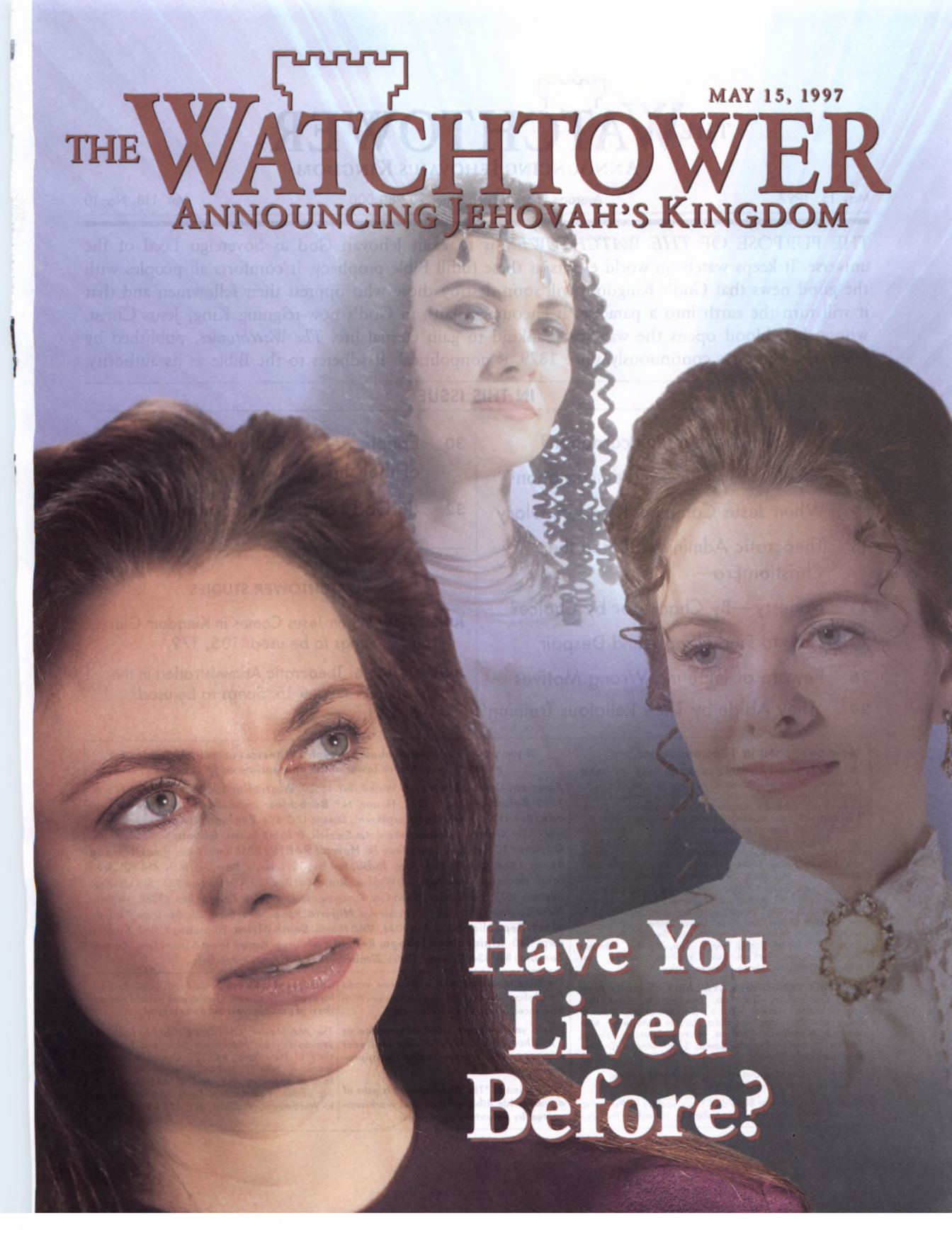




MAY 15, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**Have You
Lived
Before?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

May 15, 1997

Average Printing Each Issue: 20,980,000

Vol. 118, No. 10

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 Bible translation used is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*, unless otherwise indicated.

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Publication of "The Watchtower" is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

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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, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.

Printed in U.S.A.

Do you believe in reincarnation?

"DO YOU remember the neighbor girl you were in love with when you were growing up here in India?" wrote Mukundbhai to his son, a university student in the United States. "She is going to be married in a few weeks. I thought you ought to know."

Why did the father share this news with his son? After all, Mukundbhai put an end to that teenage romance in no uncertain terms years ago. Besides, the son had been in the States pursuing higher education for six years. He had not been in touch with the girl during that time, and Mukundbhai knew that.

Why, then, the concern? It was shown because Mukundbhai believed in reincarnation, or rebirth.* If by chance the childhood attraction between the two had been due to their being partners in previous lives, it would be cruel to keep them apart now that they were of marriageable age. Mukundbhai just wanted to make his son aware of the situation before the girl became someone else's wife in this life.

Consider another case. A four-year-old girl had had several agonizing stays in a hos-

* "Reincarnation," says *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, means "rebirth of the soul in one or more successive existences, which may be human, animal, or, in some instances, vegetable." The term "rebirth" is also used to describe this phenomenon, but the word "reincarnation" is commonly accepted. Several dictionaries of Indian languages use the words interchangeably.



pital in Mumbai, India. Her problem was a defective valve in her heart. Her well-to-do parents could not bear to see the child suffer. But they reasoned: "We have to accept it. She must have done something in her previous life to deserve this."

Belief in reincarnation plays an important role in the lives of millions in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and other religions originating in India. Experiences in life—from falling in love to intense suffering—are considered consequences of deeds committed in a previous life or lives.

Many in Western lands also have a fascination with the doctrine of reincarnation. American actress Shirley MacLaine professes to believe in it. Writer Laurel Phelan of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, claims to have memories of 50 past lives. In a 1994 Gallup poll conducted for CNN/USA Today, more than 270 of 1,016 adults professed to believe in reincarnation. Belief in reincarnation is also a part of the New Age



Is she being punished for sins committed in a previous life?

movement. But what evidence supports this belief?

"Memories of a previous life!" say believers in reincarnation. Consequently, when three-year-old Ratana in Bangkok began to have "memories of her past life as a religious woman who died in her 60s," most observers accepted her case as valid proof of reincarnation.

Skepticism abounds, however. And other explanations of memories attributed to previous lives are possible.* In his book *Hinduism: Its Meaning for the Liberation of the Spirit*, Hindu philosopher Nikhilananda says that 'experiences after death cannot be demonstrated by reason.' Yet he asserts that "the doctrine of rebirth is more probable than improbable."

But does the Bible support this teaching? And what hope for the dead does the inspired Word of God offer?

* See pages 5-7 of the June 8, 1994, issue of *Awake!*

Should you believe in reincarnation?

THE Greek philosopher Plato connected falling in love with the idea of reincarnation. He believed that after the death of the body, the soul, being immortal, migrates to what has been called the "realm of the pure forms." Bodiless, it remains there for some time, contemplating the forms. When it is later reincarnated into another body, the soul subconsciously re-

members and yearns for the realm of forms. According to Plato, people fall in love because they see in their beloved the ideal form of beauty they vaguely remember and seek.

Identifying the Source and the Basis

The teaching of reincarnation requires that the soul be immortal. The origin of reincarnation, then, must be traced to those peoples or nations that held such a belief.

On this basis, some think that it originated in ancient Egypt. Others hold that it got started in old Babylonia. To create prestige for the Babylonian religion, its priesthood advanced the doctrine of transmigration of the soul. They could thus claim that their religious heroes were reincarnations of notable, though long dead, ancestors.

It was in India, however, that belief in reincarnation came to full bloom. The Hindu sages were grappling with the universal problems of evil and of suffering among humans. 'How can these be harmonized with the concept of a righteous Creator?' they asked. They tried to resolve the conflict between God's righteousness and the unforeseen calamities and inequalities in the world. In time, they devised "the law of karma," the law of cause and effect—'whatever a man sows, that shall he reap.' They worked out a detailed 'balance sheet' whereby merits and demerits in one life are rewarded or punished in the next.

"Karma" simply means "action." A Hindu is said to have good karma if he conforms to social and religious norms and bad karma if he does not. His action, or karma, determines his future in each successive rebirth. "All men are born with a blueprint of character, mainly prepared by their actions in previous lives, though their physical traits are determined by heredity," says philosopher Nikhilananda. "A man is [thus] an architect of his own fate, the builder of his

own destiny." The ultimate goal, however, is to be liberated from this cycle of transmigration and be united with Brahman—the ultimate reality. This, it is believed, is achieved by striving for socially acceptable behavior and special Hindu knowledge.

The teaching of reincarnation thus uses as its foundation the doctrine of the immortality of the soul and builds on it using the law of karma. Let us see what God's inspired Word, the Bible, has to say regarding these ideas.

Is the Soul Immortal?

To answer this question, let us turn to the highest authority on the subject—the inspired Word of the Creator. In the very first book of the Bible, Genesis, we learn the accurate meaning of "soul." Regarding the creation of the first man, Adam, the Bible says: "Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) Clearly, the soul is not what a man *has* but what he *is*. The Hebrew word used here for soul is *ne'phesh*. It occurs some 700 times in the Bible, and it never refers to a separate and ethereal part of a human but always to something tangible and physical.—Job 6:7; Psalm 35:13; 107:9; 119:28.

What happens to the soul at death? Consider what happened to Adam at his death. When he sinned,



**The Hindu
wheel of life**

God's Personality and the Law of Karma

"The law of Karma," explained Mohandas K. Gandhi, "is inexorable and impossible of evasion. There is thus hardly any need for God to interfere. He laid down the law and, as it were, retired." Gandhi found this disturbing.

On the other hand, the resurrection promise reveals that God has a deep interest in his creation. To bring a dead one back to life on a paradise earth, God has to know and remember everything about that person. God indeed cares for each one of us.—1 Peter 5:6, 7.

God told him: "You [will] return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) Think of what that means. Before God created him from the dust, Adam did not exist. After his death, Adam returned to the same state of nonexistence.

Simply stated, the Bible teaches that death is the opposite of life. At Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, we read: "The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all, neither do they anymore have wages, because the remembrance of them has been forgotten. All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol, the place to which you are going."

This means that the dead are unable to do or feel anything. They no longer have any thoughts, nor do they remember anything. The psalmist states: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs. His spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish."—Psalm 146:3, 4.

The Bible clearly shows that at death the soul does not move on to another body, but it dies. "The soul that is sinning—it itself will die," the Bible emphatically states. (Ezekiel

18:4, 20; Acts 3:23; Revelation 16:3) Thus, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul—the very foundation of the theory of re-incarnation—does not find any support in the Scriptures. Without it, the theory collapses. What, then, explains the suffering we see in the world?

Why Do People Suffer?

The underlying reason for human suffering is the imperfection that we all inherit from sinful Adam. "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned," says the Bible. (Romans 5:12) Being born from Adam, all of us get sick, grow old, and die.—Psalm 41:1, 3; Philippians 2:25-27.

Further, the Creator's inexorable moral law states: "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) Thus, a promiscuous life-style may lead to emotional distress, unwanted pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases. "An astonishing 30 percent of fatal cancers [in the United States] can be blamed primarily on smoking, and an equal number on lifestyle,

especially dietary practices and lack of exercise," says the magazine *Scientific American*. Some disasters that cause suffering are a legacy of man's mismanagement of earth's resources.—Compare Revelation 11:18.

Yes, man is to blame for much of his misery. Since the soul is not immortal, however, the law of 'reaping what you sow' cannot be

**"Time and unforeseen
occurrence befall them all."
—Ecclesiastes 9:11**

used to connect human suffering to a karma—deeds of a supposed previous life. "He who has died has been acquitted from his sin," states the Bible. (Romans 6:7, 23) Thus the fruitage of sin is not carried over to a life after death.

Satan the Devil also causes much suffering. In fact, this world is dominated by Satan. (1 John 5:19) And as Jesus Christ foretold, His disciples would be 'objects of hatred by all people on account of his name.' (Matthew 10:22) As a result, the righteous often face more problems than the wicked do.

In this world some events happen for which the causes are not readily evident. The fastest runner may stumble and lose the race. A mighty army may go down in defeat before inferior forces. A wise man may be unable to get a good job and may therefore suffer hunger. People with excellent understanding of business management may, because of circumstances, be unable to put their knowledge to work and thus find themselves in poverty. Knowledgeable individuals may incur the wrath of those in authority and come to be in disfavor. Why is this so? "Because time and unforeseen

occurrence befall them all," answers wise King Solomon.—Ecclesiastes 9:11.

Suffering was mankind's lot long before Hindu sages tried to explain why it exists. But is there hope of a better future? And what promise does the Bible hold for the dead?

A Peaceful Future

The Creator has promised that soon he will bring an end to the present world society that is under Satan's control. (Proverbs 2:21, 22; Daniel 2:44) A righteous new human society—"a new earth"—will then be a reality. (2 Peter 3:13) At that time "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'" (Isaiah 33:24) Even the agony of death will be done away with, for God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:4.

Regarding the inhabitants of God's promised new world, the psalmist foretold: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." (Psalm 37:29) Moreover, the meek ones "will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:11.

Mukundbhai, mentioned in the preceding article, has fallen asleep in death without knowing the wonderful promises of God. But millions who have died without knowing God have the prospect of being awakened in such a peaceful new world, for the Bible promises: "There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous."—Acts 24:15; Luke 23:43.

The word "resurrection" is here translated from the Greek word *a-na'sta-sis*, which literally means "a standing up again." Resurrection thus involves a reactivating of the life pattern of the individual.



God's Word teaches resurrection

The Creator of heaven and earth is infinite in wisdom. (Job 12:13) Remembering the life patterns of dead ones is not a problem for him. (Compare Isaiah 40:26.) Jehovah God also abounds in love. (1 John 4:8) Hence, he can use his perfect memory, not to punish the dead for the bad they have done, but to bring them back to life on a paradise earth with the personality they had before they died.

For millions like Mukundbhai, a resurrection will mean being with their loved ones again. But imagine what it can mean for those who are living now. Take, for example, Mukundbhai's son, who has come to

know the wonderful truth about God and his purposes. How comforting it is for him to know that his father is not trapped in an almost endless cycle of rebirths, each surrounded by wickedness and suffering! He is simply asleep in death, awaiting a resurrection. How thrilling it is for him to contemplate the possibility of one day sharing with his father what he himself has learned from the Bible!

It is God's will that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Now is the time to learn how you, along with millions of others already doing God's will, can live forever on a paradise earth.—John 17:3.

WHEN JESUS COMES IN KINGDOM GLORY

"Some of those standing here . . . will not taste death at all until first they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."—MATTHEW 16:28.

SHORTLY after Pentecost 32 C.E., three of Jesus Christ's apostles saw a memorable vision. According to the inspired record, "Jesus took Peter and James and John his brother along and brought them up into a lofty mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them." —Matthew 17:1, 2.

² The transfiguration vision came at a critical time. Jesus had started to tell his followers that he was going to suffer and die in Jerusalem, but they found his words difficult to grasp. (Matthew 16:21-23) The vision strengthened the faith of Jesus' three apostles in preparation for his coming death and also for the years of hard work and testing that would follow for the Christian congregation. Can we today learn something from the vision? Yes, because what it foreshadowed actually takes place in our time.

³ Six days before the transfiguration, Jesus told his followers: "The Son of man is destined to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then he will recompense each one according to his behavior." These words would be fulfilled at "the conclusion of the system of things." Jesus fur-

ther stated: "Truly I say to you that there are some of those standing here that will not taste death at all until first they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matthew 16:27, 28; 24:3; 25:31-34, 41; Daniel 12:4) The transfiguration took place in fulfillment of these latter words.

⁴ Exactly what did the three apostles see? The following is Luke's description of the event: "As [Jesus] was praying the appearance of his face became different and his apparel became glitteringly white. Also, look! two men were conversing with him, who were Moses and Elijah. These appeared with glory and began talking about his departure that he was destined to fulfill at Jerusalem." Then, "a cloud formed and began to overshadow [the apostles]. As they entered into the cloud, they became fearful. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying: 'This is my Son, the one that has been chosen. Listen to him.'" —Luke 9:29-31, 34, 35.

Faith Strengthened

⁵ The apostle Peter had already identified Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16) Jehovah's words from heaven confirmed that identification, and the vision of Jesus transfigured was a foretaste of Christ's coming

- 1, 2. What happened shortly after Pentecost 32 C.E., and what was the purpose of the event?
3, 4. (a) What did Jesus say six days before the transfiguration? (b) Describe what happened during the transfiguration.

5. What effect did the transfiguration have on the apostle Peter?



The transfiguration has strengthened the faith of Christians past and present

in Kingdom power and glory, eventually to judge mankind. More than 30 years after the transfiguration, Peter wrote: "It was not by following artfully contrived false stories that we acquainted you with the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ,

but it was by having become eyewitnesses of his magnificence. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when words such as these were borne to him by the magnificent glory: 'This is my son, my beloved, whom I myself have approved.' Yes, these words we heard borne from heaven while we were with him in the holy mountain."—2 Peter 1:16-18; 1 Peter 4:17.

⁶ Today, our faith too is strengthened by what the three apostles saw. Of course, events have moved on since 32 C.E. The following year, Jesus died and was resurrected, ascending to the right hand of his Father. (Acts 2:29-36) At Pentecost of that year, the new "Israel of God" was brought forth, and a preaching campaign began, starting in Jerusalem and later spreading to the ends of the earth. (Galatians 6:16; Acts 1:8) Almost immediately the faith of Jesus' followers was tested. The apostles were arrested and severely beaten because they refused to stop preaching. Soon Stephen was murdered. Then James, an eyewitness of the transfiguration, was killed. (Acts 5:17-40; 6:8-7:60; 12:1, 2) Peter and John, however, survived to serve Jehovah faithfully for many more years. In fact, toward the close of the first century C.E., John recorded further visionary glimpses of Jesus in heavenly glory.—Revelation 1:12-20; 14:14; 19:11-16.

⁷ Since the beginning of "the Lord's day" in 1914, many of the visions seen by John have been fulfilled. (Revelation 1:10) What of Jesus' 'coming in the glory of his Father,' as foreshadowed by the transfiguration? This vision began to be fulfilled at the birth of God's heavenly Kingdom in 1914. When Jesus, like a daystar, rose on the universal scene as a newly enthroned King, that was, as it were, the dawn of a new day. (2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 11:15; 22:16) Did Jesus at that time recompense some according to their behavior? Yes. There is strong evidence that shortly thereafter, the heavenly resurrection of anointed Christians began.—2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 14:13.

6. How did events unfold after the transfiguration?

7. (a) When did the transfiguration vision begin to be fulfilled? (b) When did Jesus recompense some according to their behavior?

⁸ Soon, though, Jesus will arrive "in his glory, and all the angels with him" in order to judge mankind as a whole. (Matthew 25:31) At that time, he will reveal himself in all his magnificent glory and give to "each one" just recompense for his or her behavior. Sheeplike ones will inherit everlasting life in the Kingdom prepared for them, and goatlike ones will depart into "everlasting cutting-off." What a splendid conclusion that will be to the fulfillment of the transfiguration vision!—Matthew 25:34, 41, 46; Mark 8:38; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

Jesus' Glorified Companions

⁹ Jesus was not alone in the transfiguration. Moses and Elijah were seen with him. (Matthew 17:2, 3) Were they literally present? No, for both men had long since died and were asleep in the dust awaiting a resurrection. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Hebrews 11:35) Will they appear with Jesus when he comes in heavenly glory? No, because Moses and Elijah lived before the heavenly hope opened up to humans. They will be part of the earthly "resurrection of . . . the righteous." (Acts 24:15) So their appearance in the transfiguration vision is symbolic. Of what?

¹⁰ In other contexts, Moses and Elijah are prophetic figures. As mediator of the Law covenant, Moses foreshadowed Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. (Deuteronomy 18:18; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 8:6) Elijah foreshadowed John the Baptist, a forerunner of the Messiah. (Matthew 17:11-13)

8. What events will mark the culmination of the fulfillment of the transfiguration vision?

9. Should we expect Moses and Elijah to be with Jesus in the fulfillment of the transfiguration vision? Explain.

10, 11. Whom do Elijah and Moses picture in different contexts?

Further, in the context of Revelation chapter 11, Moses and Elijah foreshadow the anointed remnant in the time of the end. How do we know that?

¹¹ Well, turn to Revelation 11:1-6. In verse 3 we read: "I will cause my two witnesses to prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days dressed in sackcloth." This prophecy was fulfilled upon the remnant of anointed Christians during World War I.* Why *two* witnesses? Because the anointed remnant perform works that, in a spiritual way, are like those of Moses and Elijah. Verses 5 and 6 go on to say: "If anyone wants to harm [the two witnesses], fire issues forth from their mouths and devours their enemies; and if anyone should want to harm them, in this manner he must be killed. These have the authority to shut up heaven that no rain should fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every sort of plague as often as they wish." Thus, we are reminded of miracles performed by Elijah and Moses.—Numbers 16:31-34; 1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 1:9-12.

¹² Who, then, do Moses and Elijah foreshadow in the context of the transfiguration? Luke says that they appeared along with Jesus "with glory." (Luke 9:31) Clearly, they foreshadow Christians who have been anointed with holy spirit as "joint heirs" with Jesus and who thereby received the wonderful hope of being "glorified together" with him. (Romans 8:17) Resurrected anointed ones will be with Jesus

* See the books *"Let Your Name Be Sanctified,"* pages 313-14, and *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, pages 164-5, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

12. In the context of the transfiguration, who are pictured by Moses and Elijah?

when he comes in the glory of his Father to "recompense each one according to his behavior."—Matthew 16:27.

Witnesses Like Moses and Elijah

¹³ There are notable features that mark Moses and Elijah as fitting prophetic pictures of Jesus' anointed joint heirs. Both Moses and Elijah served as Jehovah's spokesmen for many years. Both faced the wrath of a ruler. In a time of need, each was supported by a foreign family. Both boldly prophesied to kings and stood firm against false prophets. Moses and Elijah both saw demonstrations of Jehovah's power on Mount Sinai (also called Horeb). Both commissioned successors on the east side of the Jordan. And the times of both Moses (with Joshua) and Elijah (with Elisha) saw the greatest number of miracles, apart from those that occurred during the lifetime of Jesus.*

¹⁴ Does not all of that remind us of the Israel of God? Yes, indeed. Jesus told his faithful followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:19, 20) In obedience to these words, anointed Christians have served as Jehovah's spokesman from Pentecost 33 C.E. until now. Like Moses and Elijah, they have faced the wrath of rulers

* Exodus 2:15-22; 3:1-6; 5:2; 7:8-13; 8:18; 19:16-19; Deuteronomy 31:23; 1 Kings 17:8-16; 18:21-40; 19:1, 2, 8-18; 2 Kings 2:1-14.

13. What features mark Moses and Elijah as fitting prophetic pictures of Jesus' anointed joint heirs glorified with him?

14. How have the anointed served as Jehovah's spokesman, like Moses and Elijah?

and have witnessed to them. Jesus told his 12 apostles: "You will be haled before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them and the nations." (Matthew 10:18) His words have been fulfilled repeatedly during the history of the Christian congregation.—Acts 25:6, 11, 12, 24-27; 26:3.

¹⁵ Further, anointed Christians have been as fearless as Moses and Elijah in standing for truth against religious falsehood. Remember how Paul denounced the Jewish false prophet Bar-Jesus and tactfully but firmly exposed the falseness of the gods of the Athenians. (Acts 13:6-12; 17:16, 22-31) Remember, too, that in modern times the anointed remnant has boldly exposed Christendom and such witnessing has plagued her.—Revelation 8:7-12.*

¹⁶ When Moses fled the wrath of Pharaoh, he found refuge in the home of a non-Israelite, Reuel, also called Jethro. At a later time, Moses received valuable organizational counsel from Reuel, whose son Hobab guided Israel through the wilderness.[#] (Exodus 2:15-22; 18:5-27; Numbers 10:29) Have members of the Israel of God been helped similarly by individuals who are not anointed members of the Israel of God? Yes, they have been supported by the "great crowd" of "other sheep," who have appeared on the scene during these last days. (Revelation 7:9; John 10:16; Isaiah 61:5) Foretelling the warm, loving support

* See pages 133-41 in the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*

[#] See the book *You May Survive Armageddon Into God's New World*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., pages 281-3.

15, 16. What parallels are there between the anointed on the one hand and Moses and Elijah on the other in the matter of their (a) fearlessly standing for truth? (b) receiving help from non-Israelites?

that these "sheep" would offer his anointed brothers, Jesus said to them prophetically: "I became hungry and you gave me something to eat; I got thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you received me hospitably; naked, and you clothed me. I fell sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to me. . . . Truly I say to you, To the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."—Matthew 25:35-40.

¹⁷ Further, the Israel of God had an experience comparable to that of Elijah on Mount Horeb.* Like Elijah at the time he was running from Queen Jezebel, the fearful anointed remnant thought that their work was done at the end of World War I. Then, also like Elijah, they had an encounter with Jehovah, who had come to judge those organizations claiming to be "the house of God." (1 Peter 4:17; Malachi 3:1-3) While Christendom was found wanting, the anointed remnant was recognized as "the faithful and discreet slave" and was appointed over all Jesus' earthly belongings. (Matthew 24:45-47) In Horeb, Elijah heard "a calm, low voice" that proved to be that of Jehovah, giving him more work to do. In the quiet period of the postwar years, faithful anointed servants of Jehovah heard his voice from the pages of the Bible. They too perceived that they had a commission to fulfill.—1 Kings 19:4, 9-18; Revelation 11:7-13.

¹⁸ Finally, have outstanding manifestations of Jehovah's power been channeled

* See "Let Your Name Be Sanctified," pages 317-20.

17. How did the anointed have an experience similar to that of Elijah on Mount Horeb?

18. How have outstanding manifestations of Jehovah's power been channeled through the Israel of God?

through the Israel of God? After Jesus' death, the apostles performed many miracles, but these gradually ceased. (1 Corinthians 13:8-13) Nowadays, we do not see miracles in a physical sense. On the other hand, Jesus said to his followers: "Most truly I say to you, He that exercises faith in me, that one also will do the works that I do; and he will do works greater than these." (John 14:12) This had an initial fulfillment as Jesus' disciples preached the good news throughout the Roman Empire in the first century. (Romans 10:18) Even greater works have been done today as the anointed remnant has spearheaded the preaching of the good news "in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) The result? The 20th century has witnessed the ingathering of the greatest number of dedicated, faithful servants of Jehovah in history. (Revelation 5:9, 10; 7:9, 10) What magnificent evidence of Jehovah's power! —Isaiah 60:22.

Jesus' Brothers Come in Glory

¹⁹ As the remnant of Jesus' anointed brothers finish their earthly course, they are glorified with him. (Romans 2:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 15:53; 1 Thessalonians 4:14, 17) Thus they become immortal kings and priests in the heavenly Kingdom. With Jesus, they will then "shepherd the people with an iron rod so that they will be broken to pieces like clay vessels." (Revelation 2:27; 20:4-6; Psalm 110:2, 5, 6) With Jesus, they will sit on thrones judging "the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 19:28) Groaning creation has eagerly awaited these events, which are part of "the revealing of the sons of God." —Romans 8:19-21; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8.

19. When are Jesus' anointed brothers seen with him in glory?

²⁰ Paul spoke of the revelation of Jesus during the "great tribulation" when he wrote: "He comes to be glorified in connection with his holy ones and to be regarded in that day with wonder in connection with all those who exercised faith." (Matthew 24:21; 2 Thessalonians 1:10) What a magnificent prospect that is for Peter, James, John, and all spirit-anointed Christians! The transfiguration strengthened Peter's faith. Surely, reading about it strengthens our faith too and fortifies our confidence that Jesus will soon "recompense each one according to his behavior." Faithful anointed Christians who have survived to this day see their confidence confirmed that they will be glorified with Jesus. Other sheep have their faith strengthened in the knowledge that he will save them through the end of this wicked system of things into the glorious new world. (Revelation 7:14) What an encouragement to stand firm to the end! And this vision can teach us much more, as we will see in the following article.

20. (a) Regarding what prospect did the transfiguration strengthen Peter's faith? (b) How does the transfiguration strengthen Christians today?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ Who appeared with Jesus in the transfiguration?
- ☐ How was the faith of the apostles strengthened by the transfiguration?
- ☐ When Moses and Elijah appeared "with glory" along with Jesus in the transfiguration, whom did they represent?
- ☐ What parallels are there between Moses and Elijah on the one hand and the Israel of God on the other?

THEOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE CHRISTIAN ERA

"It is according to his good pleasure . . . to gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth."

—EPHESIANS 1:9, 10.

THIS gathering of "the things in the heavens" began in 33 C.E., when "the Israel of God" was born. (Galatians 6:16; Isaiah 43:10; 1 Peter 2:9, 10) After the first century C.E., the gathering slowed down as genuine Christians (called "wheat" by Jesus) were overgrown by apostate "weeds" sown by Satan. But as "the time of the end" approached, the true Israel of God came back into human view and in 1919 was appointed over all Jesus' belongings.*—Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; 24:45-47; Daniel 12:4.

² During the first world war, anointed Christians performed powerful works, just as Moses and Elijah had done.[#] (Revelation 11:5, 6) Since 1919 they have preached the good news in a hostile world, doing so with the courage of Elijah. (Matthew 24:9-14) And since 1922 they have proclaimed Jeho-

vah's judgments on mankind, just as Moses brought God's plagues upon ancient Egypt. (Revelation 15:1; 16:2-17) The remnant of these anointed Christians are today the nucleus of the new world society of Jehovah's Witnesses.

A Governing Body in Action

³ From the beginning, Jesus' anointed followers were organized. As the number of disciples multiplied, local congregations were established and elders were appointed. (Titus 1:5) After 33 C.E., the 12 apostles acted as an authoritative central governing body. As such, they took a fearless lead in the witness work. (Acts 4:33, 35, 37; 5:18, 29) They organized the distribution of food to needy ones, and they sent Peter and John to Samaria to follow up on reports of interest there. (Acts 6:1-6; 8:6-8, 14-17) Barnabas took Paul to them to have it confirmed that this former persecutor was now a follower of Jesus. (Acts 9:27; Galatians 1:18, 19) And after Peter had preached to Cornelius and his household, he returned to Jerusalem and explained to the apostles and other Judean brothers how

3. What events show that the early Christian congregation was well organized?

* See the August 1, 1981, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 16-26.

[#] For example, starting in 1914, "The Photo-Drama of Creation"—a four-part visual and recorded presentation—was shown to audiences in packed theaters throughout the Western world.

1, 2. (a) How did the gathering of "the things in the heavens" proceed, starting in 33 C.E.? (b) How have anointed Christians demonstrated the spirit of Moses and Elijah since 1914?



holy spirit had indicated God's will in this case.—Acts 11:1-18.

⁴ Then the governing body came under brutal attack. Peter was imprisoned, and his life was saved only by angelic intervention. (Acts 12:3-11) Now for the first time, someone other than one of the 12 apostles appeared in a prominent position in Jerusalem. When Peter was released from prison, he told a group gathered in the house of the mother of John Mark: "Report these things to James [Jesus' half brother] and the brothers."—Acts 12:17.

⁵ Previously, after Judas Iscariot, the traitorous apostle, committed suicide, a need was discerned to give "his office of oversight" as an apostle to someone who had been with Jesus during his ministry and who had witnessed his death and resurrection. However, when James, the brother of John, was executed, no one replaced him as one of the 12. (Acts 1:20-26; 12:1, 2) Rather, the next Scriptural reference to the governing body shows that it had been en-

Even when its original members were no longer in Jerusalem, a governing body continued to operate there

larged. When a dispute arose over whether Gentiles who followed Jesus should submit to the Mosaic Law, the matter was submitted for decision to "the apostles and older men who were in Jerusalem." (Acts 15:2, 6, 20, 22, 23; 16:4) Why were "older men" now evidently on the governing body? The Bible does not say, but there was an obvious benefit. The death of James and the imprisonment of Peter had shown that the apostles might one day be imprisoned or killed. In such a contingency, the presence of other qualified elders, experienced in governing body procedures, would ensure the orderly continuance of oversight.

⁶ When Paul came to Jerusalem about the year 56 C.E., he reported to James and, the Bible says, "all the older men were present." (Acts 21:18) Why was there no mention of apostles at this meeting? Again, the Bible

4. What attempt was made to kill Peter, but how was his life saved?

5. How was the makeup of the governing body changed after the martyrdom of James?

6. How did the governing body continue to function in Jerusalem, even when its original members were no longer in that city?

does not say. But the historian Eusebius later reported that some time before 66 C.E., “the remaining apostles, in constant danger from murderous plots, were driven out of Judea. But to teach their message they travelled into every land in the power of Christ.” (*Eusebius*, Book III, V, v. 2) True, Eusebius’ words are not part of the inspired record, but they do harmonize with what that record says. For example, by 62 C.E., Peter was in Babylon—far from Jerusalem. (1 Peter 5:13) Still, in 56 C.E., and likely right up until 66 C.E., a governing body was clearly active in Jerusalem.

Administration in Modern Times

⁷ From 33 C.E. until the tribulation on Jerusalem, the governing body evidently consisted of Jewish Christians. During his visit in 56 C.E., Paul learned that many Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, despite “holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,” were still “zealous for the [Mosaic] Law.”* (James 2:1; Acts 21:20-25) Such Jews may have had difficulty imagining a Gentile on the governing body. In modern times, though, there has been another change in the makeup of this body. Today, it consists entirely of anointed Gentile Christians, and Jehovah has greatly blessed their oversight.—Ephesians 2:11-15.

⁸ From the incorporation of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania in 1884 until 1972, the president of

* For possible reasons why some Jewish Christians were zealous for the Law, see *Insight on the Scriptures*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., Volume 2, pages 1163-4.

7. Compared with the governing body of the first century, what outstanding difference is there in the makeup of the Governing Body today?

8, 9. What developments have occurred in the Governing Body in modern times?

the Society exercised great authority in Jehovah’s organization, while the Governing Body was closely associated with the Society’s board of directors. The blessings enjoyed during those years prove that Jehovah accepted that arrangement. Between 1972 and 1975, the Governing Body was enlarged to 18 members. Things moved closer to the first-century arrangement when greater authority was invested in this enlarged body, some of whom are directors of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.

⁹ Since 1975 a number of these 18 individuals have finished their earthly course. They have conquered the world and have ‘sat down with Jesus on his heavenly throne.’ (Revelation 3:21) For this and other reasons, the Governing Body now has ten members, including one who was added in 1994. Most are quite advanced in age. However, these anointed brothers are given fine support as they fulfill their weighty duties. Where is that support found? A glance at modern developments among God’s people answers that question.

Support for the Israel of God

¹⁰ Back in 1884 almost all of those associated with the Israel of God were anointed Christians. Gradually, however, another group began to appear, and in 1935 this group was identified as the “great crowd” of Revelation chapter 7. Having an earthly hope, these represent “the things on the earth” that Jehovah purposes to gather together in the Christ. (Ephesians 1:10) They represent the “other sheep” of Jesus’ parable of the sheepfolds. (John 10:16) Since 1935, other sheep have flocked into Jehovah’s organization. They have “come flying

10. Who have joined the anointed in Jehovah’s service in these last days, and how was this prophesied?



C. T. Russell
1884-1916



J. F. Rutherford
1917-42



N. H. Knorr
1942-77



F. W. Franz
1977-92



M. G. Henschel
1992-

Mature anointed Christians have been a blessing to Jehovah's people

just like a cloud, and like doves to their birdhouse holes.” (Isaiah 60:8) Because of the increase in the great crowd and the decrease in the anointed class as many finish their earthly course in death, qualified other sheep have come to play an increasing role in Christian activities. In what ways?

¹¹ Declaring abroad Jehovah's excellencies has always been a special obligation of God's "holy nation." Paul spoke of it as a temple sacrifice, and to those who would be "a royal priesthood," Jesus gave the commission to preach and teach. (Exodus 19:5, 6; 1 Peter 2:4, 9; Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; Hebrews 13:15, 16) Nevertheless, the August 1, 1932, issue of *The Watchtower* specifically encouraged those prefigured by Jonadab to share in this activity. Indeed, many of such other sheep were already doing so. Today, almost all the preaching work is done by the other sheep as a prominent part of their "rendering [God] sacred service day and night in his temple." (Revelation 7:15) Similarly, in the early part of the modern history of Jehovah's people, congregation elders were anointed Christians, "stars" in the right hand of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 1:16, 20) But the May 1, 1937, issue of *The Watchtower* announced that qualified other sheep could be company servants (presiding overseers). Even if anointed men were available, other sheep could be used if the anointed men were not able to shoulder this responsibility. Today, almost all congregation elders are of the other sheep.

¹² Is it wrong to give such weighty responsibilities to the other sheep? No, it follows historical precedent. Some foreign proselytes (alien residents) held high posts in ancient Israel. (2 Samuel 23:37, 39; Jeremiah 38:7-9) After the Babylonian exile, qualified Nethinim (non-Israelite temple servants) were given privileges of temple service that previously belonged only to Le-

11. What privileges, originally limited to anointed Christians, have been given to other sheep?

12. What Scriptural precedents are there for qualified other sheep receiving weighty organizational responsibilities?

vites. (Ezra 8:15-20; Nehemiah 7:60) In addition, Moses, who was seen in the transfiguration vision with Jesus, accepted the fine counsel offered by the Midianite Jethro. Later, he asked Jethro's son Hobab to guide them through the wilderness.—Exodus 18:5, 17-24; Numbers 10:29.

¹³ Toward the end of the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses, knowing that he would not go into the Promised Land, prayed that Jehovah would provide a successor. (Numbers 27:15-17) Jehovah told him to commission Joshua before all the people, and Moses did so, even though he was still physically strong and did not immediately cease to serve Israel. (Deuteronomy 3:28; 34:5-7, 9) With a similar humble spirit, the anointed have already been extending increased privileges to qualified men from among the other sheep.

¹⁴ The growing organizational role of the other sheep is also the subject of prophecy. Zechariah foretold that the non-Israelite Philistine would be "like a sheik in Judah." (Zechariah 9:6, 7) Sheikhs were tribal chiefs, so Zechariah was saying that a former enemy of Israel would adopt true worship and come to be like a tribal chief in the Promised Land. Further, when addressing the Israel of God, Jehovah said: "Strangers will actually stand and shepherd the flocks of you people, and the foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers. And as for you, the priests of Jehovah you will be called; the ministers of our God you will be said to be." (Isaiah 61:5, 6) The "strangers" and "foreigners" are the other sheep. These have been delegated responsibilities so as to shoulder more and more work as the ag-

13. In humbly delegating responsibility to qualified other sheep, whose fine spirit have the anointed been imitating?

14. What prophecies point to the growing organizational role of the other sheep?

ing anointed remnant finish their earthly course and go to serve in a complete sense as heavenly "priests of Jehovah," surrounding Jehovah's throne of majesty as "ministers of our God."—1 Corinthians 15:50-57; Revelation 4:4, 9-11; 5:9, 10.

"The Generation . . . to Come"

¹⁵ The anointed remnant has been eager to train other sheep for increased responsibilities. Psalm 71:18 says: "Even until old age and gray-headedness, O God, do not leave me, until I may tell about your arm to the generation, to all those who are to come, about your mightiness." Commenting on this verse, the December 15, 1948, *Watchtower* pointed out that the congregation of anointed Christians had certainly reached old age. It went on to say that the anointed happily "look forward in the light of Bible prophecy and see a new generation." To whom particularly is this referring? *The Watchtower* said: "Jesus spoke of them as his 'other sheep.'" 'The generation to come' refers to humans who will live under the new earthly administration governed by the Kingdom of the heavens.

¹⁶ The Bible does not clearly say when all anointed Christians will leave their brothers of this 'generation to come' and go on to be glorified along with Jesus Christ. But these anointed ones are confident that the time for this is approaching. The events foretold in Jesus' great prophecy about "the time of the end" have been coming to pass since 1914, showing that the destruction of this world is near. (Daniel 12:4; Matthew 24:3-14; Mark 13:4-20; Luke 21:7-24) Soon, Jehovah will usher in a new world in which 'the generation to come' will 'inherit the

15. In this time of the end, which group of Christians have reached "old age," and which group represent "the generation . . . to come"?

16. To what blessings do those of 'the generation to come' eagerly look forward?

kingdom [the earthly realm] prepared for them from the founding of the world.' (Matthew 25:34) They are thrilled to anticipate the restoration of Paradise and the raising of millions of dead ones from Hades. (Revelation 20:13) Will anointed ones be there to welcome back these resurrected ones? Back in 1925, the May 1 *Watch Tower* said: "We should not arbitrarily say what God will or will not do. . . . [But] we are led to the conclusion that the members of the Church [anointed Christians] will be glorified before the resurrection of the ancient worthies [faithful pre-Christian witnesses]." Similarly discussing whether some of the anointed would be on hand to welcome back the resurrected ones, the September 1, 1989, *Watchtower* said: "This would not be necessary."*

¹⁷ True, we do not know what will happen in the case of each anointed Christian. But the presence of Moses and Elijah with

* See *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1990, pages 30-1; December 15, 1990, page 30.

17. What wonderful privileges will the anointed, as a group, share with the enthroned King, Jesus Christ?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ How did God's organization move forward in the first century?
- ☐ How has the Governing Body developed in the modern history of Jehovah's Witnesses?
- ☐ What Scriptures authorize the giving of authority to the other sheep in Jehovah's organization?
- ☐ How have "the things in the heavens" and "the things on the earth" been gathered together in the Christ?

Jesus in the transfiguration vision indicates that resurrected anointed Christians are expected to be with Jesus when he comes in glory to "recompense each one according to his behavior" as his judgment is rendered and executed. Further, we remember Jesus' promise that anointed Christians who 'conquer' will share with him in 'shepherding the nations with an iron rod' at Armageddon. When Jesus comes in glory, they will sit with him "judging the twelve tribes of Israel." With Jesus, they will 'crush Satan under their feet.'—Matthew 16:27-17:9; 19:28; Revelation 2:26, 27; 16:14, 16; Romans 16:20; Genesis 3:15; Psalm 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:9, 10.

¹⁸ In keeping with his administration of things, Jehovah is progressively moving "to gather all things together again in the Christ." As far as "the things in the heavens" are concerned, his purpose approaches completion. The uniting of Jesus with all the 144,000 in heaven for "the marriage of the Lamb" is near. Hence, more and more longtime, mature brothers of the other sheep, representing "the things on the earth," have had delegated to them weightier responsibilities in support of their anointed brothers. What exciting times we live in! How thrilling to see Jehovah's purpose moving on to its fulfillment! (Ephesians 1:9, 10; 3:10-12; Revelation 14:1; 19:7, 9) And how the other sheep rejoice to support their anointed brothers as both groups serve together as "one flock" under "one shepherd" in subjection to the King, Jesus Christ, and to the glory of the great Universal Sovereign, Jehovah God!—John 10:16; Philippians 2:9-11.

18. (a) What is the situation as regards 'the gathering of the things in the heavens together in the Christ'? (b) What can we say about 'the gathering of the things on the earth together in the Christ'?

HONESTY

By chance or by choice?

"THOUGH I am not naturally honest, I am so sometimes by chance." So says the rogue Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare. This illustrates a basic human weakness—our inclination toward wrongdoing, which results from a 'treacherous heart.' (Jeremiah 17:9; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12) But does this mean that we have no choice in the matter? Is virtuous behavior simply a matter of chance? By no means!

Before the sons of Israel entered the Promised Land, Moses spoke to them while they were encamped on the plains of Moab. He placed before them two clear choices. They could obey God's commandments and receive his blessing or reject them and reap the bitter fruitage of sin. (Deuteronomy 30:15-20) The choice was theirs.

As free moral agents, we too have a choice. No one—including God—forces us to do good or to do bad. However, some may rightly ask, 'If our hearts are inclined toward badness, how can we practice what is good?' Well, a dentist carefully inspects the teeth in order to detect erosion or decay before it progresses too far. Similarly, we need to probe our figurative heart in search of weaknesses and moral decay. Why? Because "out of the heart come wicked reasonings, murders, adulteries, fornications, thieveries, false testimonies, blasphemies," said Jesus. —Matthew 15:18-20.



As in David's case, prayer to Jehovah can help us to do good

To preserve a tooth, a dentist must thoroughly root out any decay that is found. Likewise, decisive action is needed to purge "wicked reasonings" and wrong desires from the heart. By reading and reflecting on God's Word, the Bible, not only do we come to know our Creator's ways but we also learn to do what is right.—Isaiah 48:17.

Israel's King David availed himself of a further necessary help in the fight to do what is right. He prayed: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." (Psalm 51:10) Yes, by prayerfully relying on Jehovah God, we too can overcome our inclination to do what is bad and cultivate a "new spirit" to do good. In this way, we will not leave honesty to chance. It will be a matter of choice.



How to Find Hope Amid Despair

IMAGINE that you were to have the following experiences: All your material possessions are wiped out, leaving you destitute. Your children—the joy of your life—are no more. Your spouse is not giving you moral support. Your health has literally collapsed. Every day is an agonizing ordeal.

If that came to be your lot in life, could you find a reason to keep on living? Or would you succumb to despair?

The sad plight just described was the true-life experience of Job, a man who lived in Bible times. (Job, chapters 1, 2) At a very low point, Job lamented: “My soul certainly feels a loathing toward my life.” He would have welcomed death as a relief. (Job 10:1; 14:13) In spite of his monumental suffering, however, Job maintained his integrity to God. Jehovah therefore “blessed the end of Job afterward more than his beginning.” He thus died in peace, “old and satisfied with days.”—Job 42:12, 17.

Job set an example in endurance that is acclaimed down to this day. His trials refined his personality and motivated others to good works. (James 5:10, 11) Most important of all, Job’s flawless integrity made Jehovah’s heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) So it was that a nightmare of agony eventually became a tremendous triumph of godliness, faith, and integrity that brought blessings to Job and to all those who have been moved by his example.

Hope Despite Various Trials

You may suffer trials similar to those experienced by Job. The loss of a loved one may have left you emotionally devastated. Severe illness may have made your existence a painful ordeal. Your whole way of life may seem to have disintegrated in a heartbreaking divorce. Economic reverses may have left you destitute. You may be the object of vicious persecution by hateful opposers of true worship. The struggle to cope with your trials may have left you feeling that your future is hopeless.—1 Peter 1:6.

Rather than give way to despair, ask yourself, ‘Why am I suffering?’ You are suffering because you are living in a world that is “lying in the power of the wicked one,” Satan the Devil. (1 John 5:19) As a result, everybody suffers. In some way all of us are affected by the Devil-inspired hatred for the Kingdom message, the unloving words of others, or the horrendous acts of ungodly conduct that are so common in these “critical times.”—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

If something tragic has occurred in your life, you may have been a victim of “time and unforeseen occurrence.” (Ecclesiastes 9:11) On the other hand, things sometimes go wrong in life because of our own inherited sinfulness. (Romans 5:12) Even if you have erred seriously but have repented and sought spiritual help, do not feel that you have been abandoned by God. (Psalm 103:10-14; James 5:13-15) More than anyone else, he cares for us. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) You

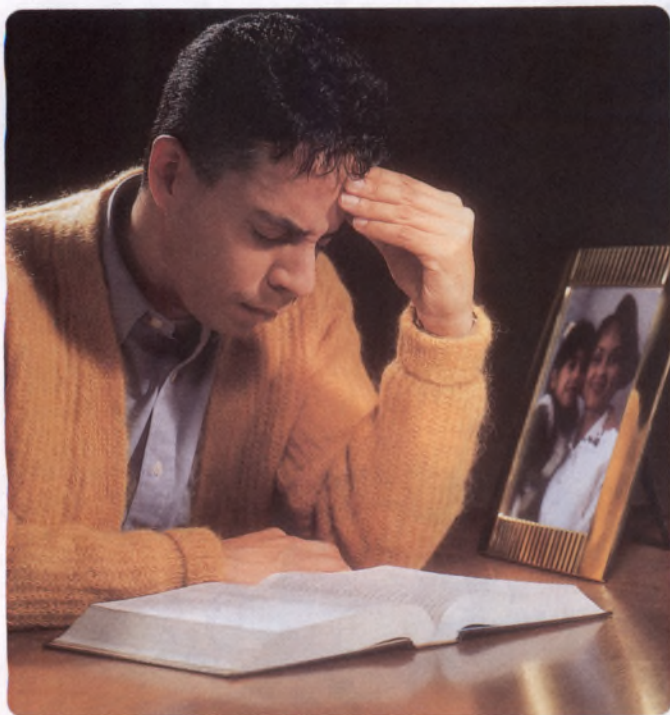


Be like Job. Never lose hope

can be confident that "Jehovah is near to those that are broken at heart; and those who are crushed in spirit he saves." (Psalm 34:18) No matter how tragic or severe your trial may be, Jehovah can give you the wisdom to deal with it. (James 1:5-8) Always remember that Jehovah can heal all wounds. When you have his favor, nothing can prevent you from gaining the prize of life.—Romans 8:38, 39.

Can Anything Good Come From Trials?

There is an old saying, "Every cloud has a silver lining." That is a simple way of saying that no matter how bad things get, you can always find a reason for hope. The purpose behind everything written in God's Word is that "we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) No matter how severe your plight, the promises and principles in the Bible can bring you renewed joy and hope.



Trust in Jehovah with all your heart

The Scriptures show that “tribulation is momentary and light” when compared to the eternal blessings set before those who love God. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) The Bible also indicates that godly qualities developed amid trials are of far greater value than fame or material wealth. (1 John 2:15-17) Thus, even suffering can serve a good purpose. (Hebrews 5:8) In fact, applying what is learned during trials can bring you unexpected blessings.

A difficult trial may make you more mel-
low. You may admit that in the past you had
a personality trait that caused irritation
to others and even hindered your spiritu-
al progress. Perhaps it was overconfidence.
After being laid low by some calamity, you
may suddenly realize how frail you are and
how much you need others. If your trial has

taught you that lesson and you
have made needed changes, it has
benefited you.

What if, in the past, others
found it hard to deal with you be-
cause you had difficulty control-
ling your spirit? This may even
have caused you some distress
in connection with your health.
(Proverbs 14:29, 30) Now, how-
ever, the situation may be much
better because you are relying on
God’s spirit to help you exercise
self-control.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

Like others, you possibly at one
time lacked the compassion to be
merciful toward those who err.
But if you yourself fell into a
situation where you felt a great
need for mercy, likely you are
now more inclined to be merciful
toward others. The heartwarm-
ing sympathy, concern, and mer-
cy you were shown have made you realize

that you should display similar qualities to-
ward repentant wrongdoers. If your pain
has moved you to correct these weaknesses
in your personality, this is one benefit you
have drawn from your experience. You have
learned that “mercy exults triumphantly
over judgment.”—James 2:13; Matthew 5:7.

What if discipline by the Christian con-
gregation has cost you cherished privi-
leges and the respect of others? Do not suc-
cumb to despair. Disciplinary action helps
to keep the congregation clean, but its
objectives include the spiritual restoration
of the wrongdoer. Admittedly, “no disci-
pline seems for the present to be joyous,
but grievous; yet afterward *to those who
have been trained by it* it yields peaceable
fruit, namely, righteousness.” (Hebrews

12:11) Though discipline can be a devastating blow, it does not leave the humbly repentant person without hope. Ancient Israel's King David was severely disciplined for wrongdoing, but he was repentant and eventually received special commendation as a man of outstanding faith.—2 Samuel 12:7-12; Psalm 32:5; Hebrews 11:32-34.

A trial could have a profound effect on your outlook. In the past, your attention may have centered on materialistic goals and achievements that brought you recognition and social status in this world. Perhaps a trial associated with a financial reverse or material losses has focused your thoughts on more important things. (Compare Philippians 1:10.) Now you realize that spiritual values and goals in sacred service are the only things that bring true joy and lasting satisfaction.

Trust in Jehovah

Rendering sacred service to Jehovah may result in persecution and suffering at the hands of those who oppose your Christian beliefs. You may feel downtrodden because of this trial, but good can come from it. This test may strengthen your faith. Moreover, others suffering persecution may be encouraged and strengthened by observing your perseverance. Eyewitnesses of your fine conduct may be motivated to glorify God. Even your opposers may get ashamed and acknowledge your good works!—1 Peter 2:12; 3:16.

To avoid despair when persecuted, you need to trust in Jehovah. His Word shows that relief from a trial is sure to come, but it may not arrive as soon as you would like. In the meantime, "do not give up in doing right." (2 Thessalonians 3:13) Keep searching for ways to cope with trials and to endure. Even when things look hopeless,

"throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." (Psalm 55:22) Rather than immersing yourself in self-pity, think about how blessed you are to know Jehovah, to have a place among his people, and to possess the hope of endless life.—John 3:16, 36.

Keep your mind focused on the essentials. Go to Jehovah every day in prayer, asking for strength to endure. (Philippians 4:6, 7, 13) Dismiss any thought of retaliating against those causing your suffering. Leave matters in Jehovah's hands. (Romans 12:19) Keep looking for ways to refine your personality, cultivating Christian qualities. (2 Peter 1:5-8) Appreciate everything done for you by others, including the elders who lovingly care for your spiritual needs. (Hebrews 13:7, 17) Be faithful to God, and keep your eye on the prize of life, confident that not even death can rob you of it.—John 5:28, 29; 17:3.

If you are now experiencing great sadness or severe trials, "trust in Jehovah with all your heart," and abundant joy will eventually replace your grief and hardship. (Proverbs 3:5, 6; John 16:20) Misery will give way to happiness when God blesses you as he did Job. Present-day sufferings do not amount to anything when compared with your reward. (Compare Romans 8:18.) Your faithful endurance can encourage others and help you to cultivate the beautiful Christian qualities that come with "the new personality." (Ephesians 4:23, 24; Colossians 3:10, 12-14) So, then, draw courage from the apostle Peter's wise advice: "Let those who are suffering in harmony with the will of God keep on commending their souls to a faithful Creator while they are doing good."—1 Peter 4:19.

BEWARE of Imputing Wrong Motives

A PROMINENT television evangelist issued a scathing denunciation of a fellow preacher for committing adultery. Within a year, however, the accusing evangelist was caught with a prostitute.

In another case, a leading world power sent out emissaries to bring warring factions to the peace table. Meanwhile, the same nation covertly dispatched its arms dealers to foreign nations to peddle billions of dollars' worth of weapons.

Since blatant hypocrisy has become so common, is it any wonder that skepticism has largely displaced trust? For many, questioning the motives of others has become second nature.

As Christians, we must be careful not to allow such attitudes to affect our relationship with faithful fellow believers. Though Jesus Christ urged us to be "cautious as serpents" while among our enemies, he did not say that we should be suspicious of his true followers. (Matthew 10:16) So, then, what are the dangers of imputing wrong motives to others? In what areas must we be especially careful to avoid such an inclination? And how can we safeguard our precious relationship with fellow Christians?

A Lesson From the Past

Imputing wrong motives to others without just cause is tantamount to judging them. It is as though we are jumping to



**How do you view others
who faithfully worship God?**

the conclusion that their words or deeds are merely a subterfuge hiding something devious and malicious. Often the real problem lies in a mistaken view of matters, as can be seen from the Bible account found in Joshua chapter 22.

The Israelites had completed their conquest of the Promised Land and had just received their tribal territories. The tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built an altar "great in conspicuousness" by the Jordan River. The other tribes wrongly assumed that this was an act of apostasy. It was supposed that the three tribes were going to use this great structure for sacrifice instead of going to the tent of meeting in Shiloh, the appointed place for worship. At once, the accusing tribes made preparations for military action.—Joshua 22:10-12.

To their credit they communicated with their Israelite brothers by dispatching an official delegation headed by Phinehas. Upon hearing the charges of unfaithful-

ness, rebellion, and apostasy against Jehovah, the supposedly offending tribes explained their reason for this huge altar. Rather than being an altar for sacrifice, it was to "be a witness" to the unity of the tribes of Israel in worshiping Jehovah. (Joshua 22:26, 27) The delegation returned home satisfied that nothing was amiss with their brothers. Thus a civil war and terrible bloodshed were averted.

What a lesson for us never to be quick to impute wrong motives to others! Often what appears to be true from a mere cursory observation is found to be entirely different upon closer examination. This is true in many aspects of the life of a Christian.

Our View of the Elders

In discharging their responsibility "to shepherd the congregation of God," at times elders find it necessary to counsel various

individuals in the congregation. (Acts 20: 28) For instance, how do we react if an elder speaks to us about our children on such matters as bad association or improper conduct with someone of the opposite sex? Do we assume that he has a hidden motive and say to ourselves, 'He never did like our family'? If we allow such feelings to influence us, we could be sorry later. The spiritual welfare of our children may be in jeopardy, and we should appreciate helpful Scriptural counsel.—Proverbs 12:15.

When a congregation elder counsels us, let us not look for some veiled motive. Rather, let us ask ourselves if there is some way that we can benefit from his Bible-based counsel. The apostle Paul wrote: "True, no discipline seems for the present to be

***Trust and respect make Jehovah's
Witnesses one happy family***



joyous, but grievous; yet afterward to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness." (Hebrews 12:11) So let us be grateful and think matters over objectively. Remember that it is often as hard for the elders to give us counsel as it is for us to receive it.

Feelings About Parents

When faced with certain parental restrictions, some young people question the motives of their parents. Some youths might say: 'Why do my parents make so many rules? They must not want me to enjoy life.' Instead of drawing such a conclusion, however, younger ones need to analyze the situation objectively.

Parents have spent years caring for their children. This has been done at great sacrifice materially and otherwise. Is there any reason to conclude that they are now determined to make the life of their teenage children miserable? Is it not more reasonable to think that love motivates these parents to protect their children and care for them? Would not the same love be prompting them to place certain restrictions on their children, who now face new challenges in life? How unkind and ungrateful it would be to impute wrong motives to loving parents!—Ephesians 6:1-3.

In Our Next Issue

Jehovah
—A God Who Reveals Secrets

Jehovah Acts in Loyalty

Human Weakness
Magnifies Jehovah's Power

Our Attitude Toward Fellow Christians

Many tend to prejudge others and stereotype them. What if we ourselves have had such an attitude and have been somewhat suspicious of certain people? Could we be influenced by the world in this regard?

For example, suppose that one of our spiritual brothers has a fine home and an expensive automobile. Should we automatically conclude that he is a materialist who is not putting Kingdom interests first in life? Some Christians may be able to afford fine things, but that does not mean that they have bad motives or are not "seeking first the kingdom." They may be very busy in spiritual activities, generously using their material assets to promote Kingdom interests, perhaps in an unobtrusive way.—Matthew 6:1-4, 33.

The first-century Christian congregation was made up of people of all types—rich and poor. (Acts 17:34; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 6:17; James 2:5) God does not evaluate people on the basis of their financial standing, and neither should we. We should love our proved and faithful fellow believers, "doing nothing according to a biased leaning."—1 Timothy 5:21.

In this world that lies in Satan's power, stereotyping and suspicion take various forms. For example, a person may be viewed as being violent or materialistic simply because of his background. As Christians, however, we must not fall victim to such attitudes. Jehovah's organization is no place for bigotry and suspicion. All true Christians need to imitate Jehovah God, with whom "there is no unrighteousness or partiality."—2 Chronicles 19:7; Acts 10:34, 35.

Be Motivated by Love

The Scriptures plainly say that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) So we need to view our fel-

low worshipers as those united with us in striving to render acceptable service to Jehovah. If we have allowed suspicion or other negative feelings to affect our relationship with a spiritual brother or sister, let us pray for God's help to combat such an attitude so that we do not fall prey to Satan. (Matthew 6:13) He convinced Eve that Jehovah had bad motives, was not concerned about her welfare, and was withholding freedoms that would make her truly happy. (Genesis 3:1-5) Our imputing wrong motives to our brothers serves his ends.—2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Peter 5:8.

If we find that we have a tendency to impute wrong motives to others, consider the example of Jesus Christ. Even though he was the perfect Son of God, he did not look for bad motives in his disciples. Instead, Jesus looked for the good in them. When his disciples were vying for a position of

prominence, he did not assume that they had corrupt motives and replace them with 12 new apostles. (Mark 9:34, 35) Being imperfect, they may have been influenced in some way by the culture of apostate Judaism, with its emphasis on pride and class distinctions. Jesus knew that the basic motivation of his followers was love for Jehovah. For displaying such love and for sticking with Jesus, they were greatly rewarded.—Luke 22:28-30.

If we were to look at our faithful fellow believers suspiciously, this would be like looking at things through a distorted lens. Nothing would appear as it really is. Let us therefore look through the lens of love. There is plenty of evidence that loyal fellow Christians love us and deserve our kind consideration. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) So may we show them love and beware of imputing wrong motives.

'They Abide by Their Religious Training'

A WOMAN from Miami, Florida, U.S.A., sent the following letter to a local newspaper: "On Dec. 10 my son's wallet was picked out of his pocket at a flea market. It contained his driver's license, Social Security card, etc., as well as \$260.

"After reporting the loss to the manager, he came home. In the early evening he had a call from a Spanish-speaking lady who, with a [telephone] operator acting as interpreter, told him that she had found his wallet.

"She gave him her address. . . . She gave him the wallet, which was intact, including the \$260.

"She had seen the thief lift his wallet and yelled. The thief dropped the wallet and ran. By that time my son had disappeared from

her view, so she took the wallet home and called.

"She and her family are Jehovah's Witnesses. They evidently abide by their religious training."

Jehovah's Witnesses do not display honesty in order to receive praise from men. (Ephesians 6:7) Rather, they earnestly desire to bring praise to their heavenly Father, Jehovah. (1 Corinthians 10:31) Their love for God and for neighbor impels them to proclaim the "good news" about God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) By means of the Kingdom, God promises to transform the earth into a beautiful paradise. Then the earth will be a place not only of physical beauty but also of moral excellence where honesty will prevail forever.—Hebrews 13:18; 2 Peter 3:13.

E P A P H R A S

"A Faithful Minister of the Christ"

WHO founded the Christian congregations in Corinth, Ephesus, and Philippi? Perhaps you would have no hesitation in answering: 'Paul, the "apostle to the nations."' (Romans 11:13) You would be right.

However, who established the congregations in Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea? Although we cannot be sure, it may have been a man named Epaphras. At any rate, perhaps you would like to know something more about this evangelizer, since he is called "a faithful minister of the Christ."—Colossians 1:7.

Evangelizer of the Lycus Valley

The name Epaphras is an abbreviation of Epaphroditus. But Epaphras is not to be confused with the Epaphroditus from Philippi. Epaphras was from Colossae, one of the three centers of Christian congregations in the Lycus River valley, in Asia Minor. Colossae was situated just 11 miles from Laodicea and 12 miles from Hierapolis, in the ancient region of Phrygia.

The Bible does not explicitly say how the good news of God's Kingdom reached Phrygia. However, Phrygians were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost in 33 C.E., perhaps some of them being from Colossae. (Acts 2:1, 5, 10) During Paul's Ephesian ministry (about 52-55 C.E.), the witness given in that area was so vigorous

and effective that not only the Ephesians but also "all those inhabiting the district of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." (Acts 19:10) It would seem that Paul had not preached the good news throughout the Lycus Valley, since many who became Christians in that region had never seen him.—Colossians 2:1.

According to Paul, the one who taught the Colossians about "the undeserved kindness of God in truth" was Epaphras. The fact that Paul calls this coworker "a faithful minister of the Christ on our behalf" shows that Epaphras was an active evangelizer in the area.—Colossians 1:6, 7.

Both the apostle Paul and the evangelizer Epaphras had great concern for the spiritual welfare of their fellow believers in the Lycus Valley. As the "apostle to the nations," Paul must have rejoiced to receive news of their progress. It was from none other than Epaphras that Paul heard about the spiritual condition of the Colossians.—Colossians 1:4, 8.

Epaphras' Report

The Colossians faced problems serious enough to persuade Epaphras to make the long journey to Rome for the specific purpose of discussing these matters with Paul. The detailed report made by Epaphras was evidently what moved Paul to write two letters to those brothers other-

wise unknown to him. One was the letter to the Colossians. The other letter, which apparently has not been preserved, was sent to the Laodiceans. (Colossians 4:16) It is reasonable to think that the contents of those letters were intended to respond to the needs of those Christians as perceived by Epaphras. What necessities did he see? And what does this tell us about his personality?

The letter to the Colossians seems to indicate that Epaphras was worried that Christians in Colossae were endangered by pagan philosophies involving asceticism, spiritism, and idolatrous superstition. Moreover, the Jewish teaching of abstinence from foods and the observance of certain days may have influenced some members of the congregation.—Colossians 2:4, 8, 16, 20-23.

The fact that Paul writes about these subjects shows us how alert and sensitive Epaphras was to the needs of his fellow Christians. He showed loving concern for their spiritual welfare, being conscious of the dangers of the environment in which they lived. Epaphras sought Paul's counsel, and this reveals that he was humble. Maybe he felt the need to receive advice from someone with more experience. In any case, Epaphras acted wisely.—Proverbs 15:22.

A Man Who Valued Prayer

In the conclusion of the letter he sent to the Colossian Christians, Paul says: "Epaphras, who is from among you, a slave of Christ Jesus, sends you his greetings, always exerting himself in your behalf in his prayers, that you may finally stand complete and with firm conviction in all the will of God. I indeed bear him witness that he puts himself to great effort in behalf of

you and of those at Laodicea and of those at Hierapolis."—Colossians 4:12, 13.

Yes, even while he was Paul's "fellow captive" in Rome, Epaphras was thinking about his beloved brothers in Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis and praying for them. (Philemon 23) Literally, 'he struggled' for them in prayer. According to scholar D. Edmond Hiebert, the Greek term used here denotes "a strenuous and costly activity," something similar to the mental "agony" experienced by Jesus Christ as he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane. (Luke 22:44) Epaphras earnestly desired that his spiritual brothers and sisters attain stability and full Christian maturity. What a blessing for the congregations such a spiritually-minded brother must have been!

Since Epaphras was called a "beloved fellow slave," there can be no doubt that he endeared himself to fellow Christians. (Colossians 1:7) When circumstances allow, all members of the congregation should give of themselves freely with warmth and love. For example, attention can be given to assisting the sick, the elderly, or others with special needs. There may be different responsibilities to care for in the congregation, or it may be possible to contribute to theocratic building projects.

Praying for others, as Epaphras did, is a form of sacred service that all can perform. Such prayers may include expressions of concern for worshipers of Jehovah who have to face various dangers or difficulties of a spiritual or physical nature. By exerting ourselves vigorously in this way, we can be like Epaphras. Each of us can have the privilege and joy of proving to be a "beloved fellow slave" in the family of Jehovah's faithful servants.

'In God I Shall Take Refuge'

IN THESE "critical times hard to deal with," temptations and pressures are ever increasing. Our honesty, for example, may be tested in the workplace. Our chastity may be tested among schoolmates. And our integrity is often put to the test by a morally corrupt world. —2 Timothy 3:1-5.

The Bible writer Asaph also lived at a time when wickedness flourished. Some of his contemporaries even boasted about their ungodly conduct. "Haughtiness has served as a necklace to them," wrote Asaph. "Violence envelops them as a garment. They scoff and speak about what is bad; about defrauding they speak in an elevated style." (Psalm 73:6, 8) Does this attitude sound familiar?

For those who desire to do what is right, such conduct is very distressing, even discouraging. "I came to be plagued all day long," Asaph lamented. "It was a trouble in my eyes." (Psalm 73:14, 16) You may feel similarly, but do not despair! Asaph was able to cope with the wickedness of his day, and you can do likewise. But how?

Asaph came to realize that true justice is nearly impossible to find under the imperfect rule of man. (Psalm 146:3, 4; Proverbs 17:23) So rather than squander his precious time, energy, and resources trying to do away with all the wickedness around him, he focused on his relationship with God. Asaph declared: "As for me, the drawing near to God is good for me. In the Sovereign Lord Jehovah I have placed my refuge." —Psalm 73:28.

Today, those who engage in corrupt business practices often enjoy material advantages.



Many may even boast of their disregard for God's moral laws. But they will not prevail indefinitely. "Surely on slippery ground is where you place them," observed Asaph. "You have made them fall to ruins." —Psalm 73:18.

Yes, in God's due time, trickery, violence, and corruption, as well as all the other ungodly practices that true Christians must avoid, will be done away with. The Bible promises: "Evildoers themselves will be cut off, but those hoping in Jehovah are the ones that will possess the earth." (Psalm 37:9) In the meantime, may we echo the words of the psalmist who said: "Jehovah is my crag and my stronghold and the Provider of escape for me. My God is my rock. I shall take refuge in him." —Psalm 18:2.