits: “My husband and I had

* You will find a number of helpful suggestions for controlling sexual desire in chapter 26 of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

12. How do you learn to hate what is bad? Illustrate.

sex relations before we met each other. Although we are both Christians today, our past sex life is a source of contention and jealousy in our marriage.” Not to be overlooked, either, is the loss of your theocratic privileges or the possibility of being expelled from the Christian congregation! (1 Corinthians 5:9-13) Is any momentary pleasure worth so high a price?

Pursuing a Close Relationship With Jehovah

¹³ It is not enough, however, to flee from what is bad. Timothy was also urged to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace.” This suggests vigorous action. The prophet Hosea similarly begged the unfaithful nation of Israel: “Come, you people, and do let us return to Jehovah . . . We will pursue to know Jehovah.” (Hosea 6:1-3) Have you made such a pursuit yourself? It involves more than simply attending meetings and accompanying your parents in the field service. One Christian woman confessed: “My parents raised me in the truth, and I was baptized at an early age. . . . I rarely missed a meeting and never missed a month of service, but I never developed a close personal relationship with Jehovah.”

¹⁴ Another youth admits that she too failed to get to know Jehovah as a Friend and Father, viewing him more as an abstract Spirit. She lapsed into immorality and became an unwed mother at age 18. Do not make the same mistake! “Pursue to know Jehovah,” as Hosea urged. By prayer and daily walking with Jehovah, you can make him your confidential friend. (Compare Micah 6:8; Jeremiah 3:4.) “He is not far off from each one of us” if we seek him. (Acts 17:27) A regular program of personal

13, 14. (a) Why is it not enough to flee from what is bad? (b) How can one “pursue to know Jehovah”?

Bible study is thus essential. Such a routine need not be elaborate or complicated. "Every day I read the Bible for about 15 minutes," says a young girl named Melody. Set aside time to read each issue of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* Be prepared for congregation meetings so that you can "incite [others] to love and fine works."—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

Give Your Heart to Your Parents

¹⁵ God-fearing parents can be a source of real help and support. But note the part you must play: "Be obedient to your parents in union with the Lord, for this is righteous: 'Honor your father and your mother'; which is the first command with a promise: 'That it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth.'" (Ephesians 6:1-3) True, you are getting older and likely want more freedom. You may also be increasingly aware of your parents' limitations. "Our human fathers," admitted the apostle Paul, "could only do what they thought best." (Hebrews 12:10, *The Jerusalem Bible*)

15. (a) Why is it at times difficult to obey one's parents? (b) Why is obedience usually to a youth's advantage?

Nevertheless, in the long run, it is still to your advantage to obey them. Your parents love you and know you better than anyone else. While you may not always agree with them, they usually have your best interests at heart. Why resist their efforts to rear you "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah"? (Ephesians 6:4) Really, only a fool "disrespects the discipline of his father." (Proverbs 15:5) A wise youth will recognize his parents' authority and show proper respect.—Proverbs 1:8.

¹⁶ That would include speaking truth to your parents, letting them know if you are having problems, such as nagging doubts about the truth or a lapse into questionable conduct. (Ephesians 4:25) Hiding such perturbing situations from parents creates more problems. (Psalm 26:4) Granted, some parents make little effort to communicate. "My mother never sits down and has a talk with me," complained one young girl. "I never have the nerve to say what I feel because I am afraid she will criticize me." If you are in a similar situation, wisely select a proper time to let your parents know how you feel. "My son, do give your heart to me," urges Proverbs 23:26. Attempt to discuss your concerns with them regularly, before serious problems develop.

Do You Remember?

- ☐ Why are youths especially vulnerable to Satan's "crafty acts"?
- ☐ Why is closely associating with worldly youths dangerous?
- ☐ How may you flee from sexual immorality?
- ☐ How can you pursue a close relationship with Jehovah?
- ☐ Why is it important to communicate with your parents?

Keep Pursuing Righteousness!

¹⁷ Toward the close of his second letter, Paul exhorted Timothy: "Continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe." (2 Timothy 3:14) You must do likewise. Do not let anyone or anything lure you away from your pursuit of righteousness. Satan's world—for all its allure—is

16. (a) Why is it unwise for youths to hide problems from their parents? (b) What might youths do to improve communication with their parents?

17, 18. What will help a youth continue in his pursuit of righteousness?

overrun with wickedness. Soon it and all who are a part of it will suffer annihilation. (Psalm 92:7) Be determined not to go down with Satan's crowd.

¹⁸ To that end, you must constantly examine your goals, desires, and interests. Ask yourself, 'Do I maintain high standards of speech and conduct when my parents and congregation members cannot see me? What kind of friends do I choose? Do worldly peers dictate my dress and grooming? What goals have I set for myself? Is my heart set on the full-time ministry—or on a career in Satan's dying system of things?'

¹⁹ Perhaps you see the need to make some adjustments in your thinking. (2 Corinthians 13:11) Do not feel overwhelmed. Re-

19, 20. (a) Why should a youth not feel overwhelmed by Jehovah's requirements? (b) Of what provisions can youths avail themselves?

member, Jehovah does not expect more of you than is reasonable. Asked the prophet Micah: "What is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?" (Micah 6:8) This will not be too difficult if you take advantage of Jehovah's provisions to help you. Stay close to your parents. Regularly associate with the Christian congregation. In particular, make an effort to get to know the congregation elders. They are concerned about your welfare and can be a source of support and comfort. (Isaiah 32:2) Above all, cultivate a close, warm relationship with Jehovah God. He will give you the strength and the will to pursue what is right!

²⁰ Some youths, though, undermine their efforts to grow spiritually by listening to unwholesome music. The following article will give this subject special attention.

GUARD AGAINST UNWHOLESOME MUSIC!

"Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, buying out the opportune time for yourselves, because the days are wicked."

—EPHESIANS 5:15, 16.

"MUSIC . . . is a divine gift." So wrote Lulu Rumsey Wiley in her book *Bible Music*. From earliest times, God-fearing men and women have recognized this sentiment. Through music, man has expressed his deepest emotions—joy, sorrow, outrage, and love. Music

thus played an important role in Bible times, being mentioned throughout that sacred book.—Genesis 4:21; Revelation 18:22.

² It was in the worship of Jehovah that music found its noblest expression. Some of the loftiest expressions of praise ever made

1. Why can music be called "a divine gift"?

2. How was music used to praise Jehovah in Bible times?

to Jehovah God were originally set to music. "I will praise the name of God with song," wrote the psalmist David. (Psalm 69:30) Music was used in solitude as an accompaniment to prayerful reflection. "I will remember my string music in the night; with my heart I will show concern, and my spirit will carefully search," wrote Asaph. (Psalm 77:6) In Jehovah's temple, music was organized on a grand scale. (1 Chronicles 23:1-5; 2 Chronicles 29:25, 26) At times, massive musical forces were marshaled, such as at the temple dedication, when 120 trumpeters were employed. (2 Chronicles 5:12, 13) We have no record of how this majestic music sounded, but the book *The Music of the Bible* observes: "It will not be difficult to form an opinion of the general effect of Temple music on solemn occasions . . . If one of us could now be transported into the midst of such a scene, an overpowering sense of awe and sublimity would be inevitable."*

The Abuse of Music

³ Music was not always put to such a lofty use, however. At Mount Sinai, music was used to spur on the idolatrous worship of a golden calf. (Exodus 32:18) Music was also on occasion linked with drunken behavior and even prostitution. (Psalm 69:12; Isaiah 23:15) Israel's pagan neighbors were no less guilty of abusing this divine gift. "In Phoenicia and Syria," says *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, "almost all popular music reflected the worship of Ishtar, the goddess of fertility. Thus, popular song was

* The nation of Israel apparently excelled in the art of music. An Assyrian relief reveals that King Sennacherib demanded Israelite musicians as tribute from King Hezekiah. Notes *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*: "To demand musicians as tribute . . . was unusual indeed."

3, 4. In what way was the gift of music abused by God's people and their pagan neighbors?

usually a prelude to sexual orgies." The ancient Greeks likewise used music to accompany popular "erotic dances."

⁴ Yes, music has the power to move, to enthrall, and to influence. Decades ago, John Stainer's book *The Music of the Bible* even went so far as to claim: "No art is exercising such a strong influence over the human race at the present time as the art of Music." Music continues to exercise a potent influence today. Hence, the wrong kind of music can pose a real danger for God-fearing youths.

A Need for Caution

⁵ If you are a young person, then you well know how important music—particularly various forms of pop or rock music—is to many your age. Music has even been called "part of teenage metabolism." It is estimated that in his last six years of school, the average youth in the United States will listen to over four hours of rock music a day! That surely shows a lack of balance. It is not that there is anything wrong with enjoying something that makes you feel good or happy. Certainly Jehovah, the Creator of joyous music, does not expect young people to be sullen and miserable. In fact, he commands his people: "Rejoice in Jehovah and be joyful, you righteous ones; and cry out joyfully, all you who are upright in heart." (Psalm 32:11) To young ones his Word says: "Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart do you good in the days of your young manhood."—Ecclesiastes 11:9.

⁶ Nevertheless, there is good reason for you to be cautious in your choice of music.

5. (a) How big a role does music play in the lives of many teenagers? (b) What is God's view of young people enjoying themselves?

6. (a) Why do youths need to be cautious in their choice of music? (b) Why is much of the music today more objectionable than the music of previous generations?

The apostle Paul said at Ephesians 5:15, 16: "Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, buying out the opportune time for yourselves, because the days are wicked." Some youths might object, as did one young girl: "Our parents got to listen to their music when they were young. Why can't we listen to ours?" Some of the music your parents enjoyed at your age may also have had its objectionable aspects. Upon close examination, many of the popular standards turn out to have a surprising number of sexual innuendos and veiled references to immorality. But what was once only hinted at is now described explicitly. Observes one writer: "Children are now bombarded with explicit messages on a scale unlike anything our culture has ever seen."

Rap Music—The Music of Rebellion

⁷ Consider, for example, the current rage of rap music. According to *Time* magazine, rap has become "a certifiable, global rhythm revolution" and is enormously popular in Brazil, Europe, Japan, Russia, and the United States. Often completely devoid of melody, its lyrics are spoken, not sung, to the accompaniment of a powerful beat. It is that driving beat, though, that seems to be the secret of rap's great commercial success. "When I listen to rap music," says one Japanese youth, "I feel excited, and when I'm dancing, I feel free."

⁸ Rap lyrics—often a brash mixture of profanity and street slang—seem to be another reason for the popularity of rap. Unlike traditional rock lyrics, many of which dwell on the subject of teenage romance, rap lyrics often have a more serious message.

7, 8. (a) What is rap music, and what accounts for its popularity? (b) What might identify a person as adhering to the rap life-style?



Some rap speaks out against injustice, racism, and police brutality. At times, though, the rhyming refrains are stated in the most foul, shocking language imaginable. Rap also seems to constitute a rebellion against standards of dress, grooming, and sexual morality. Not surprisingly, rap has become a life-style in its own right. Its adherents are identified by their flamboyant gestures, street slang, and garb—baggy jeans, unlaced high-top sneakers, gold chains, baseball caps, and dark glasses.

⁹ At Ephesians 5:10, Christians are told to "keep on making sure of what is acceptable to the Lord." Considering the reputation rap has made for itself, do you think it would be "acceptable to the Lord" for you to get involved with it? Would a Christian youth want to be identified with a life-style that is deemed unacceptable even by many people

9, 10. (a) What factors should youths consider in determining if rap music and its life-style are "acceptable to the Lord"? (b) What do some Christian youths seem to take lightly?

of the world? Note how one reviewer described a rap concert: "The rap singers vied with one another for shock appeal with profanity and explicit sexual lyrics. . . . Male and female dancers simulated sex acts on the stage." Regarding a certain headline act, one of the concert promoters said: "Every other word out of their mouth is (obscene)."

¹⁰ Even so, the music played that evening was hardly considered out of the mainstream of rap. Said the concert hall director: "What you are hearing is average rap—the same as they're buying in the stores." How sad it is to report that among the 4,000 and more youths in attendance at that concert were some who claim to be Jehovah's Witnesses! Some have apparently taken lightly the fact that *Satan* is "the ruler of the authority of the air." He governs "the spirit [or, dominant mental attitude] that now operates in the sons of disobedience." (Ephesians 2:2) Whose interests would you serve if you became involved with rap music or the rap life-style? Granted, some rap may be less objectionable in content. But does it make sense to cultivate a taste for any type of music that is predominantly offensive to Christian standards?

Heavy Metal—Sex, Violence, and Satanism

¹¹ Another popular form of music is heavy metal. Heavy metal is more than high-decibel hard rock. Says a report in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*: "Heavy metal music . . . features a loud pulsating rhythm and abounds with lyrics that glorify hatred, abuse, sexual deviancy, and occasionally satanism." Why, the names alone of some of the more popular bands testify to the depravity of this brand of rock. They include such words

11, 12. What is heavy metal music, and what objectionable features characterize it?

as "poison," "guns," and "death." Yet, heavy metal seems fairly tame in comparison with thrash metal and death metal—fringe musical genres spawned by heavy metal. The names of these bands exploit terms like "cannibal" and "obituary." Youths in many lands may not realize how repulsive these names are because they are in English or another foreign language.

¹² Heavy metal music has repeatedly been linked with teen suicide, depression, and drug use. Its connection with violent behavior caused one radio consultant to dub it "music to kill your parents by." It is the connection with Satanism that alarms many parents—and police officers. One investigator claimed that some youths dabbling in satanic worship were initiated into the occult through this music. "They don't know what they are getting into," he concludes.

¹³ Christian youths, however, should not be "ignorant of [Satan's] designs." (2 Corinthians 2:11) After all, "we have a wrestling . . . against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) How foolish it would be, by one's choice of music, to invite the demons into one's life! (1 Corinthians 10:20, 21) Yet, a number of Christian youths are evidently quite fond of this music. Some have even resorted to covert means to satisfy their musical tastes. Confesses one young girl: "I used to listen to heavy metal, sometimes almost all night long. I would buy heavy metal [fan] magazines and hide them from my parents in shoe boxes. I lied to my parents. I know Jehovah was not pleased with me." She was brought to her senses by an article in *Awake!* magazine. How many other youths might still be ensnared by such music?

13. What is the danger in becoming involved with heavy metal music?



Reaping What You Sow

¹⁴ Do not minimize the danger such music can impose. True, you might not be inclined to kill someone or to commit sexual immorality just because you listened to a song. Nevertheless, Galatians 6:8 says: "He who is sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh." Listening to music that is earthly, animalistic, and even demonic can only have a negative impact on you. (Compare James 3:15.) Professor of music Joseph Stuessy is quoted as saying: "Any kind of music affects our moods, emotions, attitudes and our resultant behavior

14, 15. Why can we be sure that listening to unwholesome music will have a negative effect? Illustrate.

In Bible times, music was often used as a means of bringing praise to Jehovah

... Anyone who says, 'I can listen to heavy metal, but it doesn't affect me,' is simply wrong. It simply affects different people in different degrees and different ways."

¹⁵ One Christian youth admits: "I was caught up in thrash metal so bad that my entire personality changed." Soon he began experiencing problems with the demons. "I finally got rid of my albums and was released by the demons." Confesses another youth: "The music I used to listen to dealt with either spiritism, drugs, or sex. Many youths say it doesn't affect them, but it really does. I was virtually out of the truth." A

proverb asks: "Can a man rake together fire into his bosom and yet his very garments not be burned?"—Proverbs 6:27.

Keep on Guard

¹⁶ Paul wrote to Christians in ancient Ephesus: "This, therefore, I say and bear witness to in the Lord, that you no longer go on walking just as the nations also walk in the unprofitableness of their minds, while they are in darkness mentally, and alienated from the life that belongs to God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the insensibility of their hearts." (Ephesians 4:17, 18) Could not this be said of the writers and performers of much of today's music? More than ever, music of all genres reflects the influence of "the god of this system of things," Satan the Devil.—2 Corinthians 4:4.

¹⁷ Concerning the "last days," the Bible predicted: "Wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse." (2 Timothy 3:1, 13) More than ever, then, you need to keep strict watch over what music you choose. Often, the unsavory title will disqualify an album. Job 12:11 asks: "Does not the ear itself test out words as the palate tastes food?" In a similar way, you can test out music by listening to a sample with a critical ear. What kind of feelings does the melody arouse in you? Does it promote wild, decadent behavior—the spirit of revelry? (Galatians 5:19-21) What about the lyrics? Do they promote sexual immorality, drug use, or other wrongs that are "shameful even to relate?" (Ephesians 5:12) The Bible says that such things should "not even be mentioned" among God's people, much less set to a beat and repeated over and over again. (Ephesians 5:3) What about the album-

16. What can be said of the writers and performers of much of today's music?

17. How can youths adjudge, or test out, music?

jacket design? Does it contain spiritistic themes or sexually arousing pictures?

¹⁸ Perhaps you need to make some changes in the type of music you choose. If you have records, tapes, and discs that carry immoral and demonistic themes, you should immediately dispose of them. (Compare Acts 19:19.) This does not mean that you cannot enjoy music; not all popular music is objectionable. Some youths have also learned to broaden their musical tastes and now enjoy certain classical, folk, light jazz, and other forms of music. The *Kingdom Melodies* tapes have helped many youths develop a taste for uplifting orchestral music.

¹⁹ Music is a divine gift. For many, though, it becomes an unhealthy preoccupation. These are like the Israelites of old who enjoyed the playing of "stringed instrument, tambourine and flute, . . . but the activity of Jehovah they [did] not look at." (Isaiah 5:12) Make it your aim to keep music in its place and let the activity of Jehovah be your main concern. Be selective and careful about the music you choose. Thus you will be able to use—not abuse—this divine gift.

18. (a) What changes may some youths have to make when it comes to music? (b) How can youths cultivate a taste for more wholesome music?

19. Why is it important to keep music in its place?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ Why can music be called a divine gift?
- ☐ How was music abused in ancient times?
- ☐ What dangers do rap and heavy metal music present to Christian youths?
- ☐ How can Christian youths exercise care in their choice of music?

The Use and Misuse of Religious Pictures

THE scene is in St. Petersburg, Russia. The date is August 2, 1914. Excited people waving icons have gathered at the czar's palace. An altar has been erected in the center of a large hall. A painting of a woman with a child in her arms stands upon the altar. This icon is called the "Vladimir Mother of God." The crowds view it as the most holy treasure in Russia.

In fact, the icon is believed to work miracles. In 1812, when Russian armies marched against Napoléon, General Kutuzov prayed before it. Now, after committing his country to war, Czar Nicholas II stands before it. With his right hand raised, he makes an oath: "I solemnly swear that I will never make peace so long as a single enemy remains on Russian soil."

Two weeks later the czar makes a pilgrimage to Moscow to seek God's blessing upon his troops. In the Cathedral of the Assumption, he kneels and prays in front of the large jeweled iconostasis—a screen bearing paintings of Jesus, Mary, angels, and "saints."

These religious acts failed to avert disaster. In less than four years, Russian armies suffered more than six million casualties and lost much territory. Moreover, the czar, his empress, and their five children were brutally murdered. In place of the centuries-old monarchy, the country began to be ruled by a revolutionary government opposed to religion. Czar Nicholas' trust in icons proved to be in vain.

Yet, to this day in Russia and other lands, millions continue to venerate icons. This

raises important questions. How does God view acts of devotion performed in front of such pictures? And what about the custom of hanging them on the walls of homes?

What Does the Bible Say?

When Jesus was on earth, he obeyed God's Law given through Moses. This included the second of what are called the Ten Commandments, which states: "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be induced to serve them, because I Jehovah your God am a God exacting exclusive devotion." —Exodus 20:4, 5.

Accordingly, Jesus did not worship God with the aid of pictures or statues made by human hands. Rather, his worship was in harmony with his Father's declaration: "I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory, neither my praise to graven images." —Isaiah 42:8.

Moreover, Jesus explained why God should be worshiped without the aid of material objects. "The hour is coming," he said, "when the true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him. God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." —John 4:23, 24.

Like Jesus, his true disciples taught others the correct way to worship. For example, the apostle Paul once spoke to a crowd of



Photo by G.N.

Greek philosophers who used idols to worship their invisible gods. He told them about man's Creator and said: "We ought not to imagine that the Divine Being is like gold or silver or stone, like something sculptured by the art and contrivance of man." Later, the same apostle explained that Christians "are walking by faith, not by sight" and that Christians must "flee from idolatry."—Acts 17:16-31; 2 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Corinthians 10:14.

An experience in the life of the apostle Peter shows that he was quick to correct any action that might lead to idolatry. When the Roman army officer Cornelius fell down at his feet, Peter objected. He lifted Cornelius up, saying: "Rise; I myself am also a man."—Acts 10:26.

As for the apostle John, he was so overawed by divine visions that he fell down at the feet of an angel. "Be careful!" the angel counseled. "Do not do that! All I am is a fellow slave of you and of your brothers who

Czar Nicholas II blessing his troops with an icon

are prophets and of those who are observing the words of this scroll. Worship God." (Revelation 22:8, 9) The apostle appreciated this counsel. Lovingly, he recorded the incident for our benefit.

But how do the above experiences relate to the use of religious pictures? Well, if it was wrong for Cornelius to bow down to one of Christ's apostles, what about the veneration of lifeless pictures of "saints"? And if it was wrong for one of Christ's apostles to prostrate himself before a living angel, then what about the veneration of lifeless pictures of angels? Surely, such acts are contrary to John's warning: "Little children, guard yourselves from idols."—1 John 5:21.

As Decorative Teaching Aids

This does not mean that the mere possession of a picture of some Biblical scene is idolatrous. This magazine makes good use

of pictures of Biblical events as teaching aids. Also, scenes of Biblical events can be used to decorate the walls of houses and buildings. Yet, a true Christian would not want to display a picture that is known to be venerated by others, nor would he hang on his wall a picture that misrepresents the Bible.—Romans 14:13.

Most of Christendom's icons portray a circle of light around the heads of Jesus, Mary, angels, and "saints." This is called a halo. Where did the halo originate? "Its origin was not Christian," admits *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1987 edition), "for it was used by pagan artists and sculptors to represent in symbol the great dignity and power of the various deities." Furthermore, the book *The Christians*, by Bamber Gascoigne, contains a photograph obtained from the Capitoline Museum in Rome of a sun-god with halo. This god was worshiped by pagan Romans. Later, explains Gascoigne, "the sun's halo" was "borrowed by Christianity." Yes, the halo is connected with pagan sun worship.

Are pictures that mix Biblical events with symbols of pagan idol worship fit to be hung on the wall of a Christian home? No. The Bible counsels: "What agreement does God's temple have with idols? . . . 'Therefore get out from among them, and separate yourselves,' says Jehovah, 'and quit touching the unclean thing'; 'and I will take you in.'"—2 Corinthians 6:16, 17.

As time went by, professed Christians began to ignore such counsel. An apostasy developed, as had been foretold by Jesus and his apostles. (Matthew 24:24; Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Peter 2:1) Early in the fourth century C.E., the Roman emperor Constantine made apostate Christianity the State religion. Now a stream of pagans began to declare themselves "Christians." A common

practice among them was the worship of images of the emperor. They also used to hang up pictures of their ancestors and other famous people. "In accordance with the cult of the emperor," explains John Taylor in his book *Icon Painting*, "people worshipped his portrait painted on canvas and wood, and from thence to the veneration of icons was a small step." Thus, pagan worship of pictures was replaced by the veneration of pictures of Jesus, Mary, angels, and "saints."

How Did Church Leaders Justify This?

According to *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, church leaders used the same old arguments as did the pagan philosophers. Men such as Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Maxim of Tyre, Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian admitted that idols were lifeless. But these pagans justified the use of idols by arguing that these were aids in worshipping their invisible gods. Russian iconographer Leonid Ouspensky admits in the book *The Meaning of Icons*: "The Fathers of the Church used the instrument of Greek philosophy, adapting its understanding and language to Christian theology."—Compare Colossians 2:8.

Many people found the theological justification for veneration of images difficult to understand. "The distinction between worshipping an icon for what it might represent, or worshipping it for itself . . . was too fine to be drawn by any but the highly educated," states John Taylor in *Icon Painting*.

On the other hand, what the Bible says about religious images is easy to understand. Consider Emilia, who lives in Johannesburg, South Africa. She was a devout Catholic and used to kneel and pray before pictures. Then, one of Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on her door. She was

thrilled to see in the Portuguese Bible that God has a name, Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18, Almeida) In the course of her Bible studies, she asked: "What must I do to avoid displeasing Jehovah?" The Witness pointed to the pictures hanging on her wall and asked her to read Psalm 115:4-8. That night when Emilia's husband came home, she told him that she wanted to get rid of her religious pictures. He agreed. The next day, she got her two sons, Tony and Manuel, to break the pictures to pieces and burn them. Today, some 25 years later, does Emilia have any

regrets about this? No. In fact, along with her family, she has helped many of her neighbors to become happy worshipers of Jehovah.

Similar experiences have been repeated many times. As a result of the worldwide disciple-making work of Jehovah's Witnesses, millions are learning to worship God "with spirit and truth." You too can experience the blessings from this superior way of worship because, as Jesus said, "the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him." —John 4:23, 24.

Are You Doing Your Utmost?

"I'LL do my best." How many times these words are followed by "but" and a long list of excuses for not exerting oneself! What about our dedication to Jehovah? Are we fulfilling our promise to give our very best to him?

To make a dedication means 'to devote oneself exclusively to the service or worship of a divine being or to sacred uses.' Jesus did much to show what dedication to Jehovah involves by saying: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and continually follow me." (Matthew 16:24) One who has disowned himself and dedicated himself to God makes the doing of the divine will the most important pursuit in his life.

As dedicated people, we have to scrutinize ourselves to see whether we are living up to our dedication. Peter indicated why we should examine ourselves when he encouraged anointed Christians: "Do your utmost to make the calling and choosing of you sure

for yourselves; for if you keep on doing these things you will by no means ever fail." (2 Peter 1:10) Yes, if we do our utmost, we will not end up as spiritual failures.

Our Utmost Can Be Enhanced

In a broader sense, all dedicated servants of God are expected to do their utmost, or their best, to please Jehovah. However, our utmost in doing God's will may grow. For a three-year-old boy, running an errand may be the best he can do to help his mother, but as he grows older, he will be able to do more. Likewise with our spiritual growth—what was formerly our utmost may no longer be such. We are moved to do more for Jehovah.

Our increased appreciation for Jehovah fuels our willingness to do more. Appreciation for what he has done for us is strengthened through personal study of his Word, the Bible. For example, when we carefully investigate and meditate on how Jehovah sent his Son to surrender his soul to liberate



Are you doing your best in applying suggestions for the field ministry?

son of the daily need to take in regular meals, a deep but onetime search into the Bible does not nullify the daily need to take in spiritual food. Ruth appreciates this need, for as far back as she can remember, her family read the Bible together every morning and evening after meals. Now, at 81 years of age, having spent over 60 years in the full-time ministry, she still reads the Bible regularly after waking up at 6:00 a.m. As soon as she receives the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines, Ruth makes time to read them. She goes over an article at least three or four times before she studies it in the congregation. "Taking in God's Word is what you need to keep strong in the faith," she says. It has also helped her to continue in missionary service for many years.

mankind from sin, we are moved to serve the Originator of the ransom arrangement. (John 3:16, 17; 1 John 4:9-11) The more we "taste and see that Jehovah is good," the more our hearts are moved to serve him. —Psalm 34:8.

A full-time minister named Jetter realized this. In order to dig deeper into what she was studying, she set aside a small room in her house for that purpose. She arranged it so that she could concentrate while doing research. She has the *Watch Tower Publications Indexes* as well as bound volumes of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* within reach on the bookshelf. "When I dig up interesting information," she says, "I can't wait to share it with others."

However, just as eating a sumptuous meal once in a while does not relieve a per-

Doing Our Utmost in Helping Others

By a deep and regular study of God's Word, our zeal to serve God grows, and something inside of us urges us to do more. (Compare Jeremiah 20:9.) Such zeal moved Hirohisa to accomplish his ministry fully. (2 Timothy 4:5) He lived in a single-parent home with four younger brothers and sisters. While he was in his teens, Hirohisa supported his family by getting up at three in the morning to deliver newspapers. He wanted to do more in telling others about Jehovah, so Hirohisa applied for the pioneer service, as the full-time ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses is called. Young as he was, he enjoyed helping others to join him in doing their utmost to praise Jehovah.

Doing our best in helping others includes becoming effective in our ministry. Jesus once encouraged his disciples: "If you know

these things, happy you are if you do them.” (John 13:17) Naomi is a fine example of putting into practice suggestions given by Jehovah’s organization to improve our ministry. She had a hard time talking to strangers from house to house and was often at a loss for words as she stood on doorsteps. Elders in the congregation urged her to apply the suggestions found in the book *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, in the section “Introductions for Use in the Field Ministry.”* She memorized the introductions under the heading “Family/Children” and practiced them many times. As a result, she was able to carry on a conversation with a housewife who was in her 30’s. Even before Naomi could make a return visit, this woman came to the Kingdom Hall. A Bible study was arranged. The housewife and her husband are now baptized Christians, enjoying a happy family life with their children.

Doing Our Utmost in Showing Personal Interest

We can also imitate the apostle Paul, who said: “I do all things for the sake of the good news, that I may become a sharer of it with others.”—1 Corinthians 9:22, 23.

Hatsumi reflects this attitude. While Hatsumi was in the public ministry, a woman politely said over the intercom that she was too busy to talk. The householder’s tone of voice was gentle, so Hatsumi continued to visit her. The householder only answered through the intercom, never coming out to meet Hatsumi. This continued for two and a half years.

One day Hatsumi changed the time of her visit, calling late in the afternoon. No one answered. As she was leaving, however, a familiar voice behind her asked, “Who are you?” The woman had just come from out-

side. Upon hearing Hatsumi’s name, she readily responded, “Oh, it’s you who’s been visiting me. Thank you for always caring about me.” Because the woman had discontinued her Bible study with Jehovah’s Witnesses in another location, she had been too embarrassed to open the door to Hatsumi. A Bible study was renewed, and the householder is progressing very well. Do we care as much about the ones we meet in the house-to-house ministry?

Do Your Utmost

Jehovah appreciates our effort to serve him to the utmost. He is like a father whose son comes to him with gifts. Over the years, the gift may vary depending on the son’s age and means. Just as the father is happy to receive whatever heartfelt gifts his son gives him, so Jehovah readily accepts our wholehearted service in accord with our spiritual growth.

Of course, there is no point in comparing our utmost with that of others. As Paul says, we will have cause for exultation in regard to ourselves, “not in comparison with the other person.” (Galatians 6:4) May we continue to heed the apostle Peter’s admonition: “Do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace.”—2 Peter 3:14.

In Our Next Issue

Do We Need the Bible?

Shedding Light on Christ’s Presence

Deliverance at the Revelation
of Jesus Christ

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you given careful thought to recent issues of *The Watchtower*? If so, you will probably find it interesting to recall the following:

□ **What is the “sign meaning goodness” that Jehovah works out for Jesus’ footstep followers? (Psalm 86:17)** It was “joy of holy spirit” that strengthened early Christians to endure the various forms of persecution that befell them. (1 Thessalonians 1:6) It is the same today, and Jehovah, the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect present,” is pleased to “give holy spirit to those asking him.” (James 1:17; Luke 11:13) So it is joy of holy spirit that works out for Jesus’ followers “a sign meaning goodness.”—12/15, pages 18-19.

□ **Why is it vital for us to accept God’s view of lying?** Psalm 5:6 says that God “will destroy those speaking a lie.” Revelation 21:8 further says that the destiny of all liars is “the second death.” Hence, accepting God’s view of lying gives us strong reason to speak the truth and so receive his gift of life.—12/15, page 23.

□ **What constituted the Samaritan form of worship? (John 4:20)** The Samaritans, in their mixed worship, accepted as Scripture only the first five books of Moses, the Pentateuch. About the fourth century B.C.E., they put up a temple on Mount Gerizim, in competition with God’s temple in Jerusalem. Although the Samaritans’ temple was destroyed, to this day they hold an annual Passover celebration on Gerizim.—1/1, page 25.

□ **Are Christians required to promote antipollution or clean-up measures?** When he was on earth, Jesus did not try to solve all the social problems of his day. When Jehovah by means of his Messianic Kingdom enforces his righteous principles on a global scale, environmental problems will be permanently solved. Hence, Jehovah’s Witnesses take a balanced view. Love of neighbor moves them to show respect for the property of others, but they rightfully put preaching the message of God’s Kingdom first. (Matthew 6:33)—1/1, page 31.

□ **In what ways did Jesus serve as a light bearer? (John 8:12)** Jesus devoted himself to preaching

the good news of the Kingdom of God. (Luke 4:43; John 18:37) He also laid bare religious falsehoods and thus provided spiritual freedom for those held in religious bondage. (Matthew 15:3-9) Outstandingly, he proved to be the light of the world by laying down his perfect human life as a ransom. (Matthew 20:28; John 3:16)—1/15, pages 10-11.

□ **What are some reasons why we owe Jehovah God subjection?** Jehovah is the Universal Sovereign, and for this reason we owe him our subjection. Also, since Jehovah is almighty, no one can successfully oppose him, so we cannot ignore our subjection to him. All intelligent creatures were created to serve the purpose of their Maker, and this places all under obligation to subject themselves to God in all respects.—2/1, pages 10-11.

□ **What helped Joseph to resist committing fornication with Potiphar’s wife?** Joseph had a powerful force actuating his mind. He was conscious of his relationship with Jehovah and appreciated that an act of fornication would be sinning not only against her husband but, more important, against God.—2/15, page 21.

□ **What did Jesus mean when he said: “I am . . . the truth”? (John 14:6)** Jesus did not just speak and teach the truth; he lived and personified it. Thus, Christianity is not merely an idea; it is a way of life.—3/1, page 15.

□ **What comforting lesson is contained in Psalm 51?** This psalm helps us to realize that if we stumble into sin but are truly repentant, our loving heavenly Father will hear our cry for mercy and save us from despair. However, we should primarily be concerned about any reproach brought on Jehovah’s name.—3/15, page 18.

□ **What is symbolized by water baptism?** Baptism is an outward symbol of one’s dedication to Jehovah God. Being dipped under the water shows that those being baptized are dying to a life course centering on themselves. Being raised up out of the water symbolizes that they are now alive to the doing of God’s will, putting it first in their lives. (Matthew 16:24)—4/1, pages 5-6.

Pomegranate Scepter From Jehovah's House?



ARCHAEOLOGISTS in Israel have uncovered many scepters, rods carried by persons in authority. (Genesis 49:10; Esther 8:4; Ezekiel 19:14) Some scepters found in Lachish had a head in the shape of a pomegranate. God's people knew this fruit well.—Deuteronomy 8:8; Song of Solomon 4:13.

The ivory pomegranate in the blossom stage, at left, came to light not long ago. It is 1.68 inches high, and a hole in its base suggests that it was part of a scepter. Note the letters inscribed in the early Hebrew style dated to the eighth century B.C.E.

Part of the ivory was broken off in ancient times, so a few letters are missing or only partially present. Yet, specialists in ancient writing propose the restoration drawn below.

(Based on *Biblical Archaeologist*) Irregular spacing between the letters has led to two principal readings.

French scholar André Lemaire offered the reading "Belonging to the Tem[ple of the Lor]d [Yahweh], holy to the priests." Nahman Avigad proposed "Sacred donation for the priests of (in) the House of Yahweh."

They and other scholars concluded that the scepter originally bore the four Hebrew characters of God's personal name—Jehovah. So it would have mentioned "the house of Jehovah," a phrase common in the Bible.—Exodus 23:19; 1 Kings 8:10, 11.

Many still feel that this scepter head may have been owned by a priest at the temple Solomon built or that it was donated to that temple.

Interestingly, the pomegranate design was often seen at God's temple.—Exodus 28:31-35; 1 Kings 7:15-20.



Israel Museum, Jerusalem